

PUBLIC PETITIONS CITY, URBANDALE AND RICHCRAFT TO SPARE WILDLIFE BY DELAYING MID-WINTER DESTRUCTION IN ONE OF OTTAWA'S MOST DIVERSE FORESTS

Ottawa, 23 January 2017. – Concerned residents from across the city are presenting a petition to Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, Kanata Councilor Marianne Wilkinson, and housing developers Urbandale and Richcraft, asking them to postpone the mid-winter clear-cutting of rich forest in an area known as Ottawa's South March Highlands, and resume clearing in the fall to give wildlife a chance to escape and survive.

Although irreversibly slated for construction, the destruction of the forest in the middle of winter is particularly cruel. Some wildlife is hibernating and will be crushed to death by the heavy equipment; those that are not hibernating are effectively unable to rebuild their dens elsewhere or find new food stores in winter.

"If we are so bent on taking over their habitat, the least we can do is give these poor animals a chance to find a new home," said concerned resident Juan Pedro Unger.

The forest being razed is within the South March Highlands, one of the last old-growth forests in our nation's capital. Studies of the area have uncovered exceptional biodiversity, with counts of hundreds of species of birds, reptiles and mammals, including species at risk.

Cutting is underway with permits requested and obtained by the developers from the Province and the City.

"Under the terms of the Province's permit, clear-cutting cannot start before October 15. Given that it issued the Permit only on November 10, the work should be postponed until October 15 this year," said Erwin Dreesen. "To avoid mid-winter disturbance, the clear-cutting should be completed by mid-November. Mid-winter clear-cutting of such a large area is simply not acceptable under any circumstance."

Housing construction on the site has been in planning for decades. "Then what is the rush to clear-cut today? Surely it can wait a few more months to prevent suffering and cruelty to literally hundreds of animals," said Ottawa resident Janice Seline.

The petition, signed by close to 2,500 persons in just a few days, was presented to Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and Kanata Ward Councillor Marianne Wilkinson at City Hall at 12:30 p.m. on January 23, and later presented to Kathryn McGarry, Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, and to Richcraft and Urbandale owners Kris Singhal and Richard Sachs, respectively.

The South March Highlands Coalition and a wide range of individual residents presenting the petition, call on Urbandale, Richcraft and the City of Ottawa to put an immediate stop to the clear-cutting and wait until the fall to resume it, so that animals have a chance to escape the destruction of their habitat.

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