



**Document 1**  
**City of Ottawa**  
**Water Roundtable**  
**Summary Notes**

June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014

# Table of Contents

---

**PAGE 4 – 5**

**Background**

**PAGE 6 – 8**

**Summary and Key themes from Participants**

**PAGE 8 -12**

**Question 1: What does a healthy water environment mean to you?**

**PAGE 11-14**

**Question 2: What actions should the City focus on to improve the health of our water environment? If we could do just one thing, what should that be?**

**PAGE 15-17**

**Question 3: How can the community work with the City to protect its water environment and vice versa? If we could do just one thing, what should that be?**

**PAGE 18-19**

**Question 4: What can residents do to improve the quality and manage the quantity of water run-off – on their own properties or public property?**

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2010 Council approved the Ottawa River Action Plan (ORAP) which included 17 projects to protect and enhance the Ottawa River. Two of these projects, the development of the Water Environment Strategy and the Eastern Subwatersheds Stormwater Management Retrofit Study, identified consultation with Ottawa's residents as an important requirement. The development of a Water Environment Strategy is a long term strategy to protect and enhance the health of Ottawa's watersheds. The Eastern Subwatersheds Stormwater Management Retrofit Study has the goal of developing a plan to mitigate the impacts of uncontrolled runoff from areas in the east end of the City that have little or no stormwater management.

Early in 2014, Chair of the Environment Committee, Ward 16 Councillor Maria McRae during the Chair's Annual State of the Environment speech called for a Water Roundtable. In June 2014, a one-day Water Roundtable event, hosted by Chair McRae, and Vice Chair Councillor Scott Moffatt, was held with Ottawa residents to explore ideas on how to protect the health of Ottawa's rivers, lakes and streams. Through the Water Roundtable, residents' feedback will be used to inform the development of the above two ORAP initiatives. The purposes of the Water Roundtable event were to:

- 1) Build awareness and understanding of Ottawa's water environment.
- 2) Highlight the City's actions and achievements related to the water environment.
- 3) Share ideas on how to collectively protect the City's natural water assets.

The Water Roundtable event included a welcome from Mayor Jim Watson and two guests who spoke to participants based on their expertise of Ottawa's water environment and sustainable development: Meredith Brown of the Ottawa Riverkeeper and Jeff Westeinde of Windmill Developments.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Water Roundtable provided residents with an opportunity to meet and explore ideas to protect and enhance the health of Ottawa's watersheds. Participants were assigned to one of four breakout session rooms at City Hall. Each room was staffed with a lead facilitator who introduced four conversation streams. In order to accurately capture participant feedback, each table was staffed with a "scribe" who recorded the key points of the table conversations. Each table was also provided with large sheets of paper and markers for "self-scribing" where participants could write down keywords and important information. This document contains a brief summary followed by an expanded

summary of participant feedback as captured through the scribes, self-scribes, and feedback forms.

## **OUTCOMES**

Overall, residents who attended the Water Roundtable stated that they were pleased with the water environment in Ottawa. All participants expressed a strong desire for the City to report back on what had been heard and to develop an action plan that reflects public interest.

A long-term strategy and work plan for the Water Environment Strategy are being developed and will be brought forward to City Council in 2015. The strategy will include: a strategic framework with long term goals and guiding principles; a 2015-2018 action plan; recommended City investments; and proposed framework to enhance coordination between the City; Conservation Authorities; provincial and federal agencies; and other water environment stakeholders. Education and outreach are also integral to ORAP and the Water Environment Strategy.

Through the Eastern Subwatersheds Study, stormwater management retrofits will contribute to improved water quality and healthier local creeks. The City will explore ways to address impacts of uncontrolled stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflow into the Ottawa River. A long-term watershed approach, including increasing awareness of and action on, water environment issues at the community level will ensure that the full range of pollutant sources and impacts are addressed.

The City of Ottawa would like to thank all the participants who attended and provided input into the Water Roundtable event. The City looks forward to continuing this dialogue to improve the collective understanding of Ottawa's water systems and to find new ways to improve the health of our water environment.



## Key Themes from Participants

---

One of the main messages heard from participants was that they wanted a follow up after the June 14<sup>th</sup> Water Roundtable with an action plan that reflects the feedback received.

### QUESTION 1 Summary

What does a healthy water environment mean to you?

---

Participants felt strongly that if the public were educated on environmental impacts and the health of the City's water, then Ottawa would have a greater chance of achieving a healthy water environment. More specifically, participants highlighted the need for a greater awareness of where drinking water comes from and residents' impact on our water environment.

