

Submitted by Susan Robertson, Project Manager, Watershed Planning, Watershed Management, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.



## HUMBER RIVER BRIDGE INVENTORY

Thursday, January 22, 2009

2 p.m.

City of Toronto, Toronto Preservation Board

### REPORT

#### KEY ISSUE

To inventory all bridges in the Humber River Watershed in order to comprehensively assess the state of existing heritage bridges in accordance with Ontario Ministry of Culture (Draft) bridge guidelines, with the intent of designation for those worthy of heritage protection and conservation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

**THAT the Toronto Preservation Board recognizes the significance of a bridge inventory to the Humber River Watershed Canadian Heritage River System designation;**

**THAT the Toronto Preservation Board generally supports the work of the Humber Watershed Alliance in this initiative;**

**THAT the Toronto Preservation Board provide a letter of support to assist with a grant application on behalf of this project to the Humber Watershed Alliance;**

**AND FURTHER THAT the Toronto Preservation Board assist the Humber Watershed Alliance by providing resources and information relevant to the secondary data collection process however possible.**

#### BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2007, the Heritage Sub-Committee of the Humber Watershed Alliance put forth a proposal to initiate an inventory of all existing bridges on the Humber with the intent of identifying and assessing bridges worthy of heritage designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act, 2006*. Building upon previous examples of bridge inventories conducted in southern Ontario (in the Region of Waterloo and the Grand River Watershed) the Heritage Sub-Committee is working with a larger network of vested stakeholders to retain support and increase awareness to this initiative.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This project was initiated through a quantitative primary data collection process, which sought to identify potential bridge locations where a tributary of the Humber River is traversed by either a rail line or a roadway. Fisheries data, used for the completion of the Humber Watershed Plan, constituted the primary data content as a potential barrier to fish habitat is also defined by where a tributary that is either traversed by a road or a rail line. Based on the application of the fisheries data for bridge site assessment, over 1200 sites were identified as potential bridge locations. In order to assist with the delineation of potential bridge locations, two summer students were retained to conduct site assessments. At the end of the summer, almost all municipalities were assessed by the summer students, with the exception of Mississauga (constitutes less than 1% of watershed), Aurora (constitutes less than 1% of watershed), Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Toronto. The data collected is currently available on inventory sheets filled out and is being entered electronically into excel spreadsheet prepared to be used for further analysis. It is our intention to complete the site assessments for the above-referenced municipalities as well as to finalize all of the data entry into the excel spreadsheet with the assistance of a university intern, which TRCA staff has retained.

Through the site assessments completed, the summer students informed committee members that the majority of sites assessed were not bridge locations and were in fact culverts. Equipped with this information, TRCA staff and HSC members have prepared the secondary data process, which is more qualitative in nature.

The secondary data collection process aims to reduce margins of error identified in quantitative/primary data process by relaying in local knowledge of bridge locations, that may not be easily identified by locations where a watercourse is traversed by a rail line or a road way. This research takes more indirect routes to discovery but may in fact offer more evocative results. For example, many bridges along the Humber are located on old abandoned roadways or in some rare instances have been relocated from to private properties and are now used for personal and private recreation only. This sort of unique information cannot be fully identified without the assistance of local Heritage Advisory Committees or heritage groups. Therefore, HSC members are attending Heritage Advisory meetings at each municipality in the watershed to request their assistance in the secondary data collection stage. The Heritage Advisory Committees of Caledon, Vaughan and Brampton have all provided their unanimous support. Further, HSC members and TRCA staff have struck an inter-municipal and provincial working group with heritage advisors from across the watershed.

In combination, HSC members hope to have completed the secondary data stage by early 2009. Once complete, there another series of steps required to finalize this project within the desire timeframe - in time for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of Humber's Canadian Heritage Rivers Designation on September 2009.

## **CONCLUSION**

In order to ensure the continued protection of heritage features/structures in the Humber River Watershed and to celebrate and maintain the prestigious Canadian Heritage River Designation, the Heritage Sub-Committee must seek out and conduct activities that identify, promote and protect the Humber's heritage resources. This initiative achieves these goals. With the examples provided by the Region of Waterloo and the Grand River Conservation Authority, we are able to benefit from the experiences of others in this unique field of research and build upon an emerging

field of heritage river conservation. In conclusion, we hope that this project will increase the level of awareness to the significance of bridges to the development of our region and country, as well as to the need to protect heritage features on the landscape.

#### **DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE**

- Finalize primary data collection for the Town of Richmond Hill, the cities of Mississauga, Toronto and Vaughan
- Finalize primary data entry into excel template in order to facilitate quick data analysis
- Reach out the Heritage Advisory Committees and local heritage groups through meetings and presentations
- Initiate and complete secondary data process with the active participation of a larger group
- Compile primary and secondary data together and analysis to extent necessary
- Apply for Ontario Trillium Grant application to retain consultant and complete report for July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline
- Retain consultant upon receipt of successful grant application
- Transfer data to consultant
- Assist consultant in completion of report through stakeholder working group meetings
- Distribute report via internet and to vested stakeholders
- Create an on-line map of heritage bridges, to be made readily available to Environmental Assessment review and Planning and Development staff at the TRCA and regionally
- Complete and present report for 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the Canadian Heritage Rivers designation, to be held in September 26<sup>th</sup> 2009
- Rivers designation, to be held in September 26<sup>th</sup> 2009