



April 10, 1989

Friends of the Don

Attached is a first draft of a proposal, as promised, though a little late, that we might be able to use to present to City and/or Metro Council.

Our next meeting is scheduled for MONDAY, APRIL 24, 7:00pm at City Hall. The meeting will be in the East Lounge, just along from Committee Room 5.

Agenda items include: the proposal, whether to remain an ad-hoc committee or formalize (a name?) a report on the meeting at the Science Centre, networking, community activism and outreach, a report on legal questions, lobbying and media strategy...

We hope you all can attend. We've made a lot of progress so far and the momentum is building. It is time to involve a lot more people as well as City Council.

If you cannot attend the meeting, but want to comment, propose amendments to the proposal or write a letter of support please get in touch with one of our offices.

Our mailing list is just at about 100. There are lots more people interested in this, if you know any please send their names in to Jack Layton's office or bring them to the next meeting. Still only have those short bios from a few people.

Hope to see you on April 24.

Sincerely

Barbara Hall

Jack Layton

Marilyn Churley

Roger Hollander

\* P.S. DON'T FORGET THE NEXT MEETING OF THE DON WORKGROUP  
\* MONDAY APRIL 24th, 7:00, COMMITTEE ROOM #5, CITY HALL



A PROPOSAL TO TORONTO CITY COUNCIL (AND/OR METRO COUNCIL) TO  
REHABILITATE THE DON

Preamble

Toronto has a river flowing through the middle of the city: the Don. It had a glorious past of beautiful white pines, summer swims, fishing and relaxing strolls. But it has taken on an ignominious present - polluted, inaccessible, neglected, abandoned.

It is time to let the river heal itself and heal the city in the process.

We now have the knowledge, the political will, the public determination. We can find the resources to stop the pollution, create appropriate access and let the river become a soothing part of our lives again.

The attached is a proposal - to begin this work as a community wide project.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of February 23, 1989, City Council adopted the principle that the Don River and the valley around it be usable by the year 2001.

Council also asked the Neighbourhoods Committee establish a Don River Clean-up Task Force, which could include local residents and City Councillors, to pursue the clean-up of the Don River by the year 2001.

This all fits in with City Council's "Healthy Toronto 2000" plan. The restoration of the Don river and its valley represents a significant symbol in the City's efforts to provide for the mental, physical and psychological health of City residents and workers.

The first step in cleaning up the Don is a community participation process to establish a community wide plan of action for the next 15-20 years of activity.

GOAL

Our overall goal is to restore the river and valley to a healthy state so that it may again be an enjoyable and life supporting part of the City.

The Lower Don within the City of Toronto is especially degraded. However, with the construction of the bicycle path here, completion of water quality studies for the Don watershed and growing public civic and corporate concerns for the lands and water course, it is possible to reclaim the river.

## OUR VISION

A group of citizens have been meeting over the last few months to try and work out how we might be able to rehabilitate the river and its valley and discuss just what we mean by this. The following is the vision we've thus far come up with which we'd like to share with the community as a whole.

Aspects of the vision shared by all:

1. The river must become accessible: at present there are significant physical and psychological barriers to enjoying or even getting near the river. Some of these barriers include 2 sets of railway tracks, no walking trails, two rail corridors with fences, a lot of noise and pollution, the Don Valley Parkway and Bayview extension. There's no easy way of getting over or across them. We want to see equal access to the river. However we also want access to be both environmentally appropriate or sensitive. For example, the bike path is terrific but dirt bikes would not be appropriate.

2. We must let the river return to a natural state. This means natural regeneration - restoration, rehabilitation, reforestation: over time letting fish, wildlife and natural growth return. Hopefully, this might also include a natural wetlands at the mouth of the river.

3. We want clean water, air and land. We must stop the existing pollution; aim for zero discharge - and we must clean up what we've done.

4. We would like the river to be seen, in the minds of Torontonians, in its historical context. The Don has a rich history and a sweeping, soothing form that can do much for the sense of continuity and history that the city needs to nurture a sense of belonging and comfort.

