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A Living Memorial: The History of Coronation Park

John Bacher

Situated like an oasis in the concrete corridors that characterizes much of Toronto's waterfront, is Metropolitan Toronto's Coronation Park, a 6 acre island of green between Strachan Avenue and HMCS York. Its remarkable stand of mature trees is perhaps the only such grove that has been planted by humanity in Toronto's two century old obsession of pushing the shoreline outwards into Lake Ontario. The park's achievement moreover is a notable testimony to the efforts of conservationists and war veterans who created and protected it.

The beauty of Coronation Park is a valuable cultural legacy of the idealism produced in the trauma of World War One and the great depression. A great expansion of parks facilities took place across Ontario in the years immediately following World War One and in the 1930s. Emerging from the bitter experience of a national depression was a realization of the need for adequate park facilities and recreation programs and for wider services to meet the varied demands of citizens at all age levels.

The immediate reason for the creation of land on which Coronation Park was built was to provide meaningful work for unemployed men. It was the first reclamation project that was not included in the original 1912 plan of the Toronto Harbour Commission, which designated large areas of future land for industrial and recreational development. In 1935, at the time of the undertaking of the land filling and seawall project, some 23 percent of the city's population was on relief; debentures had to be issued to pay the cost of the municipality's share. Alderman William Wadsworth (later Controller) argued that at a time when "private capital" was frozen, the park system provided "almost unlimited opportunity of thoughtful planning for possibilities." Childrens' need for

recreational opportunities were seen as being intensified during the depression. Recreational development was viewed as essential to avoid reaping "a harvest of ill-health, delinquency and wasted citizenship tomorrow."¹

Coronation Park's development was the result of successful fusion of a number of depression era ideals with the pragmatic concerns of harbour navigation. The Harbour Commission seized on the opportunity, provided by depression induced concerns for recreational improvements and employment, to have the city pay the cost of some of its navigational improvements.

In exchange for paying the cost of an improved shoreline for harbour purposes, the city gained six acres of parkland on land previously under Lake Ontario. The concept for what to do with sand sucked up from the Toronto Harbour was provided by the imaginative conservationist organization, Men of the Trees. They ensured that the park would be invested with such sacred values, that the most intense pressures for redevelopment for non-parkland use would be resisted.

Despite the growing awareness of the need for improved recreational facilities in the depression years, the initial reason for the construction of a seawall and reclamation of land was to improve Toronto's harbour facilities. It followed the pattern established by the 1912 plan. The Harbour Commission's Chief Engineer, E.L. Cousins throughout his long career sold the recreational benefits of navigational improvements to obtain public and city council support for Harbour Commission projects. He believed that parkland helped uninspiring dredging and landfilling schemes "go off with a bang."²

The basic plan for the future park was to extend the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) seawall eastward from Strachan Avenue, 1,000 feet to Bathurst Street. The six acres of land between the seawall and the existing shoreline line was filled in to create the basis for a future park. The estimated cost of this project was \$112,000.00. To decide whether this project was needed in the interests of improved navigation, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners and the City's Board of Control made an on site inspection on October 17, 1934. After a 15 minute survey of the existing seawall, Cousins described the recreational benefits of adding six acres to the city's park area. This aspect won support for the project by long-time reformer Controller Sam McBride, a former Mayor who believed this addition to the park's system would be worth \$90,000.00 to Toronto. Cousins further stressed to the Board that the project was needed because of the recent increased volume of harbour tonnage. To debate the issue, Mayor Stewart called together the Board of Control for an extraordinary meeting under a Maple tree. Controller William Robbins objected to the sudden move to the proposed location of the park, since he felt "no one ever comes here".³

At the impromptu gathering, J.E. Ganong, Harbour Commission Chairman, told the controllers that the new seawall would provide a longer regatta course for exhibition events and improve harbour conditions generally. E.L. Cousins was particularly sharp with Mayor Stewart, threatening an adjournment unless Controllers McBride and Robbins calmed their disagreements. Press accounts indicated the Board of Control was "in a tiff" as it debated the park proposal. Advocates of a municipal park clashed with supporters of an expanded parks system. The Board of Control approved the project only after Mayor Stewart was assured by Commissioner Ganong that



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the federal government would make its own investments in harbour improvements. The city paid for the seawall under an agreement that it would subsequently own the six acres of land created by the new harbour improvements and use the new land for park purposes. The Harbour Commissioners were able to persuade the federal government to allocate some \$766,000.00 for relief work projects in the Eastern Harbour Terminals.⁴

Construction of the seawall at a cost of \$112,000.00 was approved by Board of Control on December 10, 1934 and building began the following spring. The project provided work for six months.

