

Mayor Matt Brown,

I'm not going to get into all the details of why a man-made reservoir is another contributor to poor river and ecosystem health, as I believe the many local and international studies have already proven that they do cause further harm ecosystems, but I am going to propose a plan that should satisfy all parties involved. I canoe and kayak the Thames River from April to December. Day trips are currently alright, but access to the river is difficult and could be improved with additional parking near the river. Multi-day trips are currently difficult because of the lack of campsites.

First, decommission the Springbank Dam, permanently. The ecosystem and water quality will continue to benefit from the lack of a reservoir, along with the many towns, farms and First Nations communities downstream of the dam's former location.

Second, get the UTRCA, the LTRCA, the City of London and First Nations communities together to create a river route system that can be enjoyed by EVERYONE, I think that canoeing/kayaking on a natural flowing Thames River can be a much bigger tourist draw than a stagnant reservoir. However, some infrastructure should be put in place such as parking lots closer to the river, signage for access points, a website and map with paddling times, access points and recommended river flow rates for each section of the river. (The UTRCA already has recommended paddling river flow rates on their interactive live website: <http://thamesriver.on.ca/water-management/thames-river-levels/paddling-flows-start-page/paddling-flows/>)

Third, develop a river access campsite list to allow for multi-day trips. Currently on the north Thames River, there are two campgrounds with river access (a private campground on Valleyview Rd, just north of Thorndale Rd & Fanshawe C.A.) The south branch has the scouts Canada property near Dorchester that could be utilized for river access campsites. The main branch going past Komoka P.P. has river access that could also be utilized for renting out or free over night camping at river access campsites. Private property owners with well suited properties for camping could also be included for overnight campsite locations as well. All of these suggested areas are already positioned well for multi-day trips and although they aren't setup for river side campsites yet, if the COL, UTRCA and LTRCA build the infrastructure (parking signage, website, route map) I imagine it wouldn't take very much to convince these river access areas to get on board and offer reasonably priced campsites. Just imagine the possibilities for school groups and scout groups... Day trips and weekend adventures down the Thames River in OUR area, would create longterm canoe and kayak opportunities for thousands of school children and scout groups possible because there would not be the travel times involved like there are in going to a river canoe route up north. The numbers of children doing river trips with this type of system, would likely surpass the numbers the LCC brings in for their reservoir paddling.

Take for example the Saugeen River, in Bruce County. The Saugeen River has parking and access point signs to the river along a stretch of the Saugeen River from Hanover to Lake Huron. They also have website and map laying out all this information to draw-in tourists to their area. The Saugeen River area has a fraction of the population base that London has and yet this river route system supports several outfitters that rent canoes and kayaks and offer shuttle services. The Saugeen River has several river access campgrounds which have campsites available only to paddlers, which allows for legal overnight camping on multi-day trips.

I understand that the Rowing Club has had to move to Fanshawe Reservoir and I believe that they are already well suited for rowing at that location, as Rowing Canada and UWO Rowing Club already have rowing lanes and buildings to suit the needs of the London Rowing Club.

Sure canoeing and paddling a river does not always come with perfect water level conditions everyday of the year, but if we continue to have things such as reservoirs harm the health of our ecosystem, well without a healthy ecosystem to enjoy, what's the point in getting outside at all.

Best regards,
Chris Johnston
Reilly Walk, London Ontario