In general, we want to return the river to a state of health; so that it will act as a healthy resource for the people of Toronto; a psychological, physical, educational and natural resource.

## WHAT IS NEEDED?

Complete rehabilitation requires the participation of the public, all levels of government and their agencies and private businesses. This comprehensive approach envisions the restoration of the Don River as one significant project within an emerging city program to provide for a green, healthy city while maintaining prosperity for all. Cooperation is the cornerstone. Community participation however is the first thing necessary in developing a vision and plan of action for now and the next 15-20 years. The City is definitely in the best position to start the community participation component of the effort.

1) A Study of the Lower Don:

- review ways to restore the land
- act and advocate for water quality improvement all the way up the Don
- develop the community participation process in planning and implementation
- create a comprehensive management plan coordinated by MTRCA
- create local/area rehabilitation plans that fit within the overall plan

2) Process:

- \* Establish a community Participation Program including the establishment of technical working groups and management planning groups that include members of the public as follows:

I. Lower Don Rehabilitation Plan

- Land owners (City and Metro)
- Public
- Funding Sources

II. Watershed Management Plan

- MTRCA (Metro Toronto Regional Conservation Authority)
- Watershed municipalities as members
- Senior government
- funding sources

3) Develop a Collective Vision for the Study Area

4) Develop a Plan of Action to implement the vision

SOME IDEAS FOR THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

We should start with a hands on approach in which everyone has the right to participate, including:

- clean up days which include time for reflection, discussion and planning the future of the area
- have community groups adopt specific projects or sections of the river or valley on-going action and monitoring
- children's forest (nametags on plantings - watch them grow over time)
- selling shares in the Don
- adopt a stream approach; clean a ravine, plant a tree.
- we've got the Dome; now, how about the Don
- Don walks
- mapping the valley, by community groups
- a newsletter
- visible site office
- community forums
- flyers on what you can do
- canvassing for the Don

We also need to look at some of the steps in rehabilitation, like:

- stopping the use of salt
- burying the dvp in some parts to permit physical and psychological access
- creating hundreds of small, natural eco-systems
- ending pesticide use
- stopping sewer outflows into the river
- controlling dumping
- letting nature heal the valley on its own
- different categories of activities eg., wild gardens, sports , parks with buffer areas between
- zero discharge regulations for industry and municipalities
- wildlife sanctuaries; including a natural wetland at the mouth
- de-railing the rail lines
- removing overhead hydro line
- direct community control over the river and the valley

#### RESOURCES

- NGOs active and available;( environmental groups, naturalist and wildlife groups, sport groups, general community groups, resident associations, scout, schools, ethnic groups)
- numerous studies that have been done - we know from these studies the problems and needs; studies exist on water quality and management, sources of pollution, restoration and abatement strategies etc. sewage treatment process, sewage separation, surface run off,
- case studies of other rivers that have been restored
- helpful government agencies and departments
- academic resources
- historical societies
- the Web

The greatest need is for a comprehensive rehabilitation plan and the co-ordination of action toward rehabilitation, and abatement

#### Possible Funding Sources:

1. Metro Toronto (Parks Program)
2. Province - M.O.E. , M.N.R., M.M.A.
3. MTRCA (As per Rouge River Study)
4. Federal Government (National program on "hotspot" clean-up)

SOME MOTIONS THAT CAN BE MADE AT CITY COUNCIL

1. That the Commissioner of Planning report on the implementation of a community planning process on the rehabilitation of the "Don".
2. That a staff committee with membership from Health, Planning, Parks, and Works be established on the rehabilitation of the Don.
3. That an inventory of existing knowledge, reports and resources available to assist in the rehabilitation of the Don be published.
4. That other levels of government be approached to ask for assistance in these endeavours.
5. That the City dedicate \$100,000. in the first year for public participation and planning activities associated with the rehabilitation of the Don.

