



Take Responsibility for the Don

👥 Schools and community groups joined forces to regenerate Rupert's Pond in Vaughan.

Stewardship

Personal responsibility — it's probably the hardest thing for any human to do in any part of their life. But if we don't all stand up and admit that we are part of the problem AND part of the solution, our collective progress toward a cleaner, healthier Don is virtually impossible.

The June 2000 Angus Reid Public Awareness Survey suggests that Don watershed residents have a high degree of environmental consciousness and stewardship. Fifty-eight percent of residents interviewed have composted garden waste, 49 percent have reduced the amount of sidewalk salt used over the last three years, and 47 percent have reduced the amount of herbicides and pesticides on their properties in that same time period.

Once again, the Don is an inspiration to those who actually take the time to visit it. The June 2000 Angus Reid Public Awareness Survey compared respondents who have not visited the Don in the previous 12 months to those who had, and they discovered some interesting trends.

Those who had visited the Don in the last year were more likely to compost kitchen waste (60 percent visitors vs. 42 percent non-visitors), compost garden waste (66 percent visitors vs. 52 percent non-visitors), take their old paint and oil to a disposal depot (37 percent visitors vs. 19 percent non-visitors) and get involved in a weekend tree planting or creek cleanup (69 percent visitors vs. 46 percent non-visitors). Let's get everyone out to the Don!

The Don's dog owners seem particularly responsible. Eight in ten (80 percent) of dog owners who participated in the June

2000 Angus Reid Public Awareness Survey say they "always" stoop-and-scoop.

These results are impressive, but only 57 percent of survey respondents could think of any specific lifestyle change they could make to contribute to the clean-up efforts on the Don. Of those who could think of something, 24 percent mentioned "picking up garbage or litter," 22 percent mentioned "volunteering/organizing a clean up program," 12 percent mentioned "recycling" and 11 percent mentioned "becoming more informed/needing more information."

Business and Institutional Stewardship

Responsibility doesn't end with individuals. Commercial enterprises and institutions must also stand up and do their part to help heal the local environment.

Businesses can do the same wonderful eco-actions at work that they do at home, only on a larger scale. Improvements in water quality and wildlife habitats can be achieved through landscaping, treatment of stormwater on site, and alternatives to winter salt and lawn and garden chemicals. And like individual watershed residents, businesses can support the regeneration of the Don through improved practices, financial donations, participation in clean-up events, and more.

Did we achieve the stewardship targets we set out for businesses in the first Don report card?

Let's start by saying that the businesses and institutions who are pitching in are doing so in a big way. Here are just a few examples of the private partners committed to the well-being of the Don.

Quebecor continues to plant trees in the Don's headwaters every year. Friends of the Environment (Canada Trust) continues to provide a wide range of financial grants to projects and organizations across the Don. And Unilever Canada has expanded its annual support of Don restoration actions to become Toronto and Region Conservation's first-ever Living City Don River Partner.

Since 1997, we had hoped to increase the number of signatories to the Don Accord from 19 to 100, but sadly, there has been no significant progress toward that goal. We hope that by 2003, we will have three major business stewardship pilot projects up and running. These projects will be living, breathing inspirations that showcase the effectiveness of public and private sector partnerships.

Municipal Stewardship

In our first report card, we discovered that most municipalities in the Don do have watershed-friendly practices and policies in place. This was good news indeed, but the application of these practices was inconsistent across the watershed's municipalities.

Today, consistency across municipalities and regions is still uneven, but we have moved closer to our "greening" targets. Since 1997, York Region launched their own report card and introduced two major environmental initiatives: Greening of York Region Initiative and Water for Tomorrow program. The City of Toronto's extensive list of environmental progress includes the Wet Weather Flow Study, Tree Advocacy Program, Fung Report for sustainable redevelopment on the Waterfront, and more.

Richmond Hill and Markham also continue their advance toward more sustainable practices. Richmond Hill has reduced their use of road salt and sand by 25 percent and Markham has instituted a stricter lawn watering by-law. We hope that the day will soon come when every municipality in the watershed — and across the Greater Toronto Area — will have a strong and consistent Environmental Best Management Practices program in place.

After all, many hands make light work.



Official Opening of the Don Valley Brick Works Park, October 19, 1997. Left to right: Alan Tonks, Chairman, The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto; Michael Prue, Mayor, Borough of East York; Dick O'Brien, Chair, The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority; Jeffrey Smyth, Representing the Friends of the Valley; Allan Beattie, Chair, Don Valley Bricks Work Campaign Committee; Patrick Wilson, Chair, The Eaton Foundation; Bill McLean, President, The Conservation Foundation of Greater Toronto.

