

canoe network ... news

OTTAWA
SUN

November 7, 2008

Legal fees could uproot green group

By LAURA CZEKAJ, SUN MEDIA

A volunteer-run environmental group is facing extinction if a court decides it must pay legal costs incurred by a contingent of local developers and the city.

Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital had tried to get a judicial review of a recent Ontario Municipal Board ruling, but their case was thrown out of divisional court last month.

The community group sought to overturn the OMB ruling not to hear the group's case opposing zoning for the further development of Findlay Creek Village, a residential subdivision located off Bank St.

The community group had been trying to prevent additional development by Tartan Homes and Tamarack Homes on a site they say is damaging sections of the Leitrim Wetland.

The developers are seeking compensation from the group to the tune of \$67,217, and the city is asking for \$5,120 to cover its legal costs.

SEND CHILL THROUGH VOLUNTEERS

If the court agrees with these requests, it will spell the end of the Alliance and send a chill through other citizen-run associations which might shy away from future entanglements with the city and developers, said Alliance member Erwin Dreessen.

"It's no secret that we have almost no significant money behind us and we are all volunteers," he said.

The group consists of about 50 volunteers and has at least 120 people on its mailing list. Its legal activities were handled on a pro bono basis by the uOttawa-Ecojustice Environmental Law Clinic.

Alliance members alerted city councillors yesterday to their financial plight and found allies in College Coun. Rick Chiarelli and Bay Coun. Alex Cullen, who will table a motion stopping city lawyers from seeking financial compensation from the Alliance.