

FROM OUR ANNUAL REPORTS:

October 1999

Ours is a small group of hard-working volunteers. It has become abundantly clear since we first formed the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital in the fall of 1997 that there is a real and pressing NEED for a group like ours, one that focuses on greenspace issues only. We have not, as a group, spent much time reflecting on our accomplishments and we rarely pat ourselves on the back for all that we have accomplished. At this, our first AGM, perhaps we can take a few moments to do so.

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I suspect that our most important achievement has been to earn the respect of all the major players in the capital region, including elected officials and bureaucrats at all three levels of government, as well as the media. Credibility is a must, and it must be earned the hard way!

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For most of us, it has been hard to accept that our battle is going to be long and slow. It is vital that we recognize the real dangers of burnout and use our meagre resources wisely so that we can remain a presence into the next millennium.

November 2000

We have intervened – orally, in writing, or both – at all levels of government on no fewer than 17 issues.

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Our brochure was finalized and produced in September.

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Last June, Minister Manley encouraged us to come forward with a proposal for a Pathway that would at the same time celebrate some of the Confederation Poets and preserve important green corridors from Beechwood Cemetery, via the Southern Corridor, to Britannia Park. We have formulated a Concept and a preliminary Workplan.

October 2001

The Greenspace Alliance was actively involved – ranging from assisting citizens and groups, to formally intervening in the decision making process – in no fewer than 17 individual development issues.

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We congratulated Regional/City elected officials on the purchase of 556 acres of forest, wetlands and trails in the South March Highlands, on receiving an award for their Corporate Climate Change Action Plan, and on the purchase of 400 acres of Marlborough Forest.

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Loblaws in Westboro: The accomplishment here was an extremely cogent intervention by Barbara Barr before the OMB on why doing what the proponent wanted to do with the parcel designated “Greenway System – Linkage” would require an Official Plan Amendment and then why such an amendment should not be granted. ... Unfortunately, the OMB decision of April 19 ... in effect denied that the former City of Ottawa's Official Plan policies on the Greenway System bear any relation to actual land use.

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We will, we must, soldier on.

October 2002

We now have twelve group members and over 30 individual members. Our mailing list has grown to over 80 addresses. Our web site currently holds over 80 MB of information. The Poets' Pathway project is gaining momentum.

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There were again roughly two dozen lines of action, involving 23 members plus 22 friends, the latter a significant increase over last year.

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We finalized our bilingual brochure and came up with a new logo and letterhead. We sent self-made Holiday Greetings to all members of Ottawa and Gatineau Councils, all area MPs, MPPs, MLAs, and all members of the Board of Directors of the NCC.

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Smart Growth, 20/20, Official Plans: Along with other interveners, we succeeded in January in getting the supposedly major consultation period on the new Official plan delayed from July and August to September/November. But in other respects we were not heard when we pleaded for substance behind the rhetoric on community consultation. We noted the absence of a communication plan and the non-involvement of significant numbers of citizens to date. Soldiering on, several members participated in February workshops on "Charting a Course."

November 2006

The Alliance was one of three environmental groups that put together the very successful "environmental report card" in the lead-up to our municipal election. Also this month, members of the Alliance made presentations to the NCC Mandate Review Panel on how it could better protect greenspace in the National Capital.

In September of this year, the Poets' Pathway Committee held an inauguration ceremony for Poet's Hill, the eastern anchor of the Poets' Pathway.

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We deeply regret the lack of resources which forced us to abandon efforts to protect the 5309 Bank Street site from destruction by quarrying activity.

October 2007

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.

November 2008

Many of our activities generated media coverage, including appearances on Rogers Talk TV, CKCU Radio, CBC Radio, Radio-Canada and articles in The Ottawa Citizen, The Ottawa Sun, Le Droit, Ottawa Xpress, Metro and various community newspapers.

October 2009

This year started on a very sad note by losing our dear friend, Bill Royds, at the age of 61 on February 20th.

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In early March, we received approval of incorporation of the “Friends of the Greenspace Alliance”, with an effective incorporation date of February 26th, 2009.

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Under the leadership of Sol Shuster, 15 environmental and community groups, have formed the Greenbelt Coalition of the National Capital Region to participate in the NCC’s Review of their 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan. ... To assist with their consultations, the NCC has established a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) and has agreed to have five Coalition members participate on it.

