

# Take a *virtual* tour of Ontario's waterways

Three years ago while enjoying an afternoon on the water, couple Richard and Dale Torch of Tweed, Ontario decided to record videos of the lake and beautiful properties they passed by as they cruised along.

BY: ALEX KARN

"Whenever anyone visits they always enjoy a boat ride," Torch said. "Why don't we start filming these lakes and give them copies so that they can enjoy them to?"

Her husband Richard agreed, and they got started on their new hobby with the help of their adult son, Dana, who had been trained as a professional cameraman. The family found that they enjoyed filming the local lakes so much that they quickly progressed to capturing footage of waterways farther away.

When they explained their idea of filming

Ontario's cottage shorelines, many friends encouraged them to expand their horizons and make their waterway film clips available to the general public. Now their filming included waterways from Parry Sound and the Muskokas, Lindsay and Peterborough in the Kawarthas and eastward over to the Rideau Canal System in the Kingston, Perth, Smith Falls areas.

The idea of creating a website was discussed and everyone agreed that this would allow viewers to enjoy watching videos of Ontario's lakes, in addition to assisting prospective cottage buyers in selecting desirable waterways and in choosing the best agents



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The thing I heard most often was that people want to know what the lakes look like before they start looking at cottages there,

*explains Richard*



to work with. The concept of using such a website as a vehicle for real estate advertising was especially compelling to Richard who had a professional background in management consulting. He conducted research centered in the Toronto and outlying GTA areas and discovered that there was a great demand for cottage buyers wanting to preview the lakes and waterways before actually going and visiting these vacation areas.

"The thing I heard most often was that people want to know what the lakes look like before they start looking at cottages there," explains Richard. From that need, came the decision to launch [www.ecottagefilms.com](http://www.ecottagefilms.com). "Our biggest mandate was to provide a place for people to come and view waterways and waterfront communities, promote tourism and create a site that is easy to use, 100 percent free for visitors and free of those annoying pop down advertisements used by so many other websites," he adds.

Since that first recording in 2012, the Torch family have filmed more than 3,000 hours of footage of more than 350 lakes across Ontario. "Some of the lakes we have visited are just magnificent," Richard says. "You end up going into areas you didn't even know existed and now through our website people can see them from home!"

They have expanded their staff to seven people in order to have two crews filming at any time throughout the summer months. This year they will be focusing on Lake Ontario, the Kawarthas, the Ottawa area and other spots they missed during the last filming. "Our site is currently getting 300 to 600 views every day and growing quickly," notes Richard. "We're starting to attract more attention from real estate agents and companies. We sell them ads which run before the videos of specific waterways and they are able

to link to their websites and contact information."

"This is the future of waterfront real estate advertising. Our goal is to become a permanent advertising tool for real estate agents to show the beauty of their waterfront property listings and the lakes they are situated on," explains Richard. "The biggest challenge of this project has been that it is a new idea. People don't realize that buyers want to see the lake area. When you're buying a property, you're really buying the whole area. Our website is great for people who can't see the area because they're too far away, or those who are shopping for a cottage in the winter when it is difficult to envision what the area looks like in the summer months."

*To learn more or view your favourite waterway, visit [www.ecottagefilms.com](http://www.ecottagefilms.com) or email [info@ecottagefilms.com](mailto:info@ecottagefilms.com)*



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