

# Peterborough Examiner (On)

## Coup for Trent U.

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At a time when science and celebrity often seem to be equally important in the environmental movement, Trent University has scored big on both sides of the equation.

As announced yesterday, Trent will be hosting approximately 500 scientists for five days in May when the annual International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) conference drops in on Peterborough.

The conference's rock star moment will be supplied by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who will speak at a public event at the Memorial Centre on May 22.

In fact, Kennedy brings much more credibility than Bono or Bruce Springsteen but with just as much name recognition: leading light of his generation of the famous Kennedy clan, award-winning environmental activist and lawyer, catalyst of the international Waterkeeper movement.

Robert F. Jr. might not be bigger than the Great Lakes, but he's a bigger draw. Getting him here as part of the IAGLR conference is a coup for Trent, and for Peterborough.

So is the conference. It will add to Trent's profile as a leading water quality research centre and pull some part of the international science spotlight here.

As with any large-scale influx of conference-goers - be they Rotarians or water researchers - it will also be good for the local economy. Organizers estimate a \$400,000 inflow of other people's disposable income.

Not so sexy, but more significant, is the subject of the conference: the Great Lakes and their future. Most of us learned the geographic facts in elementary school, but they've either been forgotten or ignored in the way we tend to overlook the wonders at our doorstep.

A primer: the five lakes contain 20 per cent of all the fresh surface water on Earth and 95 per cent of North America's available drinking water.

Forty million people live in the Great Lakes Basin. If they formed a country it would be the world's second largest economy.

The issues conference scientists will explore touch on most aspects of our lives: pollution of all sorts, hydro-electric generation, water levels and future supply, waterfowl routes, commercial use of water and transfers between lakes, fish populations, the effects of invasive species, tourism.

The IAGLR has existed for 55 years and has held annual conferences since 1968 at some of the biggest,

best-known U.S. schools - most recently Penn State and the University of Michigan.

Trent's selection as host is good for the university's reputation and Peterborough's profile. And who knows, maybe Robert F. Jr. will buy a cottage in the Kawarthas.

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