Following the civic policy for relief work designed to spread equitably scarce jobs, men were employed in rotating shifts. Seventy-five percent of the men employed were to be registered with the Department of Public Welfare. Of these men supplied by the Welfare Department, each was to have at least 48 hours work. Preference was to be given to previous relief workers who were not on direct relief and seniority could govern their application. These preferred workers would be designated as class one employees. They would be given a minimum of one week's work.⁵

The design of Coronation Park was very much a product of its times. The memorial grove to Canadian war veterans reflected a stage in the evolution of park design away from the heavily ornamented gardens of the Victorian age towards the ecological ethic of contemporary park reformers, who advocated the establishment of urban wilderness areas. Park design has undergone many changes, from the luxuriant pastoral "pleasure ground" . . . by pioneering landscape architects such as Frederick Law Olmsted, to the uplifting but utilitarian

social reform minded and recreationally-focused playgrounds of the "progressive era." There has also been an urge in landscape design to recapture or celebrate the past. Named by historian Phoebe Cutler as the "Public Landscape of the New Deal," this urge promoted in park design the concept of "living pictures of the great past." Cutler shows how this desire for a symbolic landscape gave rise to such achievements as reforestation, shelter belts, the building of the Appalachian trail, restoration of Colonial Williamsburg and a "government rustic" style of parks facilities, featuring magnificent structures of hand hewn logs and stone.⁶

While the Canadian Government in the depression lacked the same conservationist direction as the U.S. New Deal, many projects were undertaken in the era that embodied the same desire to incorporate idealism into the landscape. In Ontario this was especially pronounced in the activities of the energetic T.B.

McQuesten, provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs who sponsored such projects as the rebuilding of Fort George, Hamilton's Royal Botanical Garden and the Niagara parkway. McQuesten was influenced by the sentiments of like-minded contractors in the Canadian Construction Association, an organization similar in spirit to its American equivalent, founded by Franklin Roosevelt. While not personally involved in the decision to build Coronation Park, McQuesten's activities illustrate how the spirit of the public architecture of the New Deal was shared in Canada. McQuesten, however, was involved with the arrangements for the 1939 visit of King George and Queen Elizabeth.⁷ And this event was connected with Coronation Park.

The shaping of parks facilities inevitably reflects the interests of constituencies in

the general public that nurture them. Victorian gardens were shaped by the horticultural associations of the time just as field naturalists have supported conservation of wilderness areas. Coronation Park's emergence as a memorial grove would be a tribute to the imagination of Toronto residents inspired by new visions of conservation and imaginative approaches to the commemoration of wartime service. Neither a Victorian ornamental garden nor a self-perpetuating tree grove favoured by today's ecologists, the park is a vivid Canadian example of the public landscape of the great depression that sought to be infused with idealism forged from memories of an era of past sacrifice.

Coronation Park was in part inspired by a new ecological ethic that slowly took root in Toronto amidst the despair of the depression. Founded in 1923, the Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN) broadened their activities in the depression years from the areas of public education and interest in nature study to the principle of conservation. Members joined a drive for better protection for "eagles, pelicans, herons and cormorants" and later for all hawks and owls. The TFN launched a successful campaign for the preservation of Point Pelée in its natural state as a wild life sanctuary. On June 7, 1930, the TFN opened a nature trail in Sunnybrook Park, believed to be the first such trail opened in urban Canada. A TFN member, L.T. Owens, served as a nature guide in Sunnybrook Park. He extended the trail, labelled trees and plants, conducted tours and established a field museum. In 1935, the TFN planted 14 trees in Sunnybrook Park in celebration of the Jubilee of King George V.⁸

The TFN's plantings in commemoration of the Jubilee of King George V helped inspire the much more ambitious plans of

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another local non-governmental environmental group, the Toronto Chapter of the International Men of the Trees. Its ideas for uniting the conservationist sentiments of army veterans and foresters were inspired by the ideals of its remarkable founder, Richard St. Barbe Baker.