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Both the Leitrim case and the cost awards issue caused the Alliance to issue press releases and there was wide media coverage of the latter issue as it came to City Council.

November 2010

Leitrim Wetland: A settlement was reached with the developers in the long standing effort to protect Leitrim Wetland.

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FGA has in mind to launch a regional social media initiative called “GreenMyCapital / MaCapitaleVerte”, a free, informal, non-commercial open data web-enabled co-operation service for people in organizations or individually, who want to document and protect neighbourhood greenspace from a landscape and watershed perspective. ... The concept was presented to the CAFES Group in June 2010, with very positive reactions. But we need a core group of social-media-aware activists to help with the groundwork.

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...we are an “alliance” because we assist activists that have organized in one way or another to defend terrestrial or aquatic natural areas in Canada's National Capital Region.

May 2012

Former chair and good friend George Wilson passed away on April 13, 2011.

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In light of the cost awards against the Friends of the Greenspace Alliance as a fall-out from the Fernbank appeals, the Alliance re-incorporated as Greenspace Watch. Letters Patent dated May 2, 2011 were received late June...

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Word leaked out in late March that the Mayor's Planning Summit would be held on April 26, 2012. ... A vigorous discussion took place on the List with contributions to potential speaking points. In all, some 40 points were summarized in a document posted a few days before the Summit. Over half of the points fell under the rubric "Governance and City-wide issues." Key among those were consultation issues (the main point FCA would make in an April 26 media release), guidelines for the Committees of Adjustment and more transparency, and the working of democracy at City Hall.

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Most of the effort has gone into the various appeal processes of Official Plan Amendment No.76 (5-year review of the OP). ... something was gained in protection of the environment in every case.

April 2013

Erwin has written a report about the Urban Boundary issue, how it came to be that an original decision by Council to expand the urban area by 230 ha ended up as a 1,104 ha expansion (see [Trail and Landscape](#) Jan.-Mar. 2013 issue).

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Emerald Ash Borer: At a crucial time when decisions on actions should have been taken, the City's Environment Committee meeting ignored our advice and did not even deal with the issue.

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Review of the Provincial Policy Statement: The Alliance created a PPS working group in order to produce comments on the September 2012 draft PPS.

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Cooperation with Ecology Ottawa: Over the last year a dialogue with Ecology Ottawa was established about potential cooperation to meet common goals. Ecology Ottawa suggested ways to cooperate with the Alliance's short, medium and long term goals. However, many issues that the Alliance is working on are of an unpredictable (reactive) nature with short deadlines that cannot be defined in advance.

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Effective 11 October 2011, "Greenspace Watch" was granted a Certificate of Continuance under the new federal Not-for-profit Corporations Act.

April 2014

Connectivity Forum: A Panel discussion on natural linkages (eco-corridors) in and around Ottawa was held on Saturday morning, June 8, 2013, at the Hintonburg Community Centre. Brought together were Prof. Emer. Gray Merriam, landscape ecologist; Dr. Gary Bell, program manager for Eastern Ontario at the Nature Conservancy of Canada; François Cyr, senior manager of the Greenbelt at the National Capital Commission; Dr. Nick Stow, senior land use and natural systems planner at the City of Ottawa; and Dr. Erwin Dreessen, co-chair of the Alliance. Iola Price welcomed all and served as moderator.

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The City's public engagement and transparency performance: The draft consultation report for "Building a Liveable Ottawa" formed a 376-page Appendix in... the Infrastructure Master Plan! Perusing it, it becomes clear that the various "consultations" consisted mostly of one-way communication, with evidence of dialogue far and few between. ... In conclusion, while staff has been very correct in responding to our written comments, the broader public was barely engaged in this exercise.

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Urban Natural Area Strategy Update: An important side-debate developed out of the presentation by Faith Blacquièrè regarding the City's obligation to purchase land if it wants to protect it. A memo from Legal Services that resulted by no means closes this debate.

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Greenspace Alliance Renewal: Current and recent members of the Alliance were engaged in a discussion about the future direction of the organization. It was concluded that people want to maintain the current activities of the Alliance.

