

Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital 2018 Annual Report

May 2017 – April 2018

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital has been active in the last year in its work to protect and preserve greenspace and shape and influence federal, provincial and municipal policy and plans that have an effect on greenspace, while continuing to maintain itself and develop as an effective advocacy organization.

Our action starts with monitoring threats and developments to greenspace in Ottawa-Gatineau and also keeping abreast of new or revised policy or plans that touch on local greenspace. We are assisted in this by the eyes and ears of our members, of our list subscribers and of community members at large, to whom we are indebted for their care and concern for greenspace. We also receive a steady stream of information through subscriptions to email alerts from the City of Ottawa, the National Capital Commission, the Ontario Environmental Network and many others groups and organizations.

We then educate ourselves and others regarding the issues that arise from this monitoring so that we can better focus our action, which is mainly to advocate. We do this through the preparation of briefs and submissions, appearances at committee and council meetings and participation in public consultations. In certain cases, we may take it a step further and participate in events such as demonstrations and marches, or launch letter writing or media campaigns meant to influence public opinion and sway decision makers. In rare cases, we may go as far as taking cases to appeal and adjudication bodies for review.

This annual report is meant to provide something of a report card on our action over the period of May 2017 to April 2018. What did we do in terms of protecting and preserving greenspace and how successful was it? It will be presented under the headings of threats to greenspace that were faced during the year, policy and plans that we shaped or influenced, and our own governance as an organization.

1 Threats/Protection

1.1 Rural greenspace

The rural area of Ottawa is the City's largest greenspace asset. We are therefore concerned with loss of greenspace within the rural area, which includes the encroachment of the urban area into the rural area through urban expansion. This year, three principal issues attracted our attention: the federal government's plans for a nuclear waste storage facility in Chalk River, the status of the Goulbourn Provincially Significant Wetlands, and the development plans for urban expansion areas approved in 2012 as a result of appeals of Official Plan Amendment 76 and the threat of further urban expansion through appeals of Official Plan Amendments 150 and 180.

1.1.1 Near Surface Radioactive Waste Disposal – Chalk River

Early in the year, we heard a presentation from the Concerned Citizens of Renfrew County and Area on radioactive wastes at Chalk River Laboratories, a federal nuclear research facility. After 70 years of

operation, the decommissioned facilities there are releasing radioactive waste into creeks that feed into the Ottawa River, less than 1 kilometer away. A 2014 comprehensive decommissioning plan called for dismantling and underground storage of the non-fuel nuclear waste. In 2015, however, the federal government signed an agreement to speed up the waste disposal target to within 6 years. The task was awarded to a private consortium, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL), which has proposed storing the waste in an above ground mound instead, essentially a landfill. Conclusion: the proposal is based on the wrong technology, pursues the wrong objective and does not meet international standards. The choice of location is bad, the process is broken and the wrong proponent is in place. There will almost certainly be leakage from this storage mound, resulting in nuclear contamination of the Ottawa River, with dilution the only defense downstream for drinking water and the natural environment. We agreed to take this on as one of our initiatives and to support the efforts of the local group to advocate for the adoption of a more secure technology for the storage of the nuclear waste at Chalk River.

As a result, we submitted comments to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission on the Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the CNL. We also signed, along with 35 other co-signatories, a letter to the Prime Minister calling on the federal government to suspend work on the nuclear waste disposal site at Chalk River and to develop a policy on the storage of non-fuel nuclear waste. We posted the letter to our Facebook page, which generated over 1700 views. We participated in the Red Canoe march through the streets of downtown Ottawa to bring attention to this issue. One of our Board members participated and made submissions at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission hearings in Pembroke on the renewal of CNL's operating permit. We signed on, with eight other local organizations, to a letter to MP Greg Fergus providing additional information on the nuclear waste being stored at Chalk River and proposing a meeting to fully brief him on the dangers of the current decommissioning plan. We signed on to a letter to the International Atomic Energy Association asking that it investigate whether the planned storage of nuclear waste at Chalk River meets international standards and we participated in a rally and march on Parliament Hill on April 23, coinciding with the presentation by a delegation of concerned indigenous groups at the United Nations in New York City at the same time. By the end of the year, the issue was receiving better news coverage while, on the political front, all 82 Mayors of the Montreal Metropolitan Community adopted a motion to oppose the storage plans. Although it has not yet figured in the Ottawa municipal election, this issue seems to be gaining momentum.