Participants described a healthy water environment as one that is trustworthy and expressed a desire for peace of mind regarding the safety of our water. Safe, reliable, affordable, accessible drinking water and healthy water for all: people, animals and plants alike. Across the board, participants echoed comments made by Meredith Brown, the Ottawa River Keeper, and referred to Swim-Drink-Fish as the best way to describe their ultimate healthy water environment. It refers to lakes and rivers that are swimmable, with water that is drinkable as well as healthy and liveable for all fish and animals.

For many, a healthy water environment meant watersheds (lakes, rivers and wetlands) that are protected and for others it was a natural and maintained shoreline and natural stormwater management.

Participants shared that they were pleased with the water environment in Ottawa.

### QUESTION 2 Summary

What actions should the City focus on to improve the health of our water environment? If we could do just one thing, what should that be?

---

Again, participants returned to the topic of education and awareness. Participants felt that, to change behaviour, the City needs to do more outreach and consultation to influence social change. Participants were very passionate about their desire to see

more green infrastructure and green policies surrounding development. Often mentioned were concerns on paving and permeable surfaces.

Shoreline naturalization and upkeep was a recurring concern amongst participants. Many felt that an initiative much like Cleaning the Capital could be used to maintain shorelines. For example, Plant the Capital, a specific time of year where the City would solicit volunteers to assist with vegetation planting along watercourses.

Tax credits were referred to a number of times as ways to provide incentives to those who install permeable driveways, conserve water and build “green” homes.

Salt reduction was mentioned frequently. Many participants felt that the City was going in the right direction on the use of road salt, however anything that can be done that still protects road safety should be investigated.

Stormwater Management was a concern as well. The desire is to reduce the amount of untreated stormwater that enters Ottawa’s watercourses and invest in the implementation of a stormwater management plan.

### **QUESTION 3 Summary**

How can the community work with the City to protect its water environment and vice versa? If we could do just one thing, what should that be?

---

Water quality data is generated by various groups in the area, but the results are not always consistent. Participants felt that, as a City, we need consistent, harmonized data that is easy to understand and supports evidence-based decision making. A central repository for all data and reports from all groups available publicly would be desirable. Participants emphasized partnerships between community groups, environmental organizations and the City in order to build networks and avoid duplication of initiatives.

A number of participants discussed the desire for a governance group which would include citizens, particularly for the Rideau River and its tributaries. There is expertise/knowledge within the community that can be drawn upon.

Once again, education was at the forefront of this discussion. The City should play a large role in education for all. It was felt that there should be more learning opportunities and educational events within the schools and communities.

Annual reporting from the City on the State of the Environment is desired.

## QUESTION 4 Summary

What can residents do to improve the quality and manage the quantity of water runoff – on their own properties or public property?

---

While the use of rain barrels and water gardens were often referred to throughout the day, by far the main concern was de-paving asphalt and the use of permeable surfaces. Other solutions frequently mentioned were as follows:

- Green roofs, green parking lots;
- Gardens that require less water;
- Education programs;
- Organic farming;
- Salt alternatives;
- Tree planting and naturalization of shorelines.





## QUESTION 1

What does a healthy water environment mean to you?

---

- Everyone has a greater awareness of where their drinking water comes from and are aware of what they are dumping down the drain and what impact that has.
- Create a positive feedback loop in the community by having clean water – they will drink tap water.
- Kids swimming in rivers and using it for recreation and future generations will enjoy what we have been able to enjoy. Recreational value of water is everything. Those who use it value it.
- Wetlands, streams, municipal drains, vegetation requirements are all healthy and standards are being met.
- Safe and healthy drinking water as well as safe swimming for dogs and individuals.
- Education to future generations. An understanding of water components help with a healthy water environment.
- Affordable and accessible water – I don't want to go to a store to have to buy reliable water – I am so pleased that the systems are safe in Ottawa.
- Public toilet in Vincent Massey Park – should be front page – should have them all over the City – solar panels, use rain water.
- Approximately \$318 million – drinking water, wastewater, stormwater – all encompassing of City departments.
- Roughly 10 per cent of the City's budget – only one that has its own budget separate and unique; separated from tax budget.
- Approximately 95 per cent of costs (fixed) are affected by things that are not affected by demand – operators, infrastructure renewal, only 5 per cent variable.
- Without agricultural and sewage runoff and without industrial pollution and pollutants.
- Natural shorelines everywhere.