Born in Britain, Richard St. Barbe Baker left school in 1909 for Saskatchewan. Living in a tent at Beaver Creek, he adopted a life style similar to Thoreau's in a conscious effort to live in harmony with nature. His contact with Indian tribes encouraged the development of a belief in the possibility of ordering society on the basis of cooperation with nature. Such bio-ethical principles were reinforced by his experience as an officer in World War One and shaped his subsequent career choice as a professional forester. Sent to Kenya by the Colonial Office, Barker developed among the Kikuyu tribe an army of tree planters and nurturers known as "Watu Wa mite" or "Men of the Trees." Barker established "Men of the Trees" chapters around the world. One of his most important achievements was to persuade U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt to establish the Civilian Conservation Corps. At his school of silviaculture at Punchnoll, Dorset, Barker lectured to army cadets and war veterans on the need for reforestation. Seeing this task in a similar spirit to William James "moral equivalent of war," Barker wrote that "world afforestation is necessary because it is the most constructive and peaceable enterprise in which nations could cooperate." "Each Country," Barker urged, as it was "able to spare men" would co-operate in sending "expeditionary forces" to take part in great reforestation projects such as the reclamation of the Sahara desert.⁹

Baker's dialogue with veterans and military officers brought some results. In Palestine, Field Marshall Viscount Allenby was a strong supporter and tree planting efforts of Men of the Trees there involved both Arabs and Jews. In California Baker's battles to save the redwoods were helped by the decision of the Patriots Women's Clubs of America to purchase 5,000 acres of forest as a National Tribute Grove to the Fallen.

Although Men of the Trees and Richard St. Barbe Baker wished to redirect the energies of humanity from war to conservation, their vision was not strictly pacifist. Men of the Trees was not part of the inter-war peace movement and Baker and many of its members loyally returned to the service of the Crown in World War Two. Both Baker and the rank and file were, however, firmly convinced that the root causes of war lay in the thoughtless destruction of nature.

Baker's vision of turning armies over to reforestation corps engaged in heroic tasks such as reclaiming the Sahara desert sought to eliminate the causes of war by reducing hardship, scarcity and poverty caused—he felt—by ecological degradation. In Kenya, Barker saw how his ritual, the "dance of the trees," generated "a power with joyfulness that soon brought warring tribes together to vie with each other in planting trees." His vision of a green peace was later vindicated when, during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the 1950s, it was discovered that one of the few districts not touched by the rebellion had been heavily influenced by Richard St. Barbe Baker's conservationist message. In 1952, the co-founder of Men of the Trees, Chief Josuah Njonjo, reported at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, that since the promise to Baker "to protect our native forest and to plant

native trees . . . we have plenty of timber, plenty of fuel, plenty of water, plenty of food,—and so no trouble."

The Men of the Trees ecological view of the roots of peace did not begin to permeate the global peace environment until after World War Two. It became most pronounced in India. Here it became integrated into the holistic philosophy of peace espoused by the Gandhian movement, manifested in the Chipko or "Tree hugging" movement, which emerged in response to the violent landslides with heavy loss of life caused by deforestation in the Himalayan mountains. Indian villagers defied armed guards by clinging to trees marked for cutting.¹⁰

The planting of trees at Coronation Park by the Toronto Chapter of Men of the Trees carried out the ideals of Richard St. Barbe Baker and continued his dialogue with war veterans. It realized the goal of planting trees ceremoniously and with respect as the basis of a communal ritual; at the time, it was believed the Coronation Park planting was the largest such ceremonial planting in Canada.

The idea for a commemorative coronation planting was developed jointly by F.E. Robson, President of the Toronto Chapter of Men of the Trees and Thomas Hobbs and Andrew Gillespie of the Toronto Ex-Servicemen's Coronation Committee. Thomas Hobbs was the most critical figure in the parks' development, proving to be an effective Toronto disciple of Baker's prophetic ecological message. Like his mentor, he was both an army veteran and conservationist, known for a "love of trees" and a dedication to "the needs of reforestation." This combination of experiences made the memorial grove possible, as Hobbs was both an active member of Men of the Trees and of a

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number of veterans organizations, becoming president of the Ontario Civil Service Veterans' Association. (Hobbs died in 1940, on overseas military service. Two years after his death, a memorial cairn to Hobbs was erected in Coronation Park, honouring him for his critical role in its creations.¹¹)

