

**The Lake Simcoe Partnership
A Collaborative Management Approach**

Towards A New Governance Model For Lake Simcoe

Report of the LSEMS Working Group

June 2007



LAKE
SIMCOE
ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT
STRATEGY

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Representatives of the Working Group operated in an ex-official manner in that the representatives brought their respective expertise from their organizations and professional experience to enrich the discussions and bring factual information to the table; consensus of the Working Group does not represent consensus amongst the agencies of the individual members.

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Executive Summary

In the past, organizational design and governance have followed the adage that “structure follows strategy.” A more enlightened view suggests that there is an opportunity to utilize organizational design to gain strategic advantage. Here, structure does not follow strategy – it is strategy.

The Lake Simcoe watershed is a resource worthy of protection. Having a governance model for the Lake that provides a forum for government, industry and the public to work together is a fundamental foundation for building a community of practice for Lake Simcoe. Lake Simcoe and its watershed face many challenges. The Lake has many advocates intent on protection and enhancement – each with a different focus and approach. There have been many accomplishments over the past sixteen years through the Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy (LSEMS) – accomplishments that are the result of the collective action of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and other government agencies from all levels. But much remains to be done because the landscape of the Lake and its watershed is inherently complex. It has many facets – it is an economic resource, it is an environmental resource and it is a vitally important social resource. The Working Group supported in principle, a conceptual framework for the Lake which engages government, industry and the public as equal partners who collectively share the joint challenge of securing a future for Lake Simcoe that holds promise for all.

The Working Group, with its membership from across industry, non-government organizations and representatives of the three levels of government took on this challenge to look at the future of Lake Simcoe and the watershed and design a governance model that is distinctive – one that puts the needs of the Lake and its watershed first. One that brings together a diverse set of stakeholders who are interested in protecting the Lake by informing decisions that affect Lake Simcoe and its watershed – leaders in their own right who will act as Champions for the Lake.

Since its inception, LSEMS has existed as a partnership between the Provincial government, the Federal government, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and the watershed municipalities. The composition of the partnership has evolved over time and recently expanded to include industry and public stakeholder representatives. The recommendations herein represent the next stage in this evolutionary process to effect a collaborative model that aligns the interests and the efforts of the public, industry and government. There is an opportunity at this point in time, when the future of the Lake is being considered under the stewardship of LSEMS, to contemplate a governance structure for the Lake that further promotes partnership, information sharing, collaboration, innovation and learning.

This Report summarizes the collective efforts of the LSEMS Working Group. Charged by the LSEMS Steering Committee with the task of evaluating and providing recommendations with respect to a future governance model, the LSEMS Working Group was given the mandate to complete an evaluation and to produce a Report containing findings of fact and key recommendations. In particular, the LSEMS Working Group were charged with recommending a new governance model for the Lake Simcoe partnership and were given the responsibility of defining the scope, format and function associated with a new governance model,

Lake Simcoe faces a number of challenges. Concerns with water quality and its impacts particularly on the coldwater fishery (as a critical indicator of watershed health) have provided a focus of concern for watershed residents, government at all levels and industry alike. While much progress has been made, it is apparent that much work remains to be done. While LSEMS has produced numerous marks of success, it has become evident that the Lake and its watershed is the subject of considerable interest and attention from an increasing number of stakeholder groups and associations, each with a particular interest and area of expertise. The result is that while each of these efforts is commendable, there is an interest in further cooperation and collaborative action – an integrated approach that looks at aligning the efforts of all who are intent on protecting and restoring Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

The Working Group agreed the Principles of good governance are:

- Inclusiveness (of all representative interests)
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Simplicity and easily understood
- Appropriately resourced
- Cost Efficient
- Lake and Watershed focused
- Ability to inform decisions
- Based on a single point of contact
- Practical, implementable and applicable to LSEMS (The Forum Fits the Fuss)
- Integrated with the mandates and requirements of other organizations and agencies
- Promotes information sharing, cooperation and coordination of effort
- Discourage duplication and overlap.

Members of the Working Group agreed Lake Simcoe needs:

Lake Champions
A Common Vision that is Shared By All
A Unity of Purpose
Strategic Leadership
One Centralized Point of Contact
Sustainable Funding
Efficient and Effective Resource Allocation
Efficient and Effective Public-Private Partnerships
Integrated and Coordinated Plans of Action
A Meaningfully Engaged Public Who Feel A Sense of Ownership and Pride in the Lake
An Ecosystem-Based Management Approach
A Collaborative Web of Constituents and Stakeholders
An Enhanced Monitoring and Analysis System That Is Connected To Indicators of Watershed Health
Continued Emphasis on Science, Data Collection and Information Sharing

Marrying Lake Simcoe's Needs With Principles of Good Governance

Members of the Working Group aligned the fundamentals of good governance and what the Lake and watershed needs into a series of fundamental principles as follows:

Champions Who Can Effect Change... The Lake needs to engage high profile decision makers who can commit resources, effect positive change and offer a stronger voice for the Lake and watershed.