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We applied for a capacity grant from Mountain Equipment Coop in the Spring but were not successful.

April 2015

Our Main Activities are grouped under 26 headings or subheadings.

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We decided to take part in the 2014 municipal election campaign by sending a letter (in English and French) to all candidates and publishing on our website any responses received. The letter solicited candidates' opinion on four propositions:

- Support for a strong site alteration by-law, with emphasis on “strong.”
- Renewed commitment to an annual allocation towards an environmental lands acquisition fund.
- Standing firm in support of the prohibition against future country lot subdivisions.
- The City's Advisory Committees should be genuine bridges between the public and Council.

Our letter was endorsed by 16 local environmental organizations and 150 individuals, covering every ward. We placed advertisements in seven community papers. Centretown News did a story on some of our propositions.

We received responses from 64 candidates, including 13 who ended up winning (seven of whom were incumbents). Large majorities were supportive of our propositions.

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Through a collaborative effort on the GA List we developed a 4-page brief for the Environment Committee outlining its challenges and opportunities as we saw them.

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Central Experimental Farm encroachment: Following the November 3 federal announcement that it would make 60 acres (24 ha) of the Central Experimental Farm available for a new hospital, the Alliance has worked closely with Heritage Ottawa, the Heritage Canada National Trust, adjacent community associations and concerned scientists to develop counter-arguments to this encroachment on a local and national treasure. Apparently unbeknown to federal and hospital officials, much of the 60 acres happens to be “Field No. 1” where long-term soil studies are ongoing.

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At the June AGM of the Federation of Citizens' Associations Amy received the FCA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

April 2016

Our Main Activities are grouped under some 30 headings or subheadings. Major involvements were with the aftermath of the Comprehensive Official Plan review (OPA 150) and related files; KNL's "overall benefit" application and other development proposals in Kanata; protecting the Central Experimental Farm; and several files related to trees and forests. It was also a busy year for Ontario policy and legislative reviews.

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An op-ed penned by Erwin with much input from GA List subscribers, "Stormwater fees: Principles, Facts and Prescriptions" (March 2016), was distributed through our networks and published in various online media and weekly papers.

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The fact that, in 2012, Area 2 was found eligible to become urban based on an erroneous wastewater readiness score, continued to gain no traction.

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Oblate lands: A final zoning by-law amendment for these lands next to St-Paul's University came before Planning Committee in November. We made an appearance, praising Regional's constructive work with the community which, like CLC's for CFB Rockcliffe, stood in sharp contrast to the unhelpful role played by the City's planning staff over the course of the preceding years.

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Central Experimental Farm encroachment: ... Paul has been instrumental in many of the initiatives undertaken by the Coalition.

April 2017

KNL: We provided feedback to the Ministry as part of the consultation process via the Environmental Bill of Rights site, questioning how clearing 100 hectares of forest habitat could ever be of any benefit to the species living there. We also promoted participation on this consultation along with partners in its network. The Ministry received 422 comments. ... The Overall Benefit permit was finally issued on November 10. The large number of comments received in the consultation process was acknowledged but, to quote the Decision posted on the EBR, “*no changes were made to the permit proposal as a result of the comments received.*” ... In early January 2017, the forest clearing started. We signaled our dismay with a letter to the Mayor, recognizing that, while all rules and regulations had been observed, this major loss of urban greenspace was nonetheless deplorable and calling upon him to make it up in the overall greenspace balance of the City.

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The GA has launched a Facebook page in an attempt to expand its reach beyond its traditional audience.

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It has been a very good year for the recruitment of volunteers.

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A survey was conducted of the subscribers to the GA List to learn about their satisfaction regarding the content and functionality of the list. Of approximately 110 subscribers, 44 responded (40%). Overall, respondents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the topics covered and information provided by the service.

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The Board has adopted an approach and a program of work for 2017 based on inventorying and mapping Ottawa’s greenspace resources, monitoring them over the year and responding to threats through collaboration, education, advocacy, agitation and if necessary litigation.

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[Through settlement on one ground of our appeal of OPA 173 ~ Kanata North] ...we secured our participation in the consultation process that the City is required to conduct on how it will implement the requirements of Bill 73 regarding public engagement.