

Cheryl Doran - Prepared Notes, February 17, 2009

Good morning, Mayor O'Brien and Councillors. My name is Cheryl Doran and I am Chair of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital.

I'd like to start by thanking and congratulating Councillors Chiarelli and Cullen on their continued support for community organizations and their respect for your own Public Participation Policy.

Reading from the Public Participation Policy it states: "*The city of Ottawa is committed to informing and actively involving citizens, community organizations and Advisory Committees on issues that affect them, to the greatest extent possible*".

The Policy also states as one of its key principles: "*Building and maintaining strong, positive and cooperative relationships between the City and the community to increase the potential for engagement and result in improved decision-making*".

These are two excellent statements of public policy and public engagement.

We are here today to hear this motion of Councillors Chiarelli and Cullen. This is a cross road for the city. The fundamental issue is one of fostering continued public engagement or obliterate it? I use the word obliterate because, if city staff demand costs, then the effect is to bankrupt any group for taking a position on a matter. Lose once and the group is finished for life – that is not public engagement.

As you can see from our Annual Report, the success of our organization is entirely a result of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly with citizens, advisory committees and various community groups to protect and preserve green spaces and significant areas within the national capital region. We provide input into reviewing the city of Ottawa's Official Plan, various OP amendments and policy changes whenever possible. This is community engagement, not a vexatious activity against the City.

I simply ask you to support this motion; a motion that would encourage, not discourage future Public Participation in Ottawa's future.

Any other action, would be sending a very clear and chilling message – if you challenge our decisions in court we may go after your community group for costs.

That is not what this council is about. Please support this motion.