



Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

Alliance pour les espaces verts de la capitale du Canada

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4 June 2015

Dear Members of Council,

Re: Term of Council Priorities

The Greenspace Alliance requests that a specific strategic objective and associated budget allocation be included in the Term of Council priorities 2015-18 for the Environmental Lands Acquisition Fund and other land conservation measures.

We note with satisfaction that **Biodiversity and ecosystem health** is one of the long term sustainability goals in the “roof” of the strategic map, and that it is supported by a strategic priority to **Promote an environmentally sustainable Ottawa**. We also commend that this priority is to be pursued over the 2015-2018 period through a strategic objective to **Increase Forest Cover**, as a responsibility of the Public Works department, under the oversight of the Environment Committee and the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

However, we believe that the budget allocated, which is all operating, will be totally absorbed by tree planting in the urban, suburban and rural areas, the rehabilitation of parks and green spaces in partnership with Ecology Ottawa and the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Woodlot Management Strategy and that nothing will be left for the Environmental Lands Acquisition Fund.

While that continued funding will mitigate the temptation to again “raid” the Environmental Lands Acquisition Fund for this purpose, we believe that the fund itself is currently inadequately endowed. Land acquisition ought to be considered a cost effective and sustainable means of achieving the strategic objective of preserving and increasing forest cover and other environmentally sensitive lands. Opportunities to acquire pockets of remaining natural areas continue to arise and the City should have a consistently maintained reserve to take advantage of such opportunities.

We hope to see in the 2015-2018 Term of Council Priorities a return to a permanent, dedicated allocation for the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands. Such an allocation would also give the City some leverage to partner with other financing sources such as land trusts, as well as pro-actively engage in or facilitate easement and stewardship agreements, in a manner consistent with Policy 5 in section 5.2.1 of the Official Plan:

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“5. The City has a particular interest in ensuring that lands in the following designations are secured in a way that is consistent with their greenspace values: Natural Environment Areas, Significant Wetlands, Urban Natural Features, and Major Open Space. A similar interest may apply to any lands along waterways in a Village or Urban Area. [Amendment #96, February 22, 2012]

a. The City will consider methods other than acquisition to meet its objectives for the preservation of lands with greenspace values, including exchanging lands of similar value, negotiating conservation easements, entering into agreements with other public bodies concerning land management or maintenance, partnering with a land trust and other methods that may be proposed from time to time;”

We hope that you will support the inclusion in the Term of Council Priorities 2015-18 of a consistent, annual allocation for the Environmental Lands Acquisition Fund.

May we remind you that doing so was one of the propositions we put to all candidates in the 2014 municipal election and to which 13 of you responded. They were endorsed by 16 local groups and 150 individuals from every Ward. Nine of you supported this proposition, and two more did so conditionally. (Ref. <http://www.greenspace-alliance.ca/letters>)

Sincerely,

Erwin Dreessen,

Co-chair