- Boat lockers in every neighbourhood to store non-motorized boats to facilitate use of the river for kayaking, etc.
- Connecting all of the pieces (issues) – Look outside the box for solutions to facilitate use of our waterways, stop focusing on individual issues and work on how they work as part of a whole with the outcome of a healthy water system.
- Recognize that wetlands are the kidneys (filter out the toxins) of the ecosystem and prevent turning wetlands into municipal drains.
- We want a sustainable water environment. Look into the future and predict what our river will look like. We must take the protective steps now to make sure that our river is still here thousands of years from now.
- Swamps - understand how it is important and how it connects to the waterways. Normally swamps are viewed as negative but it is an important part of the water.
- Protection of shoreline very important. Not often mentioned in City brochures. Prohibit housing close to river edges and buffer near shorelines. Wildlife needs protection.
- Infill happening where old houses are. Larger houses being built in place of smaller homes and taking up more space. As well, developers taking up too much space. We need more land left after building.



- City has standards for their own buildings (City facilities) should migrate into private development.
- Flooding is a main concern with paved surfaces for example, Kanata after big storms.
- Participants are concerned with storm drainage – metals and oils getting washed into drains after heavy rain storms.
- Tree coverage on the decline – more trees needed to help the water.
- There is a problem with the Canadian geese. It is affecting our beaches and water due to feces. Seagulls are also a concern. We need something to use to scare the birds away a bit, i.e. Westboro Beach.
- Water should not be privatized or sold – there are regulations in place but they need to be maintained.
- A healthy environment recognizes cultural importance of waterways and water. Ottawa has the chance to set this precedent.
- Peace of mind regarding the safety of the water (some people won't touch the water because they feel they will get sick). The City should communicate how safe the water is. It helps to have an educated public.
- Scientifically – ecosystem with high ecological integrity – low e-coli, low heavy metal, no pollutants, good water quality, no endocrine disruptors in the fish.
- Minimized flood risk.
- Watershed urban natural features highlighted as assets in our City. We should have water festivals.
- Interpretive signs along every creek/river that explains their ecosystem and where they 'fit in' to the overall watershed.
- Deal with AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Limited) nuclear waste.

## QUESTION 2

What actions should the City focus on to improve the health of our water environment? If we could do just one thing, what should that be?

---

- Education about wells and water program and conservation of water. Education programs revived. Talk to citizens before initiation of programs. Put out a water challenge to the citizens about usage.
- What is the impact of our personal products and pharmaceuticals on the environment? The public would like to see research.
- Engage citizens in the challenge of a healthy water environment. More impact assessments and involvement.
- Focus provincial/federal politicians to improve the health and making the City aware that we need to lobby these resources. Bring in groups that can highlight these issues.
- Incentives for new development. Be innovative. Make changes to by-laws. Lift the bar in creative ways in planning. We would also like to see strong meaningful penalties for infractions.
- Ottawa should create a forum with Gatineau to look at regional actions to protect the Ottawa River as well as bring together other jurisdictions to work on the watershed in an integrated manner.
- Naturalization of the management of stormwater, which is critical and it would save money, using best practices with a focus on wetlands (look at Edmonton, Winnipeg, etc.). As well, too many of our parks are manicured areas that are not in fact 'natural' – a wetland would be a better place to have a public park. Sandy Hill Park is a good example of a park design that manages rainwater – a CSST project that plays both functions of both recreation and water management.
- It was also suggested to change the design of the catch basins – going with the built into curbs, doesn't stop large items.
- Have an environmental "ombudsperson" to quantify, educate, promote and regulate.

- Imbed water in OP (Official Plan) policies for all development. The public would like to see the City of Ottawa research and adopt best practices from other cities. In addition, consider making low impact design more mandatory by having incentives which will encourage the developers.
- We would like the city to announce before dams open seasonally.
- It seems that the City has a good plan to deal with the sewage water overflow. Next frontier should be stormwater management – let's reduce the amount of stormwater that enters the system - green infrastructure projects. The Sunnyside Drive Street renewal project is a good example of what the City is doing more of – when the street is rebuilt; it can do a better job of managing stormwater – use more Sylva cell technology.
- We need to look at our own individual consumption- households tend to consume an average of 300L a day. We need to price water at its true cost to encourage consumption. Low flush toilets are an easy solution. As well, the City should provide rebates on purchases of rain barrels or water cisterns.
- The City needs to lead by example by incorporating the most advanced processes possible – for example the GCTC and the War Museum use graywater in their toilets. All City buildings should strive for responsible water use. Could the City use graywater to water outside gardens and properties? For all public buildings, set an example of water conservation, composting, rain barrel, water sense taps and toilets.