One Voice... First and foremost, the Lake needs One Voice. It needs a collaborative Action Plan that unites all partners toward a common cause. The Lake needs a governance model that offers a centralized point of contact for information sharing, collaboration and cooperation. It needs a model that is simple and easy to understand, practical and aligned with existing agencies – one that is effective and can facilitate change.

Unity of Purpose... Lake Simcoe and its watershed needs a common vision, a Strategic Vision that will provide a unity of purpose to integrate all partner interests. It needs a vision that is supported by all to unite disparate interests in focusing on areas of collective, strategic priority.

Collaborative Management Approach: Lake Simcoe needs a governance model that is premised on a co-creative collaborative management approach to engage all interests – government, industry and the public – to share information, collaborate and work cooperatively. The Lake needs a governance structure that promotes inclusiveness, accountability and transparency.

Watershed Focus: Lake Simcoe needs a governance model that promotes a watershed focus, one that is practical, implementable and applicable for the Lake.

Sustainable, Reliable & Adequate Revenue... To be effective, a new governance structure requires a dedicated revenue stream – long term, reliable, sustainable funding and the resources to get the job done. It needs high profile decision makers who can commit the resources needed.

Critical Elements For Developing a Lake Simcoe Governance Model:

Further, the Working Group determined that the following elements were critical in developing a new governance model:

Time Is Of the Essence: *Moving the process forward quickly is critical. Time is of the essence with respect to the new governance model and the work of the Working Group. The Lake Simcoe partnership needs to be driven by a desire to move forward efficiently and effectively – action is needed now.*

Partnerships Are Critical – Inclusiveness Is Essential: *Each of the participating stakeholders has a different perspective and views Lake Simcoe and its watershed through a different lens. We all bring individual strengths and expertise to the table. A variety of actions are needed, but under the guise of 'One Voice.' We are good when we work on our own but great when we combine efforts to work as a team. The future of*

Lake Simcoe and its watershed depends on a partnership approach where the interests of all are aligned toward a common objective and a shared goal. The governance model needs to be inclusive of the interests of the public, government and industry. It also needs to be simple and easily understood.

Watershed Focused: *The issues facing the Lake are complex and multi-faceted. The governance model needs to be broad enough in scope to address the key issues and flexible enough to take into account local circumstances and conditions. The new Lake Simcoe partnership should not be seen to be 'everything to everyone' but it should provide a forum to assist partners in coming together for a collective purpose. It should be watershed focused.*

Practical, Implementable & Applicable (Fit the Forum to the Fuss): *The development of a new governance structure for Lake Simcoe and its watershed needs to be cognizant of the current fiscal climate. Any governance model needs to focus on addressing the core functions and mandate of the partnership. There is a need to 'fit the forum to the fuss' and not overbuild or over-design an unnecessarily complicated model. The model also needs to be easy to implement, simple and easily understood.*

Prevents Duplication & Overlap and Instead Promotes Information Sharing, Collaboration and Cooperation: *The development of a new governance model needs to be aligned with existing organizational structure and legislative mandates. Any new governance model must take into account the prevailing role and legislated responsibilities of the partners, including provincial and federal agencies, municipalities (local and regional), and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. The new governance model must provide linkages to those structures that already exist. It must provide value added. The governance model must provide the opportunity to strengthen existing alliances and build new ones. It must build on the considerable strengths of the past LSEMS partnership and, at the same time, further engage the public and industry. A healthy watershed and Lake must be the primary goal and be linked to a vibrant economy, environment and society.*

Accountability: *The development of a new governance model for Lake Simcoe and its watershed needs to adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability. It needs to be premised on a forward-focused, strategic and visionary approach that provides an opportunity for increased public and industry participation, one that is based on formalized methods of public reporting.*

Effects Change: *The new governance model must be focused on information sharing, collaboration and cooperation. It must engage people at all levels and it must clearly identify to its members, the public and industry, the delineation between those who are in a position of decision making authority and those who are responsible for implementation. It must have the ability to inform decisions that impact the Lake and its watershed. The model must be both sufficiently resourced and cost efficient.*

Learnings From Other Governance Models

The Working Group assessed a variety of partnership models and determined from these that the following critical lessons could be learned for a successor model to the current LSEMS partnership:

