

To: Members of ARAC, and Carole Legault, A/Standing Committee Coordinator
the other members of Council, and Dawn Whelan, Council Coordinator

Re: Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, Item 8, Agenda 8, 01 September 2015
Protocol for Wildlife Protection During Construction – Updated

Dear Councillors,

Although in support of many of the recommendations, we are very concerned that the Wildlife Construction Protocol has been watered down with the removal of the requirement for developers to submit a Wildlife Mitigation Plan and Construction Site Management Plan – both reasonable requirements to reduce harm to wildlife.

Replacing the requirements with only “best practice guidelines” will change little in what is a very deadly environment for wildlife, unless these “best practices” are actually implemented.

Now that the implementation rests squarely on planning staff and the City, we ask that you, as Councillors, make the Wildlife Construction Protocol a priority and see that staff are given the resources needed to do the job.

Wildlife-Sensitive Planning: Some of you will recall when a Wildlife Strategy was approved by ARAC in 2013, the Wildlife Construction Protocol was identified as a long-overdue priority – having first been approved by Regional Government 15 years ago.

You’ll recall that the Wildlife Strategy approved by ARAC was centered on wildlife-sensitive planning. Well, the Wildlife Construction Protocol will be the first important public test of whether the City of Ottawa is really committed to wildlife-sensitive planning. If it fails at this most basic level, how else is it going to demonstrate this commitment?

Failure to Provide a Fair and Transparent Process: You’ll recall that the Wildlife Strategy you approved in 2013 was accompanied by a lengthy report summarizing the results of the public consultation, including written submissions, in support and opposed, along with staff comments. This is what people expect when they take the time, as we did as a stakeholder organization, to participate in a process that was based on a request from the City.

However, the report in front of you today provides no such information, making it impossible for you as councillors or the public, to understand why, if the majority of the 106 written submissions were in support of the Protocol, has it been so substantially watered down.

Getting to Best Practices: The Home Builders Association opposed the Protocol, conducting a survey showing that no other municipality had a Protocol as the reason why Ottawa shouldn’t adopt one either or, at least, one that had any teeth.

“Best Practices” are not established by those wanting to be last in line. We have been working with cities like London, Ontario and Edmonton, Alberta – cities that are not afraid to be first in line when it comes to protecting wildlife and the environment and in developing the innovative solutions needed in this regard.

Edmonton, for example, has recently won international and national awards for incorporating wildlife passage design into its transportation and drainage planning. It has built 27 wildlife passages since implementing the program 9 years ago.

Edmonton didn't say 'no one else is doing this, so why we should we'? It saw a need and did the right thing and, in the process, reduced costly wildlife collisions by 51% over that time despite additional road infrastructure and an increase in population of more than 160,000 people. Edmonton's leadership has gained the support of developers and the community where 97% of the public surveyed were in strong support of this initiative.

Time for Ottawa to Show Leadership: Ottawa has an opportunity to be first with respect to an effective Wildlife Construction Protocol. We urge you to ensure it's not another missed opportunity.

Donna DuBreuil, President
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