After approval of the general concept by city council, a Coronation Park Advisory Committee was established to supervise details of the plantings. In addition to Hobbs and Gillespie, committee members included G.A. Lascelles of the Civic War Veteran's Association, J. Harvey Lynes of the Sir Arthur Pearson Club and A.J. Bushell of the Third Battalion. The committee decided on the design of the grove by grouping trees to represent the several parts of the British Empire in a circle around the Royal Oak, planted in commemoration of King George VI. In this imperial ring were planted trees representing the British Isles, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and the Crown Colonies. Around the Empire circle were planted separate groves representing the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian divisions, Siberian troops and Corps Troops with two plantings in the east and west areas. Each grove contained trees representing units of the various divisions. In the Corps Troops East areas were included trees commemorating Canadian nursing sisters and veterans of the Boer War, the 1885 rebellion and the Fenian Raids of 1866. While the trees of the empire circle were oaks, those planted in commemoration of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces in World War One were all maples. Some 144 trees were donated for the planting by the Toronto Chapter of Men of the Trees. The grove was developed in such a way so that it was estimated by tree experts to last without major replantings for 200 to 250 years.¹²

The tree planting took place on May 12, 1937, Coronation Day, a public holiday in Toronto. While veterans planted the trees representing various armed forces units, Justice John A. Hope planted the Royal Oak. This was done with a silver shovel which Men of the Trees presented to the City of Toronto during the ceremony. A.L. Barnes of The Men of the Trees on this day indicated that "Trees are the most interesting things on earth. Some were 2,000 years old when Christ was on earth." To a group of school children, he explained that the oak was chosen to represent King George VI since its deep roots represented the "depth of the English tradition, English Kings having been crowned in the same way 1,000 years ago as today."¹³

After the Coronation day planting, the Coronation Park Advisory Committee devised a plan whereby each tree would be properly and permanently identified with each battalion or unit by a granite stone, set in the ground close to each tree, on which would be placed a brass plate with the unit named inscribed on it. The costs were borne by veterans and Men of the Trees.¹⁴ The unveiling of the commemorative plaques was the scene of an impressive ceremony that took place on August 1, 1938. This ceremony was part of a massive reunion of veterans, which saw an estimated 60,000 parade and 250,000 participate in a commemorative service over the three days of the civic holiday weekend. Sir William Mulock unveiled the plaque marking the Royal Oak. Plaques on all the other trees were unveiled by veterans representing their units simultaneously as Sir William Mulock, former Chief Justice of Ontario and currently Chancellor of the University of Toronto, gave the signal. The members of the assembly pledged themselves to the service of the nation

and the maintenance of democracy. Sir William said the ceremony would set an example to those who preached the extremist doctrines of right and left, of Communism and dictatorship. Mulock concluded that such doctrines would not find a foothold in Canada while the spirit of the Canadian Corps lived, and that would last as long as Canada remained a nation. Archdeacon F.G. Scott of Quebec, padre of the troops overseas, pronounced a blessing and spoke briefly on how the young trees were a fitting symbol of the ideals of the Corps since both "reached upward toward heaven."¹⁵

Shortly after the unveiling ceremony, veterans and Men of the Trees developed plans for another commemorative planting, this time as part of the Royal visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. This ceremony involved planting a tree for each Public and Separate School in the city. The trees formed an avenue, called the "Royal Avenue of Remembrance." The avenue curved southwest from Lakeshore Boulevard near the Princes' Gates. One girl and boy were selected as a representative of their school, and they were assisted by a veteran at each tree. Considerable effort was made to have the same men present who earlier planted their unit trees at the morning of their majesties' coronation. To facilitate the planting of 123 hard maples by the school children, 42 elm trees were removed. These were replanted to line the roadway from Fleet Street to Old Fort York gate, a line to parallel the railway to the Military Cemetery, and to complete street planting to the Strachan Avenue bridge. Nickle plated spades were purchased for the use of the school children in the planting of the trees; they were retained by the various schools as souvenirs of the occasion.¹⁶

The tree planting for the Royal visit took place on May 22, 1939, with the Salvation Army band performing 15 minutes before and after the ceremony. At the approach of the Royal car, the ex-servicemen held the tree. As the car moved opposite the tree directly to the west of them the school children dropped earth into holes as the motorcade passed by.¹⁷

Coronation Park's status as a sacred ground, dedicated to the memory of Canadian veterans and the ideals of conservation and democracy, did not in itself provide sufficient protection from development forces altering the Toronto waterfront. The romantic image of a heroic past, which provided a consensus for public landscapes in the New Deal, did not provide a similar lock on the minds of the post-war generation. On two occasions the memorial grove was slated for destruction. The first threat came as part of a scheme to relocate Fort York to facilitate the routing of the Gardiner expressway and was supported by both the first Metropolitan Toronto Chairman, Frederick Gardiner and Premier Leslie Frost. The second came from a proposed CNE master plan endorsed by two Metropolitan government department heads, Parks Commissioner Tommy Thompson and Planning Commissioner, Wojcek Wronski. This scheme have turned the memorial grove into a new location for the CNE amusement park. In both instances, plans for the destruction of the grove were stopped by citizen groups. The relocation of Fort York was primarily stopped by historical societies while the CNE expansion was blocked by outraged veterans who had early been involved in the park's development.

