

Wetland going down drain, group argues

Developer proposes drainage work near sensitive area

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Plans by a developer to drain water in the area of a sensitive wetland has environmental groups concerned about the ecosystem.

Developers of Pindlay Creek Village in south Ottawa last month submitted an application to the Ministry of the Environment for a permit to drain up to 17 million litres of water a day for the next 10 years for a new housing development near the Leitrim Wetland.

Pierre Dufresne, vice-president of land development at Tartan Land Corp., said that they will not exceed 2 million litres per day, adding that the groundwater will be taken periodically and from outside the wetland boundary.

"We are not taking that water away, we are pumping it into a nearby location where it is recharged back into the system," Dufresne said.

"If we were doing something wrong in the draining of the wetland, we would have been stopped by government regulatory agencies like the Ministry of the Environment."

Friends of Leitrim Wetland, comprised of members of Ottawa environmental groups, including Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, are urging the public to consider the implications.

Impact on wildlife

"This proposal involves drainage work, cutting trees, removing plants and animals and the problem continues for what remains behind," said Linda McCaffrey, director of Ecojustice and lawyer for Greenspace Alliance.

The environmental group said that 74 hectares of the 313-hectare wetland would be destroyed if the Ministry grants the permit.

Dufresne said that Tartan is committed to preserving this wetland, which provides hab-

itat for at least 642 species of plant and 90 species of birds.

Soil physicist Dr. Clarke Topp said further drainage will cause immediate degradation of the wetland.

"You lose the wildlife because all of it is built around being able to readily access the water," Topp said.

Friends of Leitrim Wetland claim that another developer has been removing water between Sept. 10 and Oct. 25.

"We have photographic evidence showing pipes of water in the ground, and as of last Sunday (Dec. 9), there were 37 new sets of pipes," said Erwin Dreesen of Greenspace Alliance.

Greenspace Alliance last month filed an application with the Divisional Court for a Judicial Review of an Ontario Municipal Board Decision that would allow the development to proceed. The case will be heard in February.

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