<i>Commitment From On High:</i>	Involve the highest levels of leadership in the governance structure.
<i>Core Staff Are Essential:</i>	Core staff are essential to getting the job done.
<i>Engage the Right People:</i>	Don't be concerned about engaging large groups. Encourage a broad spectrum of participation.
<i>Set SMART Goals:</i>	Set clear, strong, specific and measurable goals.
<i>Foundation of Science:</i>	Use science as the foundation for decision-making. Make sure scientists are at the table and that decisions are based on sound science.
<i>Collaborative Management:</i>	Establish an integrated management structure for collaborative management.
<i>Diversified Funding:</i>	Secure a sustainable, appropriate and diversified funding base.
<i>Institutionalize Cooperation:</i>	Provide incentives/methods for institutionalizing cooperation. Learn from others.
<i>Assess & Communicate Progress:</i>	Conduct regular assessments of goals. Demonstrate marks of success and report on progress.
<i>Fit the Forum to the Fuss:</i>	Focus on a 'made for Lake Simcoe' solution.
<i>Agreed Upon Action Plan:</i>	Develop an Action Plan that everyone can commit to. Encourage the participation of local groups.
<i>Exercise Due Diligence:</i>	Exercise due diligence – continue to revisit the past to be sure nothing has been missed or overlooked.

Key Elements of a Successor to the Current Lake Simcoe Governance Structure

Critical to moving forward is having in place a governance structure that brings together the various stakeholders to work together to meet the needs of the Lake. This Report is intended to outline a governance model for the Lake that reconciles competing interests, forges new cooperative partnerships and explores opportunities for innovation and learning. The successor to the LSEMS partnership must be considered in light of the following:

A Shared Purpose & A Sense of Urgency. *The future of Lake Simcoe is largely dependent on partner efforts being aligned and motivated by a shared purpose. Urgent action is needed. The operating premise of 'action delayed would be results denied' needs to factor prominently in the establishment and start up of the new governance model.*

A New Name. *The Lake Simcoe partnership needs a new name – one that is easily understood and recognizable by all. LSEMS, as an acronym, is understood by those who form part of the alliance of partner interests. Outside of the partnership, however, LSEMS is not readily understood. A unique branding is needed that clearly articulates the new Lake Simcoe partnership.*

A Committee Structure That Maximizes Efficiencies. *Design a reporting structure that maximizes efficiencies and promotes integration. Support the committee structure with dedicated staff and operating resources.*

A Face for the Lake. *The Lake Simcoe partnership needs a centralized point of contact – a 'face'. It needs to move from a partnership arrangement to an entity, an organizational structure that coordinates and integrates the efforts of the public and industry stakeholders with the government partners. At present, LSEMS consists of a voluntary partnership – an agreement. It does not exist as a distinct entity or organization.*

A Defined Time Horizon. *The work of the new partnership needs to be guided by a defined time horizon for completing its work. While there will continue to be opportunities to focus on the Lake and its watershed over the long term, critical issues need to be addressed within a finite timeframe. Regular reporting on progress should be part of the overall reporting structure and mandate. All reporting should reflect this defined end point and specific measures of performance should be defined accordingly.*

An Ability To Align Reporting With Results. *All reporting or tracking progress needs to dovetail with measurable 'on-the-ground results.' In this regard, a reporting structure needs to be defined up front. Annual Progress Reports should clearly and concisely define the goal, what action was to be taken; the results and what remains to be completed.*

RECOMMENDATION: A VALUE ADDED CO-CREATIVE GOVERNANCE MODEL THAT BRINGS TOGETHER INTERESTS OF GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC.

This Report recommends a governance model for the Lake Simcoe partnership that brings together the interests of government, industry and the public. It is a co-creative model that in theory, and in practice, will promote the sharing of information, cooperation and collaboration. It recommends developing a value added model that builds upon the governance model currently in place and includes the following:

***A Unique Solution
for a Unique Resource***

It is recommended that a governance model for Lake Simcoe be designed to meet the needs of the Lake.

Build On the Past:

It is recommended that the governance model reflect the benefits associated with the current LSEMS Model and in particular, incorporate the positive elements as identified by the Working Group, of the Chesapeake Bay, Lake Champlain and Hamilton Harbour RAP models that hold promise for Lake Simcoe.

New Name

It is recommended that a new name be found for the partnership, one that is easily understood and recognized by all.

Partnership Lake Concept

It is recommended that the governance model promote a 'partnership Lake concept' that is premised on a collaborative management approach; that is co-creative and consists of equitable representation from government, industry and the public.

In keeping with the above, the Working Group has operationalized a value-added Model for Lake Simcoe as one governance option as outlined in report for consideration of the Steering Committee.

The Working Group recognizes that this Report presents a recommended governance model and appreciate that the details concerning the structure and organizational details reflect one model for Lake Simcoe governance and that others may evolve as the Steering Committee takes the recommendations of the Working Group and puts forward a recommended governance structure for the Lake.