Unilever Canada Don River Partner

On October 30, 2000, Unilever Canada will announce its 3-year funding commitment to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Conservation Foundation's Living City Environmental Vision for Toronto and region. Unilever will become the first-ever Don River Partner. Unilever Canada's main manufacturing plant has been located on the lower Don River for more than a century, and the company has long taken responsibility to help in the River's preservation and restoration.

Unilever's focus on the Don supports their long-term, global strategy on clean water stewardship, and it complements the work Unilever companies around the world are doing to ensure sustainability, access and protection of fresh water resources. Their commitment to the Don River mirrors their efforts in the Mersey Basin in England and the Pasig River in the Phillipines.

Ruth Richardson, Manager of Environmental and Corporate Affairs for Unilever Canada, on becoming the Don River Partner:

"This new sort of partnership is exciting for Unilever Canada. We have long benefited from our participation with both Toronto and Region Conservation and the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. Our new role as Don River Partner will draw upon the success of our past efforts in the lower Don and elevate them to the entire watershed."

Through their role as Don River Partner, Unilever Canada will help Toronto and Region Conservation:

- continue to improve the health and proliferation of habitat and species in the Don
- expand access and use of the watershed by all citizens, especially children
- increase use of the Don as an outdoor classroom and educational resource
- create a renewed and inspired connection between the Don River and Lake Ontario
- increase opportunities for educational pieces
- increase the sense of community, both publicly and institutionally, in the watershed
- provide leadership and inspiration to other corporations to become River Partners in other watersheds across the Greater Toronto Area

The Don Watershed Regeneration Council commends Unilever Canada for their stewardship and for their commitment to a healthy Don.



INDICATOR 16: STEWARDSHIP

PERSONAL

Are Don residents doing their part for the environment?

Where we were: (1997)

Although Don residents showed a high degree of environmental stewardship in general, only 35 percent had ideas on how they could help the Don specifically. At the same time, 36 percent of residents who lived in a house used pesticides or herbicides on their lawns, and only 21 percent had disconnected their downspouts from the sewers. No information existed on ravine stewardship in the Don.

2000 Target:

Forty percent of residents will know how they can help the Don, and will be doing at least one positive thing.



☞ The "fruits" of a hard day's clean-up of the Don.

Some Responses from 2000 Angus Reid Survey

"Can you think of any changes you could make in your activities or behaviours which would contribute to the efforts to clean up the Don?"

"I cannot think of anything"

"nope"

"no"

WHAT'S THE TREND?

in 1997



in 2000



Little change in the action of individuals; no reduction in pesticide/herbicide use.

Climate Change and the Don Report Card

The future goals outlined in the Don Report Card may be impacted significantly by the onset of climate change. The key facts are, as follows:

- even if all nations meet the emission reduction targets of the Kyoto protocol, the CO₂ concentrations in the planet's atmosphere will reach a level that is double the average for the last 10,000 years around 2030, with the doubling having taken place since the start of the industrial revolution; and,
- as we move toward this unavoidable doubling, the onset of climate change will impact most aspects of watershed management, including: the temperature, quality and quantity of surface waters; the health of wetlands, fisheries and riparian edges; natural heritage, agricultural, greenspace and urban canopy management; and land use planning, water-taking permits, stormwater management systems, the rate of ground water re-charge and erosion damage from extreme weather.

As a result, all long term goals for the regeneration of the Don may need to be revised to reflect the changing climatic realities. Extensive work is required to integrate climate change into existing watershed management strategies, develop local climate change scenarios and identify adaptation strategies for a changed future.

Where we are: (2000)

Significantly more people than in 1996 survey now have ideas on how they can help the Don River; however, 43 percent of people polled couldn't think of anything they could do. Of the 57 percent that could think of something they could do, most cited picking up garbage or volunteering. Only six percent offered reducing pesticides and fewer suggested naturalizing their properties to provide habitat and retain water. This suggests a limited understanding of the stormwater problem that connects our lot-level actions to the health of the river. Thirty-nine percent of house dwellers* reported using pesticides and/or herbicides on their properties in the last year. Of those residents living in houses, forty-one percent reported that their downspout is not connected to the storm sewer system. Of those people, 23 percent reported that the downspout had been disconnected by either themselves or someone else in the household.

The June 2000 Angus Reid Public Awareness Survey also indicates that people who visit the watershed's valleylands for walking, cycling or some other activity are more likely to donate money or time to environmental organizations.

* House defined as detached, semi-detached or townhouse dwelling.



☞ Reducing the number and volume of household chemicals used and safe disposal of unused portions are excellent ways to reduce personal impact on the environment.