- To change behaviour the City needs to do more outreach and consultation to influence social change so that we can do better, bring parties together – solutions come from the brain trust.
- City looks like it is going in the right direction on the use of road salt from what I have read but it seems that a lot is still used – anything that can be done that still protects road safety should be investigated. Beet derivatives could be used as alternatives to road salt.
- Cleaning the Capital should continue and expand - rid streets of garbage – expand to other water courses -some areas being neglected (Bells Corners – Graham Creek, Findlay Creek, shoreline in Orleans).
- Continue working on ORAP (Ottawa River Action Plan) – excellent initiative. The public would like to see the City make Roundtables regular and part of business.
- The public needs to understand what are the stress and limits we can put on the water. We need to understand the metrics and measure the effect of stress and changes. Establishing the objectives and key indicators. How many wetlands do we need to maintain in the area? Key indicators are defined in regulations but need to tailor key indicators to a particular area. We also need to collect information on areas of impacts. For example, maps indicating key impact and problem areas.
- It was suggested that the City better engages citizen volunteers. They would like to see better mobilizations of volunteers. For example, citizens can take water measurements. The City can assist by educating the volunteers' methods of taking water samples.
- Wildlife management – geese, beavers. Beaver dams should be controlled as they can change the flow of the water and can cause problems.
- Participants would like the City and Provincial Conservation Authorities to address agricultural runoffs to support source water.
- All zoning that is designated EP (environmental protected) should be strictly enforced – businesses dumping, etc. City needs to lobby to ensure it is followed. As well, all waterways and abutting land (15m) should be designated EP – to stop private owners from doing what they want. City needs to investigate provincial

policies and City policies to ensure there are actions to enforce EP designated zones.

- Hire students in summer to go around and give an assessment to home owners/business on what they can do to make their waterfront better.
- We want to protect every storm water situation, every stream and creek that goes into our main waters. Ottawa is so beautiful because we are the meeting point for three major rivers and its tributaries. There are also hidden rivers and creeks. The City needs to bring those to light – letting us know where they are and open them if they can. If these hidden waters are opened and cleaned, they will form part of the watershed and assist with storm water drains.
- The City should revisit some of the feedback from previous planning forums, including Gatineau and the National Capital Commission.
- Some participants felt the City needs more intensification and densification if we are to avoid sprawls which destroy green space. Others disagreed with intensification – in some neighbourhoods this translates to cutting trees. Lack of intensification means cutting down forests in some areas. The City needs to be strong on protection of trees with the by-law, particularly in the downtown core.
- Participants would like to see community design plans and complete green street plans and neighbourhood plans to include addressing water, from drinking water to wetlands.
- Participants suggested an Increase Awareness Campaign as well as a Waterway Adoption Program.
- Waste containers along all waterways should be installed at regular intervals. City staff and/or private residents or business owners should be responsible for emptying them.
- It was suggested that the City have a central repository for all data and reports from all groups available publically. Educating the citizens will encourage them to become more active and pro-active with water issues. Better mobilization of the citizen volunteers will add value to the system.

### QUESTION 3

How can the community work with the City to protect its water environment and vice versa? If we could do just one thing, what should that be?

---

- Focus on Partnership, work with them, liaison with community groups and associations on planning and growth projects. Talk to them about innovative ideas.
- Update MLS listings to show quality of water and impact of water to the property.
- Build a strong community voice. Water environment needs to be a priority. Have an informed voice, better informed more responsibility, act together so we are informed.
- Reach out to community associations on environmental issues through recreational facility managers or through public education meetings e.g. Water Roundtable. Try to get people together through the community associations and talk about the environment.
- Participants were impressed that when Hintonburg Community Association reached out to City staff to speak to issues – the City was very responsive.
- A suggestion was made to “Plant the Capital”. For example, a specific time of year where the City would solicit volunteers to assist with vegetation planting along water sources.
- Review by-laws e.g. wildflowers/weeds should be allowed to replace lawns and by-laws should provide citizens with options.
- Expand green bin program to multi-residential buildings.
- If you are going to engage the community it should be understandable and in plain language and should be made accessible. This is the best way to mobilize people. It activates the public to political engagement.
- Reporting annually on the City’s environmental goals would be one way to engage the community to show strengths and weaknesses similar to what the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario does.
- A “Citizens Academy” would be an excellent way to provide education to citizens and would enable the formation of networks. Modules on how the City works and



how to deal with the City were suggested. In addition, hands on educational workshops with communities were encouraged.

