

Dear Civic Works Committee:

Congratulations on the publication of your Environmental Assessment for the first stage of the One River Project. It contains a wealth of useful information about the Thames River system and I was delighted to see that Option 2 was chosen as the most practical and environmentally friendly option.

Given that the Springbank Dam structure is already in place, however, it seems a waste not to put this unique (and expensive) structure to some alternative use. The Dam commands one of the best views of the entire river and sits at a convergence point of several walking paths, as well as having road access and limited parking. As a frequent user of Springbank Park in both winter and summer, I can testify that the stretch of pathway around the dam is high traffic in the summer--due in part, to its proximity to the children's playground. In the interest of fulfilling the Committee's mandate to improve the aesthetic and communitarian aspects of the river system, I would recommend repurposing the Dam as a viewing platform with daytime access. The Report makes clear that simple alterations to the Dam (e.g. resurfacing) would not require special ministerial permits. The addition of gates and barriers for public safety on a viewing platform would come at comparatively little cost and make the Dam a focal point for local and tourist uses. Compare, for example, a redesigned Springbank Dam to the publicly accessible Orr Dam in Stratford, which functions as a link between the north and south sides of Stratford's river system and sits adjacent to the Information Centre.

If maintenance costs for such a proposal are daunting, then perhaps the city could also licence food or coffee trucks in the summer months in the paved areas adjacent to the Dam. This would lead to even greater use of the Dam area, especially given the presence of families in the playground. However, it would also require that garbage be gathered and cleared daily before nightfall.

I look forward to hearing about Stage 2 of your the One River project.

Sincerely,

Ian Rae  
Associate Professor  
King's University College at Western University