Fred Gardiner was determined to proceed with the relocation of Fort York for the expressway that bears his name. Both

Gardiner and Frost dismissed arguments about sacrilege to a sacred ground on the basis that Fort York had already been desecrated by the surrounding railyards and lakeshore expansion. Originally, plans for the Gardiner Expressway called for its south-west corner and its cemetery to be taken, necessitating a relocation of the whole complex to retain the integrity of this remainder of Toronto's past. The proposed routing of the Gardiner resulted in protests from the Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire, the Women's Canadian Historical Society, the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada and the Toronto Chapter of the National Council of Women. In response to their concerns, George Grant, Road Commissioner of Metropolitan Toronto, drew up an alternative expressway route which bypassed the 24 acre Fort York and cemetery grounds.¹⁸

Despite Grant's compromise route that satisfied historic preservationists, Gardiner would not budge from his support of the original relocation plan. While avoiding what the Toronto Star called "his usual fiery dialogue" while "negotiating with the historians," the Metropolitan Chairman maintained that moving Fort York would increase public access and provide a "source of inspiration to thousands who drive past there every day."

Gardiner's tactful manner of presentation did not sooth the outraged historians. Gordon Clary, President of the York Pioneers and Chairman of a coalition of groups formed to stop the relocation, maintained that one did not "just move away a historic site." Once inside the Fort's palisades he argued, visitors were shielded from the sight of surrounding rail yards. A sample of the 50,000 annual visitors found an overwhelming desire for the original location

to be maintained. Clary, adopting a more fiery style than Gardiner ever used on his opponents, charged the relocation was "part of a stupendous and lucrative real estate transactions." He had obtained evidence of this pending speculative bonanza "from several sources" and believed that where "there's smoke there's usually fire." Opposition persuaded Gardiner to have a last minute change of heart, despite Frost's appeal to preservationists to support the relocation in an open letter to the Toronto and Metropolitan Toronto Councils. Gardiner's sudden conversion saved the memorial grove from the proposed Fort York relocation.¹⁹

The visions of a beautiful commemorative park held initially by the Men of the Trees and veterans were subsequently preserved only after considerable controversy concerning the proposal to redevelop Coronation Park as an amusement area. A proposed master plan for the CNE released in 1971 prepared by the Metropolitan Toronto Planning and Parks departments, suggested the relocation of the exhibition midway to Coronation Park, which it admitted would displace "the existing public open space in that location". It was proposed that a new park be reclaimed from Lake Ontario with a major promenade extending from the new Midway to Ontario Place. New trees would have been planted along this promenade, with the original plaques honouring the veterans retained. The destruction of the park was justified on the supposition that "the existing trees will die in a few years having exhausted their normal life span".²⁰ In a book on the history of the CNE, author James Lorimer complained that the proposed Master Plan would turn the area into "carefully controlled spaces" with "vast space-age stretches of concrete."²¹

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After the Master Plan received endorsement in principle by the Canadian National Exhibition Association and "enthusiastic support" from the Metropolitan Toronto Board of Trade, it was reviewed by the Metropolitan Toronto Council Parks and Recreation Committee. Deputations in favour of the preservation of Coronation Park were heard from veteran and labour organizations. The Originals' Club expressed their "unalterable opposition" to the conversion of any part of the park away from the memorial purposes for which it was consecrated. They viewed Coronation park as sacred to "The memories of the hundreds of servicemen who laid down their lives in World War I to ensure a better world and Canada for we who remain, our descendants and their families." The War Pensioners of Canada complained that:

Veterans' organizations throughout Metropolitan Toronto are particularly perturbed, since it was through their efforts that this land became a park commemorating the regiments which fought in Canada's wars. They have assisted in perpetuating the beauty and serenity of this lakeside area, not only as a fitting tribute to men who sacrificed so much for Canada, but also as a quiet haven from the hustle and bustle of downtown Toronto, to be enjoyed by all citizens of the metropolitan district.²²