- Every public space should have a map of the watershed.
- Consultation between City and community are very important and the public would like to see this as a more common occurrence.
- Champlain Park – the City got rid of the parking area close to the river – well done – reduces green house gas and runoff from automobiles into river. All at table very happy about this.
- City should remove chlorine and fluoride from the water as other municipalities have.
- Reduce personal care products used in your home as most of them are responsible for the destruction of the water – antibacterial soap is very bad for the water, hair dyes, etc. In addition, remove micro beads from products as they end up being eaten by fish.
- Plant high grasses closer to the beaches so that geese do not thrive. This deters them from landing there.
- Need to partner with all local elementary and high schools – every child should know what watershed they live in and water body is close to them and take a role in protecting them. Adopt, care for and become stewards for nearest waterway.
- Have City lead an initiative where all water recreation activities (clubs organizations) include a component on how to protect the water. Look to the province for tax incentives. As well, have the City lead a focus group on cleaning up waterways for 2017 Celebrations.
- When City fixes a bridge, put additional funding into a mitigation plan to avoid salt from bridge going into the river upstream.
- Participants would like to see, a governance group that includes citizens on its decision-making panels, particularly for Rideau River and its tributaries. The Fraser River has a consortium that includes businesses, residents and communities, as well as the City and the conservation authorities.

- What can residents do to improve the quality and manage the quantity of water runoff on their own properties or public property? Use rain barrels and minimize the use of salt. Don't wash cars in your driveway, use permeable pavers and soft landscaping which should include native trees and shrubs. Direct downspouts to soil rather than asphalt.
- It was suggested that the public should use environmentally appropriate or green cleaners as well as make use of the household hazardous waste disposal and Take It Back program. It was also emphasized that people should properly dispose of medicines and not add them into the sewer system.
- Tax Credits for every household that shows that they followed through on actions required to clean up their environment.



#### QUESTION 4

What can residents do to improve the quality and manage the quantity of water run-off – on their own properties or public property?

---

- Participants suggested rain barrels which prevents run-off and reduces water bills as well as tree planting and landscaping alternatives such as rain gardens. Recycling and composting should continue to be encouraged. Low flow toilets should now be the norm.
- Citizens should volunteer for environmental programs.
- Advocate that new communities don't use asphalt. Ban asphalt driveways, education of sealants.
- Participants would like the City to better educate citizens on how to dispose of toxins, pharmaceuticals.
- Develop a software application for citizens to measure their impact on water.
- Potential subsidies to improve septic, bring forward initiatives for their septic quality and keeping it up to date. Educate and inform of run-offs and quality, initiate run-offs in rural as well.
- Participants would like to see the City regulate and encourage green roofs as well as partner with an innovative developer to do a green roof community.
- Participants suggested differentiated water rates - if you have permeable surfaces vs. non permeable surfaces you pay different rates. Kitchissippi United Church is replacing its entire parking lot with a green parking lot.
- Tax reduction for land owners who practice organic gardening and farming.
- Impose more restrictions on developers to use green space more effectively and properly –no more 'park-in-lieu' allowances.
- Natural heritage protection needs to be increased.
- Purchase grass seeds that are more resilient to drought. In addition, sump pump water should go into ditches or storm and not the sewers.

- There is an organization called 'Living by Water' from British Columbia that explains what residents can do to live better by water. Information can come in the water bill and can include actions on how to live better by water.
- Citizens can influence the National Capital Commission to naturalize the riverfront more.
- Some participants would like to see the expansion of the Greenbelt around the core. It will mean a denser community but with protected green space. We need to prevent it from disappearing in the future.
- Quite often we refer to green space – need to speak about green and blue space to include water instead of just land – need to get the concept that water is a key element of our environment and greening.
- Land purchases by the City need to incorporate environmental protection. We need to increase funding toward purchasing sensitive land for the purpose of being able to retire it.
- Planning rules for suburban area should be geared to reducing runoff as much as possible. In essence, it makes the community more pleasant to reside in.
- Citizens would like reports on the web to be simplified, less scientific and easier for the average citizen to understand.
- Stakeholders should educate their neighbours about ground water quality.
- Infill, Greenfield and suburban policies need to be pro-water to reduce hard surfaces.
- Open rainwater runoff system (i.e. ponds that are aerated for example with a fountain in the center).





