

## Hamilton Harbour an inspiration

Gail Krantzberg

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It may be difficult to believe — or choose to believe — the tremendous gains made in revitalizing Hamilton Harbour which was in such poor condition only 25 years ago. At that time, a group of stakeholders mobilized around the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan in an effort to bring back to health fish and wildlife, improve access to the waterfront and allow for swimming and enjoyment of the water. Today, Hamilton's waterfront is an evolving gem. With the opportunity presented by the Pan Am Games for brownfield redevelopment in the city core, connecting communities with the Bay and Lake Ontario, it makes sense to further capitalize on our natural assets and define ourselves as a hub of water excellence.



**HAMILTON HARBOUR.** THE REVITALIZATION OF HAMILTON HARBOUR HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES IN THE PAST TWO DECADES. KAZ NOVAK

This excellence arises from innovation and technological advances. Researchers have been piloting new technologies at our wastewater treatment plants to achieve exceptional water quality improvements with new cost effective inventions. Still, since about half of the energy our community uses is dedicated to water treatment costs, the less water we consume and send back for treatment, the more the city can save in energy. The less energy the city uses, the less greenhouse gases we emit. So water conservation and efficiency actions result in lower energy use and a smaller carbon footprint for this city. Further, Hamilton has been identified by the province as one of the "places to grow." Growth generally leads to more water consumption and pressures on our water treatment infrastructure. Actions that result in less demand on water resources extend the life of our existing infrastructure, and position Hamilton as a leader in water conservation and efficiency initiatives.

We pursue these leading edge initiatives for both environmental and economic reasons. It is estimated that the global market for water technologies, services and practices, is estimated to grow to an astonishing \$1 trillion over the next decade. Hamilton is well positioned to seize this opportunity and become a leader in water innovation, a true hub for technological advances in collaboration with local engineers, scientists and researchers at McMaster University. These advances will create local economic and employment opportunities in a 21st century global water industry.

But cities such as Hamilton cannot achieve global leadership status independently. They require the support and backing of our provincial government, which performs a critical role in the regulation and management of our water supply. Fortunately, an act making its way through the Ontario Legislature could, if passed, provide the impetus for cities such as ours to become global pioneers in water solutions. Such an act also challenges our federal government to become a partner in such pioneering advances.

Introduced on May 18, 2010, the Ontario Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act (Bill 72) is designed

to encourage the development of innovative water technology solutions and to improve the efficient use of water. Its goals are laudable and the direction it sets out is sound. There are, however, a few areas where it could be strengthened to advance a truly progressive water agenda.

First, the Act currently favours the development of hard technologies, such as water efficient cooling towers and advanced water treatment technologies. It is less explicit about supporting the type of natural or 'green' technologies that define sustainable communities. Supporting techniques such as rainwater harvesting, green roofs, permeable pavements, urban forests and wetlands would not only improve the livability of our cities, it would also conserve water, reduce water pollution and ease the pressure on aging infrastructure. At the same time, it would create opportunities for a myriad of new entrepreneurial businesses and services involved in the design, manufacture and installation of these innovative techniques.

Second, in order to transform the culture of water use in Ontario, all Ontarians need to be involved and working together to improve our collective water stewardship. The province should therefore work with cities such as Hamilton to institute a comprehensive public education campaign.

Lastly, the Act needs to ensure that clear targets for water conservation are established at provincial and municipal levels and establish a transparent process to report on progress in meeting these targets to all Ontarians.

The Regeneration Institute for the Great Lakes, a partnership between McMaster University and Seneca College, is committed to working with the city as it launches a revitalized future beginning with the restorative development of its water resources. But to take full advantage of our potential future, we need the support of our provincial government — including passing the best water conservation legislation possible.

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