Where we want to be:

By 2003:

- 1) Seventy percent of people will be able to identify one thing they can do to help the Don and more than 25 percent of people will cite disconnection of downspouts, reduced use of pesticides and property naturalization as actions they can take (on an open ended question).
- 2) Governments, agencies and groups will be more effectively communicating the need for sustainable living at the individual level (see Indicator 11).

By 2010:

- 1) Ninety percent of residents will have eliminated pesticide use on their lawns.
- 2) Fifty percent of all downspouts currently connected to the storm sewer system will have been disconnected (where feasible).

By 2030:

Personal stewardship of the watershed will be an integral part of daily life.

How to get there:

First and foremost, public awareness targets and directions must be reached. Only when people are aware can they be expected to act. Education efforts must first break down existing misconceptions about the source of the Don's pollution (see Indicator 11) and provide information pertaining to actions we can all take to help the River. A "Property Health Care" message should be adopted as the main theme for outreach and education efforts. People should be made aware of the integral connection between their lifestyles, their health, their properties and the River. The awareness messages should coincide with efforts to have people take "one simple action" to personally help the River. The action promoted should be easy to implement and should effectively communicate the link between ourselves, our lands and the Don River. Owners of properties adjacent to the river should be approached first.



☞ It only takes a minute to return your cart to its proper spot!



INDICATOR 17: STEWARDSHIP

BUSINESS AND INSTITUTIONAL

Are businesses doing their part to protect and restore the Don?

Where we were: (1997)

There was proven leadership and interest from some watershed businesses and institutions in the Don's regeneration, but there were no broad survey data about what was being done. Nineteen businesses had signed the Don Accord as of December, 1996.

2000 Targets:

- 1) Collect baseline data on business stewardship and best management practices, and establish targets for 2010 and 2030.
- 2) At least 100 businesses will sign the Don Accord.

The June 2000 Angus Reid Public Awareness Survey found that 33 percent of those people employed outside of their homes are aware of corporate environmental policies or goals, while 18 percent are aware of financial contributions their employer has made to local environmental efforts.

WHAT'S THE TREND?

in 1997



in 2000



Businesses have started to address the environment in their operations but are lagging behind in the area of watershed-friendly land management.

A Sample of Business and Institutional Involvement in the Environment

In the Don

Aventis Pasteur	Grounds naturalization; plantings in G. Ross Lord Park.
Canada Trust	Many grants to organizations across the Don.
Friends of the Environment	
Domtar	Support to Friends of the Don East.
Langstaff EcoPark	Local businesses have contributed over \$100,000 in cash and in-kind support to EcoPark since 1995. Quebecor employees have planted trees for eight years, resulting in the creation of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Corporate Tree Planting Challenge.
Rotary Clubs	Supports community plantings.
Unilever Canada	Provides financial assistance.
Paddle the Don	Supported by Loblaws, Laidlaw, Sporting Life, Tremco and Harbourfront Canoe and Kayak School.

General

Large industries have shown extensive leadership, focusing on employee health and safety, waste management, recycling, reducing industrial emissions, and implementing environmental management systems, including the Responsible Care Program of the chemical industry. The motor vehicle and parts manufacturing industries, comprising 30 percent of Ontario's economy, are working toward the elimination or the reduction in use of 113 chemicals, as well as the certification of all suppliers to ISO 14001 standards early in the new decade.

Where we are: (2000)

Two pilot projects were initiated: the Sediment Awareness Project with the development industry, and the Langstaff EcoPark with the park's 1,500 local businesses. Baseline data were collected on both the broad spectrum of corporate environmental stewardship and on business and institutional support for local regeneration, as described in the box on page 48.



The Langstaff EcoPark showcases the great work that can be accomplished when different groups join forces.

Where we want to be:

By 2003:

- 1) Continue sediment control outreach activities and achieve demonstrable improvement in the area of sediment contamination from construction sites.
- 2) Develop and implement three pilot projects with Don businesses and institutions to raise awareness of the link between good property management and the health of the watershed.
- 3) Improve business and institutional participation in regeneration projects.

By 2010:

Fifty percent of businesses and institutions in selected demonstration areas will have implemented some form of improved property management.

By 2030:

Environmentally sound property management practices will be in place at a majority of businesses and institutions across the watershed.

How to get there:

While large industries are making great strides, industrial and commercial areas, dominated by small and medium sized enterprises, make up 20 percent of the watershed and still contribute a significant percentage of non-point source pollution and stormwater runoff. The challenge in the Don will be to engage all levels of government, business organizations, and other organizations to develop products and mechanisms that will help business and institutions expand their focus from internal operations to address the chosen priority targets for 2001-2003: improving sediment control, reducing the impact of stormwater runoff through property management practices and getting businesses and institutions more involved in community regeneration projects. Businesses and institutions located in areas bordering the river may be given priority attention.



