

THE TAYLOR MASSEY PROJECT

Celebrating and Protecting Taylor Massey Creek

December 31, 2007

John Baird, Minister of the Environment, Canada
PDF via email

RE: **Suggestions to Expand the Use of the new Water Quality Index**

Dear Minister Baird,

The Taylor Massey Project welcomes the development of the new Water Quality Index as launched in the 2007 report on Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators. We hope that the Index matures as a meaningful tool, and we offer two suggestions for its improvement, overleaf, for the consideration of your ministry.

In addition, we are concerned about the lack of information on Taylor Massey Creek. As the Creek contributes 80% of the pollutants to the Don River under some flow conditions, it is both the largest source of pollution to the Toronto Area of Concern and it may be the most polluted watercourse in the country for which a Water Quality Index (WQI) has not been prepared.

As a result, we are currently trying to obtain a WQI for the Creek, or at least to obtain access to the data so that a WQI for the Creek can be calculated by Environment Canada.

Our initial request to Environment Canada indicated that they merely prepared the WQI based on data provided by Ontario's Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network (PWQMN), and suggested we contact them. Our request to the Network resulted in a response that "Taylor Massey Creek has not been monitored as part of the PWQMN", and a suggestion that we contact the City of Toronto and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA). We subsequently wrote the City and the TRCA (December 13, 2007), but the personnel to whom we wrote are on vacation until early 2008.

Having a WQI for Taylor Massey Creek is extremely important to our members and others interested in the health of the Don. It would also provide a significant benchmark that would allow everyone to gauge progress as the City prepares to spend tens of millions of dollars under the Wet Weather Flow Master Plan in order clean up the Creek.

We look forward to updating you, or soliciting your support if needed, on our efforts to obtain a WQI for the Creek.

Sincerely,

Andrew McCammon
Founding Chair

Suggestions to Expand the Use of the new Water Quality Index

The Taylor Massey Project, a community organization focused on the healthy of Toronto's Taylor Massey Creek, welcomes the inclusion of the new Water Quality Index (WQI) in the 2007 report of the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Index and urges that its use be expanded.

The recent report, for example, provides WQIs for the Credit (90.5), the Humber (60.2), Oakville Creek (56.4), and the Don (Ontario's dirtiest river at 38.4), but nothing for the Etobicoke-Mimico, Duffins, nor the Rouge. Residents of the GTA need a more comprehensive approach to gauge the relative health of the water flowing through their communities.

Similarly, the more heavily-polluted rivers should have multiple WQI reporting stations. For example, in addition to the overall rating of 90.2 provided for the Credit River, the study cited WQIs of 83.5 for the West Credit and 43.4 for Fletchers Creek, two of its tributaries. Unfortunately, there is no such analysis of the Don and its three main tributaries: the West Don, flowing from Vaughan; the East Don, flowing from Richmond Hill; and Taylor Massey Creek, flowing from Scarborough near Highway 401 and Pharmacy Avenue.

For the Don watershed, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority reported in 1992 that up to 80% of the pollutants to the Don system come from Taylor Massey Creek under some flow conditions. Based on the difference between the rating for Fletchers Creek and the overall rating for the Credit River, it is easy to wonder if the WQI for Taylor Massey Creek might be in the teens or low twenties. Regardless, Taylor Massey Creek is probably the dirtiest watercourse in Canada for which a separate WQI has not been provided.

Since 1992, of course, progress has been made. Taylor Massey Creek has become the number one priority under both the City of Toronto's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan and its Stormwater Outfall Monitoring Program. While these programs will bring significant reductions in pollution to Taylor Massey Creek in the future, knowing the current WQI for the Creek and seeing it improve as we spend millions cleaning it up would be both informative and useful.

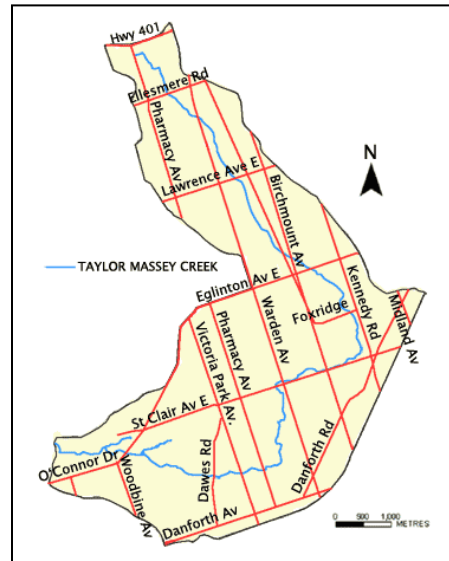
Our members celebrate and work to protect Taylor Massey Creek. We perform clean-ups, plant trees, provide submissions to local agencies, and sometimes just enjoy a nice walk. In addition to urging a general expansion of the WQI program in the future, we believe the provision of a WQI for Taylor Massey Creek at the earliest possible opportunity is fundamental to understanding its health and to sound local decision-making.

About The Taylor Massey Project

Established in 2003, the Taylor Massey Project celebrates and works to protect Taylor Massey Creek, the smallest of the three main tributaries to the Don River. The Creek flows for about 16 kilometers south from Highway 401 near Pharmacy Avenue, through the western edge of Scarborough, and then west through East York, joining the Don River near Don Mills Road and the Don Valley Parkway.

The TMP focuses on:

- Engaging local residents in clean-ups, plantings, and educational activities;
- Connecting the communities of the Creek with new trails and crossings; and,
- Developing a comprehensive watershed management approach for the Creek and its watershed, including both aquatic and terrestrial habitats.



Over the last five years, our partnerships with more than 20 sister organizations have allowed us to:

- Stage 58 events involving 3,114 participants;
- Plant 2,900 trees and shrubs, provided mostly by the City of Toronto; and,
- Pick up approximately 1,175 bags of litter.

In the same period, we have generated 15 submissions to local agencies.

Our extensive website, at www.TheTMP.org, includes background information about the project, detailed “Reach Fact Sheets” on each section of the watercourse and the Warden Hydro Corridor, 69 aerial photographs covering the creek and the corridor, and copies of submissions to local agencies.

cc: Environment Canada

Rimi Kalinauskas, Remedial Action Plan

Ontario

John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment, Ontario

Aaron Todd, Ontario Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network

Taylor Massey MPPs Duguid, Berardinetti, Prue, and Tabuns

City of Toronto

Lou Di Gironimo, Toronto Water

Mayor Miller and City Councillors Kelly, Thompson, Heaps, and Davis

Wet Weather Flow Implementation Advisory Committee

Task Force to Bring Back the Don

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

CEO Brian Denney and TRCA Board

Adele Freeman, Director of Watershed Management

Don Watershed Regeneration Council