The Metropolitan Toronto Labour Council protested against the deprivation "of much needed parkland." Surprisingly, no objection to the removal of the grove came from the Toronto Historical Board. While it was "reluctant to lose any grassed and treed area" and recognized that there were "a number of people who have emotional ties to the area, particularly those who were personally involved

with its establishment, "the board endorsed the Master Plan's call for the location of the CNE midway on the memorial grove. The proposed corridor to Ontario to Ontario Place would satisfy its requirement for "a new and satisfactory memorial area." Building such a new facility would provide an opportunity to create "a clear and prominent explanation" of the significance of the trees and plaques, since it was unable "to discover anyone visiting the present area" who understood the purpose of the memorial. The grave concerns regarding the future of Coronation Park, historic buildings at the CNE and parkland at the western edge of Exhibition Park, led Metropolitan Toronto Council to delay a decision on the Master Plan until input had been received by the City of Toronto.²³

In reviewing the proposed Master Plan, the City of Toronto Planning Board depicted Coronation Park as one of the most valuable assets of the Exhibition grounds. It suggested an extension southward by land reclamation from Lake Ontario. The Toronto Planning Board praised Coronation Park as "an exceptionally quiet, well treed waterfront park" and deplored the proposed sacrifices of "some of the best sections of Exhibition Park for alternate uses." Rather than being "used as an amusement area" the city planners felt Coronation Park should be "retained in its park state." The report predicted that with heavier use of Exhibition Park there would be a greater "need for places to relax." It found that "Coronation Park with its mature cover of trees, its summertime view through boats at anchor to the lake and through greenery to Exhibition park in the distance could not be duplicated within this generation." In contrast to the "bleak environment" envisaged in the proposed master plan, the city planners urged the incorporation

of more "natural park elements" throughout the CNE grounds. Parking would be banned from open space adjacent to the commemorative grove, and new elements such as hills, toboggan runs, lagoons and water inlets would be introduced. While the Metropolitan Planning Department in response, dismissed the city's concerns as small minded parochialism, it did not specifically challenge any of their arguments regarding the preservation of Coronation Park.²⁴

After receiving input from veterans and the City Planning staff, Metro Council in 1972 eliminated the proposal for the relocation of the Midway to Coronation Park from the CNE master plan. The Council's Parks and Recreation Committee noted the relocation's "conflict with the historical and commemorative past."²⁵

Coronation Park is still maintained as a memorial to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Only a few of the original trees have died in the Park's half century. They have been replaced with large young trees.²⁶

Future planned projects tend not to threaten Coronation Park. Instead, they offer the promise of extending this forested oasis across all of a large barren Toronto waterfront. This design would both integrate Toronto's urban communities better with their lakeshore parks, and serve to create a continuous greenbelt area linking the parklands of the Don and Humber Valleys, High Park and the CNE. Proposals include severing ramps and tunnelling portions of the Gardiner expressway, removing freight yards from the Union Station facility, decking over the Sunnyside rail corridor, creating new landfill waterfront parks and new penetrations of Lake Ontario into the city. The influential

report on Federal Land Management in the Toronto Region, prepared by former City of Toronto Planning Commissioner Stephen McLaughlin, has called for an integration of the “fragmentation of unrelated parts” and advocates strengthening the “most tenuous and constricted connections” between Ontario Place, Exhibition Place, Fort York and Coronation Park. The report envisages the extension of Coronation Park to be part “of a continuous uninterrupted waterfront open space system from Union Station to Ontario Place.” Water could become a significant form of public transportation with water taxis able to take persons from “the CN Tower or Skydome, to the Island airport, Ontario Place or East Bayfront.” As well the ravine system, now integrated to the waterfront would provide an extraordinary interconnected system of public open space protecting the environment.²⁷

The prospects of success of bold landscaping proposals have been enhanced by McLaughlin's role as a consultant to the federal commission on the future of the waterfront chaired by David Crombie. Coronation Park as a jewel of an emerald necklace of parks stretching in a green course to all the corners of Metropolitan Toronto will in the future be a even more fitting memorial to the veterans and visionary pioneer ecologists of Men of the Trees who created it over 50 years ago. In a touch of irony, the linkage of disparate islands of green of CNE parkland, Coronation Park and Fort York, may be achieved by burying the expressway named after the Metropolitan Chairman who proposed that the memorial grove be sacrificed to facilitate a super-highway named in his honour.

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