INDICATOR 18: STEWARDSHIP

MUNICIPAL

Are the Don's municipalities doing their part?

Where we were: (1997)

The adoption of specific ecosystem stewardship practices such as protecting groundwater, encouraging naturalization of parks, reducing sediment and erosion, etc., were inconsistent across the watershed's municipalities. Even simple policies such as reducing the use of pesticides were not in place across all municipalities.

2000 Targets:

1. All Don municipalities will have ecosystem stewardship policies and good management practices.
2. A method for measuring how well municipalities are implementing and enforcing their stewardship practices will be in place.

WHAT'S THE TREND?

in 1997



in 2000



Strategic initiatives underway;
needs support from Federal and
Provincial governments.

Transportation Management Associations (TMAs)

TMAs are private, non-profit membership organizations dedicated to providing a variety of transportation services and programs. TMA membership is derived from the business community, public sectors and interested citizens.

TMA programs encourage people to walk, bicycle, ride public transit, carpool, vanpool, work flextime and telecommute. TMAs generally serve a number of employers and businesses in a specific geographic area.

TMAs are commonly and successfully used in the United States, where there are over 100 in existence. The City of Toronto has helped facilitate the formation of the first TMA in Ontario, the Black Creek Transportation Management Association, and is looking to encourage the formation of many more.



*The Don Valley Parkway — on a ↗
good day.*

Where we are: (2000)

York Region's Greening of York Region and Water for Tomorrow initiatives, as well as its Regional Report Card, are laudable efforts that have been completed or launched since the last Don Report Card. These have been undertaken as a prelude to the development of a new Regional Official Plan. As well, York Region opened its first Hazardous Waste Depot in 1998 (prior to that time there had only been mobile service).

The City of Toronto's many, significant environmental efforts include: the Environmental Task Force; the new City Official Plan process; the commitment to the sustainable redevelopment of degraded urban lands (e.g., *Gateway to a New Canada*, *Our Toronto Waterfront*, *Downsview Park*); the new Sewer-Use By-law; coordinating the establishment of Transportation Management Associations; the Wet Weather Flow Study; and the Tree Advocacy Program. These efforts place Toronto at the forefront of the drive toward sustainable urban existence. That these efforts were undertaken during the difficult period of transformation from six municipalities to one, only adds to the magnitude of the accomplishments. It will take some time, however, for these efforts to translate into measurable change in the watershed.

Specific stewardship policies are still inconsistent across the watershed but, generally, municipalities are continuing to advance toward more sustainable practices. Richmond Hill has achieved a 25 percent reduction in the use of road salt and sand. Markham has instituted a new lawn watering by-law. York Region has adopted a policy of "minimal use of pesticides." The City of Toronto's Environmental Task Force has recommended the elimination of pesticide use and outlined other sustainability initiatives dealing with smog, transportation and energy issues.

The City of Toronto's Downspout Disconnection Program resulted in the disconnection of 7,919 properties between 1997 and 1999. None of the upper watershed municipalities have implemented downspout disconnection programs, although Richmond Hill has taken steps towards initiating a pilot program. Salt and pesticides are still used by every Don watershed municipality, although use has been considerably reduced.

Where we want to be:

By 2003:

1. The efforts underway should be completed and implemented.
2. There should be a recognition at all government levels that a sustainably-developed and utilized GTA, with healthy neighbourhoods and viable functioning natural areas, will help facilitate the economic growth of the region.
3. All municipalities will have Environmental Best Management Practices.
4. Ecosystem-focused regeneration projects will become a line item in each municipality's annual budget, funded through a small increase in water rates.

By 2010:

1. All of the Don's municipalities will have modified their Official Plans based on the concept of sustainability.
2. Pesticide use will have been eliminated.

By 2030:

Don municipalities will be world leaders in sustainable municipal operations, helping to solidify the Don as an attractive place to live and work.

How to get there:

The Don's upper municipalities of Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham should make specific allocations to upgrade stormwater management at the lot-level (eg. downspout disconnection, infiltration basins, wetland construction, etc.). The City of Toronto should continue its extensive environmental efforts with the ultimate goal of enshrining sustainable practices in the new Official Plan. Municipalities should be able to access the Superbuild Fund for green infrastructure to help carry out these efforts. Municipalities, in partnership with others (including municipally-supported Transportation Management Associations, see box page 50), should improve public transit systems to reduce fossil fuel emission and encourage greater public transit use.



☞ Smog is on the increase across the GTA.

