

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of Committee. My name is Erwin Dreessen. I am a co-founder of the Greenspace Alliance and was its Chair for 2 ½ years. What I really want to say is that the City should not try to punish individuals or community groups when they pursue legitimate means of review of Council decisions.

You'll hear from our current Chair in a moment. I thought I'd use my 5 minutes to provide you with some highlights of what the Alliance has done over the years with respect to municipal government.

That is to say, I leave aside all work that relates to the National Capital Commission, the Quebec side of the capital area, or provincial and other federal levels of government. Everything I say is drawn from the 10 Annual reports which are available on our web site. You have the latest Annual Report in your hands.

Many of our Annual Reports begin with the phrase: "The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital is the leading advocate of greenspace preservation and expansion in the National Capital region." How do we earn that name?

We cut our teeth back in 1998-99, when the old City of Ottawa was working on its Natural and Open Spaces Study (NOSS). Our contribution to that study set the tone – to this day – for our approach to issues: we sit down, study the document, and make reasoned, evidence-based comment.

By 2000 we were involved, not only in the implementation of the NOSS, but in over a dozen greenspace issues – in old Ottawa, Gloucester, Nepean, the Regional level of government and – remember that one? – the Ottawa Transition Board. In the November 2000 election, we were the lead organizer of a Mayoralty Candidates debate – it was the best-attended event of the campaign.

That year, too, the seed was planted with then-Minister John Manley for a Poets' Pathway between Beechwood Cemetery, the Southern Corridor and Britannia Park. You recently amended the Official Plan and Zoning By-law to ensure protection of the view of Parliament Hill from Poet's Hill at Beechwood. Poet's Hill is the east-end anchor of the Poets' Pathway, which continues to be an active project.

This too illustrates an enduring trait of the Greenspace Alliance: Over the years it has not only been a watchdog for development that threatens greenspace, it has also been an advocate for enhancement or greater appreciation of open spaces.

Nor do we always oppose. For example, in 2001, we congratulated you or your predecessors –

- when you purchased 556 acres in the South March Highlands,
- upon receiving an award for a Corporate Climate Change Action Plan,

- and on the purchase of 400 acres of Marlborough Forest.

In August 2002, we were there with you, in support of the City at an OMB hearing, when revised boundaries of the Fernbank Wetland were being challenged.

We actively participated in the development of the new City's first Official Plan. When it was finally approved in May 2003, Councillor Gord Hunter, who was then chair of the Planning and Development Committee, publicly commended one of our Directors, Barbara Barr, for her outstanding contributions to ensuring the Official Plan reflected the 'green city' goals of the City. The fact is that the Greenspace Alliance had provided more improvements to the text than any other organization in the city, save city staff itself.

Still, we were among the 87 appellants of the 2003 Official Plan. We were accepted as a Party to several appeals of others. As for our own, we agreed to settlements for certain parts of our appeal, for others we went through a 2-day OMB hearing and obtained improvements. Being reasonable has always been our motto in all phases of our involvement in civic affairs.

During the 2006 municipal election campaign, we worked with two other groups in putting together a score card of the voting record of the incumbents and developed a questionnaire for all candidates. The results of that work received wide media coverage.

I'm going to let you peruse the 2008 Annual Report on your own. The picture that I want to leave you with is this:

1) In the 11 years of its existence, the Greenspace Alliance has been your ideal partner in consultation: loyal, critical and constructive, never driven by ideology or hidden motives.

2) Invariably, to do our work, we have attracted resources on a volunteer or *pro bono* basis. Our strength derives not from money but from people - our Directors, members and friends – many of whom are professionals who give freely of their time because they appreciate the importance of what we do and the way we do it.

3) To the extent resources permit, we have always pursued our objectives to the full extent our democratic decision making process allows – attending public consultation meetings, engaging in discussions with staff, appearing before Standing Committees, attending OMB or Environmental Review Tribunal hearings, and just recently, indeed, for the first time, to the point of a Divisional Court hearing.

None of these actions have ever been frivolous, vexatious or for oblique motive. For the sake of all individuals and groups in this City working in the public interest, I urge you to support this motion.

I thank you for your attention.