



Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital
Alliance pour les espaces verts
dans la capitale nationale

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Chair's Report 2007

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital is the leading advocate of greenspace preservation and expansion in the National Capital region. This report on our activities follows a format similar to what was used in the past, covering what we have done, our accomplishments and thoughts about what we might do in the next year.

Highlights:

Since november of last year, we have undertaken a number of activities to help preserve significant greenspace in the capital. Here are some highlights:

- We followed through on several appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) – one against a rezoning of an area of Leitrim Wetlands, and two more related to provisions of Ottawa's Official Plan.
- We provided input to the National Capital Commission Mandate Review Panel.
- We started development of the Poets' Pathway, building on the inauguration of Poet's Hill in September 2006.
- We launched our new website in February, introducing many new features, including discussion fora.
- Work started on the development of a concept for a whitewater park in the City of Gatineau, expanding a bit on our notion of greenspace.

- We participated in a number of public events, providing information to the public on our activities and greenspace issues.
- As of today we are still waiting for a reply from the Minister of Environment regarding our Part II Order request submitted under the Ontario Environment Assessment Act, because of concerns we have related to the environmental assessments underlying proposed development along the Carp River.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE - BACKGROUND

Development and Planning:

The Alliance has continued to be an active member of “**Friends of Leitrim**”, a group working to prevent the destruction of this provincially-significant wetland. Unfortunately, the Ontario Municipal Board recently dismissed our appeal of the rezoning of part of the wetland for residential development (Phase 2 of Tartan’s development). Our subsequent request for reconsideration was also turned down. We consider this to be most disappointing given that this wetland is unparalleled in North America. A judicial review is another option under consideration.

Members of the Alliance were active in the “**Carp River Coalition**” which was formed to fight against the filling and developing of the Carp River floodplain in Kanata West. The Coalition has been waiting for over a year for a ministerial reply to the Part II Order Request which was made because we felt that the environmental assessments were unsatisfactory. In the meantime, members of the Coalition continue to monitor the developments and new zoning applications in the vicinity of the Carp River.

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada’s Capital successfully appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board regarding requirements for development within Rural Natural Features. Previously, Ottawa’s Official Plan did not have a definition of “adverse” environmental impact of development within Rural Natural Features. A two-day hearing was held in May. In Decisions issued in June 2006 and March 2007, the Board ordered the City to negotiate with the Alliance a definition of ‘adverse impact’ as it applies to Rural Natural Features and ordered a clarification in the City’s Official Plan policies regarding information and study requirements when development adjacent to Rural Natural Features is proposed. A definition of adverse impact is now part of the Official Plan and we expect to see a clarification of the requirements in the next version of the Official Plan.

The Alliance has consistently opposed the Country Lot Estate provisions in the Official Plan, which allow developers to subdivide rural areas into large estate lots, often in Rural Natural Features. The Alliance settled its appeal

against the Official Plan's provisions for [Country Lot Subdivisions](#) with the stipulation that the option to prohibit Country Lot Subdivisions in the 2008 Official Plan would be put before City Council for their consideration.

Greenspace Preservation

[Poets' Pathway and Poet's Hill](#) are collaborative initiatives of the Alliance and the Ottawa Literary Heritage Society. Committee members Jane Moore, George Wilson and Ben Glossop have been meeting with City of Ottawa planners and councillors to delineate the route and its challenges. A presentation to the NCC is imminent.

Last year, Alliance members including Erwin Dreesen, Sol Shuster and Amy Kempster contributed to position papers which were prepared by the Coalition for NCC Renewal. The report of the Mandate Review Panel, which was issued in December, adopted many of the Coalition's recommendations. However, the government, while it has taken certain actions in line with the Panel's recommendations, has yet to respond formally. The NCC, meanwhile, has announced major initiatives for greater openness and transparency in the agency, again in line with the Panel's recommendations. The Coalition's paper on NCC land holdings outside Gatineau Park and the Greenbelt has been published in Trail & Landscape.

On the Quebec side of the National Capital Region, Alliance member Joseph Potvin has been developing the concept of a whitewater park in the City of Gatineau, in collaboration with city officials and the NCC. A canoe-kayak 'Parc sport-ecologique' is envisioned, which would hopefully improve the state of Brewer's Creek (or Ruisseau de la Brasserie) while creating recreational opportunities.

Organizational:

We held twelve well-attended [monthly meetings](#), which at times included guests bringing new greenspace issues for discussion or offering support to ongoing initiatives.

We raised about \$700 this year by way of our main fundraising activities. In addition we received some individual donations.

Our new website has been launched and is now well-populated with up-to-date content. As well as including a feature for automated updating of content, it also includes some new interactive features to support on-line discussions on greenspace and other environmental issues. Hopefully all of this will foster the development of links between various local communities and their greenspaces, for stewardship. Our webmaster is Ron Rancourt.

In terms of outreach and membership development, Alliance members including Theresa Jobateh, Janice Seline and Erwin Dreesen hosted tables at a number of environmental fairs, including the Ecofair, Imagine Ottawa, the Glebe Eco Fair and the Unitarian Sustainability Fair. Alliance representatives were interviewed twice by CKCU Radio, once to talk about Alliance activities in general, and another time to discuss the proposal for an interprovincial bridge crossing.

ACHIEVEMENTS

As a result of the efforts of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, Ottawa's Official Plan now contains a solid definition of 'adverse environmental impact' with respect to development within Rural Natural Features. This is important because development in rural areas of the City tends to occur in these biodiverse areas which are often unfit for agricultural use. We have a solid team in place to build a Poets' Pathway in Ottawa and the seed has been planted for a white water park in Gatineau. Both of these projects shed a different light on our usual notions of greenspace. The Alliance has made a valiant effort to monitor the local scene with respect to development proposals around the city and respond where it was felt to be necessary, in spite of the high volume of these proposals. Finally, we have taken a leap into the future with our new website, which has left some of us with some catching up to do, a challenge I hope we will be able to meet.

DIRECTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR

Members of the Alliance will work on commitments from last year that will continue into the next year, including considering next steps, if any, for protecting Leitrim Wetland. Collaboration with City officials and the NCC will likely continue for the development of the Poets' Pathway and the Gatineau whitewater park to garner support for these imaginative initiatives. We made efforts during the last year to try to come up with a list of 'must do' projects for greenspace preservation. It was and, I expect, will continue to be a challenge to pick the most pressing issues to focus on, because there are so many that beg for attention. In the end, any efforts, however small, no doubt contribute to the enhancement of greenspace and the environment in the National Capital Region.

Submitted by Carol Gudz, Interim Chair