

Walkerton, Water, Ontario:

A Role for Impact Assessment?

Ontario Association for
Impact Assessment

Walkerton Inquiry, Toronto Town Hall

October 29, 2001

Who We Are

- Ontario Association for Impact Assessment (OAIA)
- An Affiliate of International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)
- Ontario membership >100
- Ontario friends and associates, >400

What is Impact Assessment (IA)?

- *Impact assessment, simply defined, is the process of identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed action.*

What We Do

- Professional practitioners of Impact Assessment (ecologists, planners, technical and legal experts...)
- In various communities and settings
 - Agencies and regulators
 - Business community and consultants
 - NGOs and interested public(s)
 - Academics and others

Where It All Began

- ‘Silent Spring’
- US Congress: NEPA, 1969
- As ‘scientific’ exercise
 - For academics and technical experts
 - Focusing on physical and biological features
- Largely value and people-free
- Project-specific in scale

Where Are We Now – I?

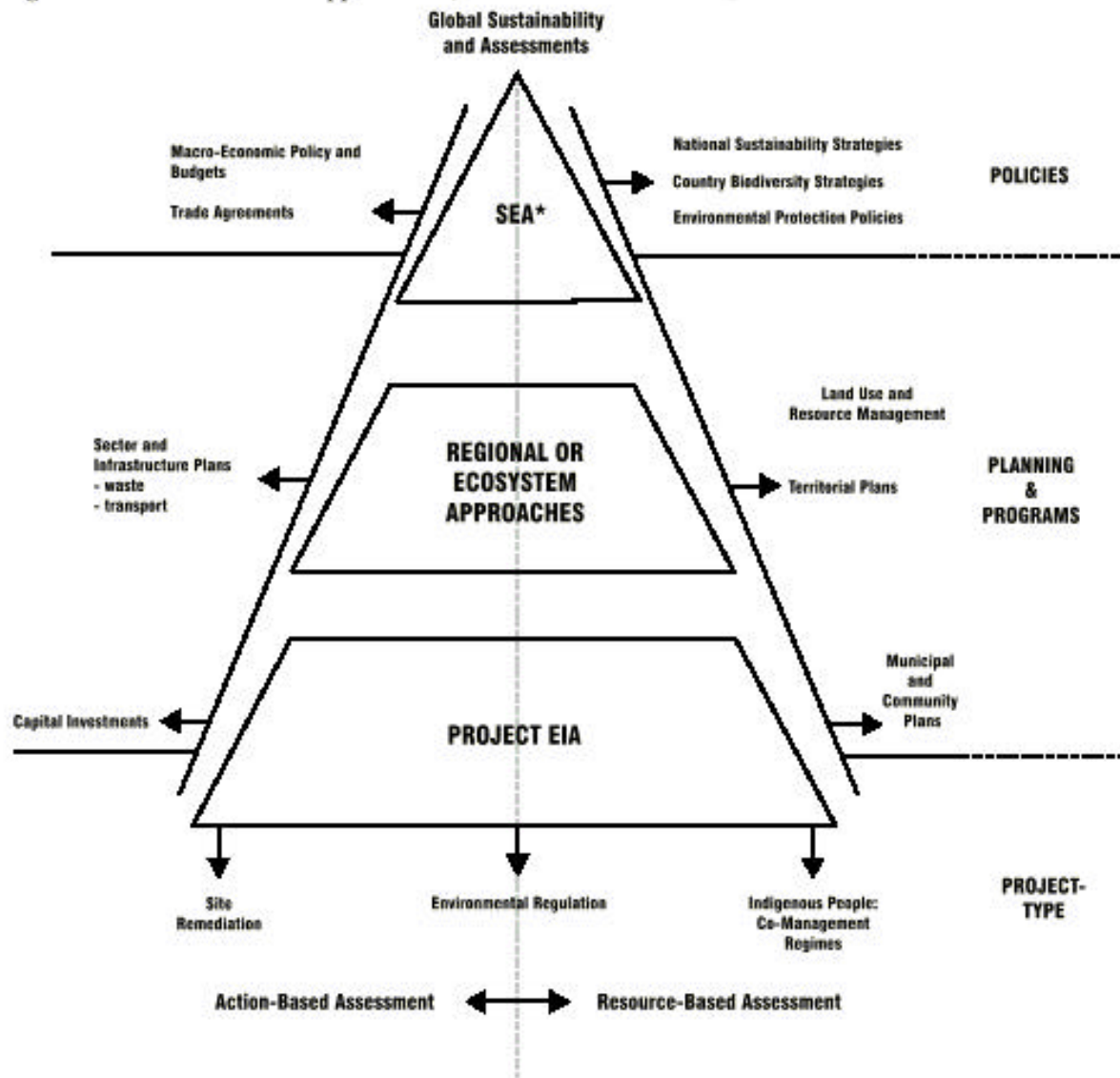
- IA is a **legal process**
 - Regulated in 100's of jurisdictions around the planet
- IA is a **technical discipline**
 - Computer models and
 - Checklists and maps and ...
 - Experts and jargon
- IA is a **way of thinking**
 - Consultative
 - Multi- and inter-disciplinary
 - At various scales and levels
 - In space and time
 - Towards sustainability

Lessons from Impact Assessment

– I

- Project-level IA is not enough
 - To deal with impacts at other levels (cumulative; regional)
- Also need
 - different scale(s)
 - different timeframe(s)
 - to think differently (e.g. strategic)

Where Are We Now - II?



* SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment

Lessons from Impact Assessment - II

- Think *explicitly*
 - at different scales and timeframes
 - across and between disciplines
- Ask the people concerned
- Listen to what they are saying
- Act, cooperatively and in good faith, to
- Find *solutions*, mutually agreeable

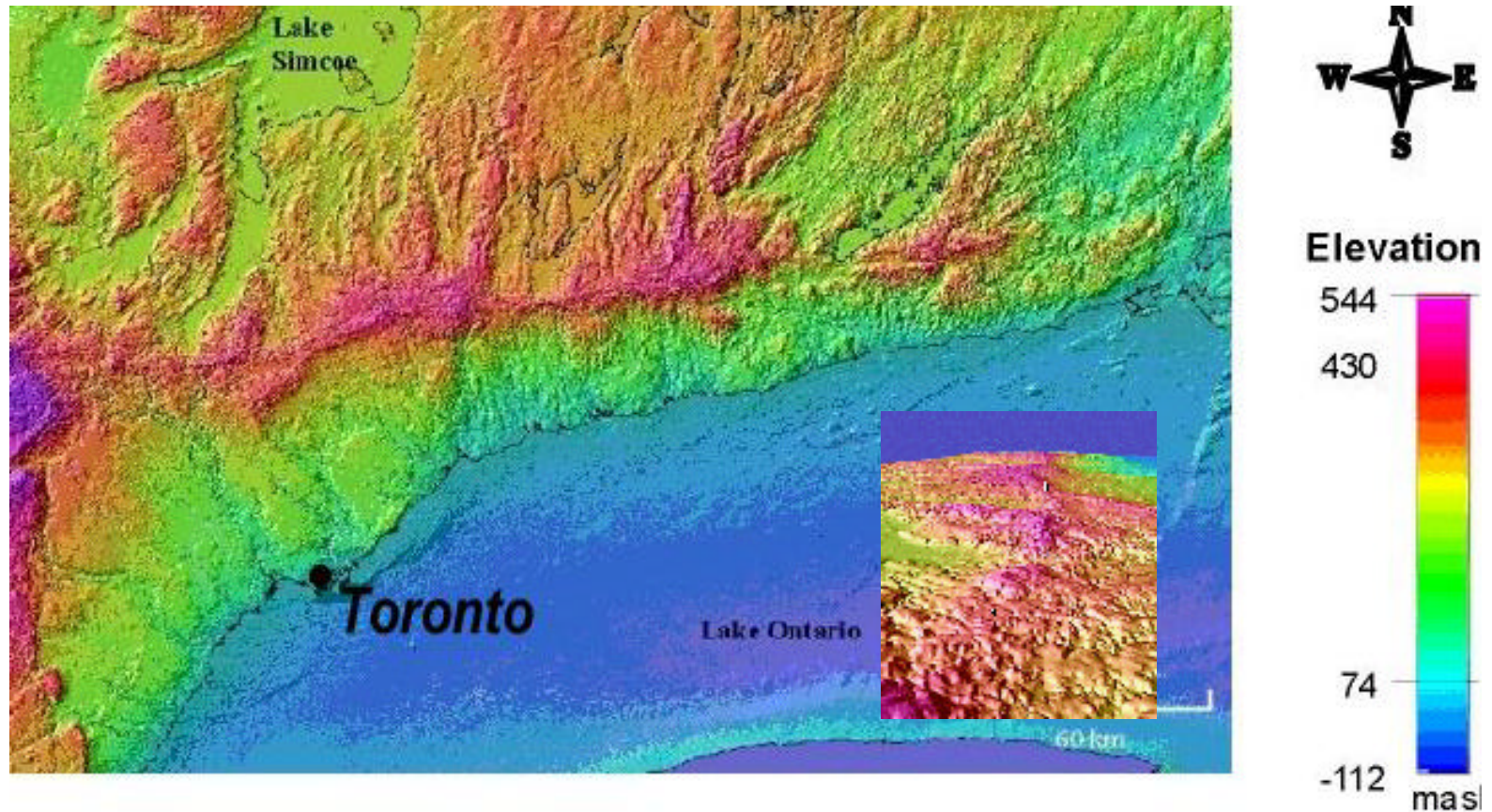
Thinking Differently: We are Already Doing it -- Toronto Waterfront



Lessons from Impact Assessment – III

- Local and even watershed ‘levels’ are important
 - but *not sufficient*
- Timeframes need to consider both long term
 - as well as short term
- Ecosystem management needs to be at level of the concern
 - e.g., Regional issues need regional solutions
- ***Integration*** of various IA levels into decision-making is indicated, as appropriate

Thinking Differently -- Oak Ridges Moraine



Thinking Differently: We need to Do More of it

- Beyond the single project
 - At various scales
 - On longer timeframes
- In *integrated* way, including social and policy issues
- Towards sustainability

Thinking Differently – Niagara Escarpment



Recommendations from – and for – Impact Assessment

- Think Differently, Consult Widely
- Ground decisions in values and visions, e.g sustainability
- Be not overwhelmed by short term legal and technical considerations
- Spread this word
 - By example
 - By teaching and training

In Summary...

- Impact Assessment has a 30+ year history
- As a discipline, we have learned a lot
 - Beyond the legal and regulatory
 - Beyond the technical
- Project-level IA is not enough
- A Different Way of Thinking is needed
- Towards a sustainable future