1.1.2 Redelineation of the Goulbourn Provincially Significant Wetlands Boundary

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) provided the results from the Flewellyn Special Study Area to the City on July 31, 2017. The study required the remapping of boundaries for the Goulbourn Wetland Complex, a provincially significant wetland southwest of Stittsville. Rather than immediately confirming the new boundaries via an Official Plan Amendment, the City of Ottawa decided to allow property owners to conduct, at their own expense, a re-evaluation of the boundaries during the 2018 growing season. This raised concerns that landowners may fill parts of the wetlands on their properties to physically alter boundaries in the interim. Local activists made the case with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority while the GA tried to get action from City Councillors. Neither local councillors were interested in addressing the issue. At the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, the issue was addressed at a Board meeting in January 2018, where landowners and sympathetic current and former city politicians argued forcefully to maintain the suspension of enforcement the Board had approved in 2016. They lost by a very narrow margin, with the Board voting to enforce protection of the Goulbourn wetlands, but only as delineated in 2008, leaving the newly delineated areas unprotected. We wrote to the Chair of the City's Environment and Climate Protection Committee requesting that he look into enacting an interim control bylaw to prevent further wetland loss. A response from staff

indicated that this mechanism could not be applied in this case and that enforcement of wetland protection ultimately rests with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority. The only remaining option is to appeal the RCVA board decision not to extend protection to the newly delineated areas, which action was not taken.

1.1.3 Urban Boundary

1.1.3.1 *Appeals of OPA 150/180*

Official Plan Amendment 150 was a comprehensive review completed in 2013 which concluded that Ottawa's projected housing growth through to 2031 could be accommodated without expanding the urban boundary. It was appealed and the OMB directed the City to produce new population estimates through to 2036, complete the review of employment lands and also the evaluation of agricultural lands. The City complied and produced OPA 180, which Council approved in November 2017. It again concluded that no urban expansion was required. This was also appealed. At a prehearing conference in January 2018, we learned that two appellants, Minto and Mattamy, expect to present evidence to argue that the urban boundary must be expanded by 500 hectares to accommodate housing growth through to 2036. The Greenspace Alliance was recognized as a party in support of the City and will present evidence to the contrary.

1.1.3.2 *OPA 76 Urban Expansion Area 2 - South March Highlands*

We had set as an objective for this year to keep track of urban expansion areas that were added in 2012 by OMB decision following appeals of OPA 76 with a view to ensuring that planned development preserved as much greenspace as possible. In this vein, we participated and made representations in two public consultations regarding development plans for Area 2, an environmentally sensitive strip of land along the Carp River, running from Terry Fox Drive to Huntmar Rd. Although it was initially thought that no development was possible in this area, we were disappointed to see a plan to shoehorn residential development between the base of the South March Highlands ridge and the Carp River. We offered ideas for the alternative use of this area as green infrastructure for the large residential projects being developed east of Terry Fox Drive. The only saving grace of the current plans is the preservation of a large section south of the Carp River as a conservation area.

1.1.3.3 *OPA 76 Urban Expansion Area 7 – South Barrhaven*

A Community Design Plan for this expansion area was completed in early 2018. Other than parkland required under the city parks policy and stormwater ponds, there is little existing greenspace retention potential in this area. We are concerned, however, with a land swap agreed to in the CDP process whereby a parcel of rural land will be brought into the urban boundary, in exchange for an equal area of urban expansion land being reverted to the rural area.

1.1.3.4 *Reimer Lands – Leitrim*

In the Leitrim urban expansion area, we established a positive communication channel with the Regional Group through which we remained apprised of measures intended to safeguard the adjoining Leitrim and Casino wetlands. We worked with the developer on the drafting of a homeowners guide regarding the natural features surrounding the development.

1.2 Major Urban Greenspace

1.2.1 Greenbelt

1.2.1.1 LRT Extension from Bayshore to Moodie Drive

Phase 2 of the LRT plan included the extension of the LRT from Bayshore to Moodie Drive. In addition to the selection of the path of the rail line through the Greenbelt, the plan included the location of the LRT station at Moodie Drive and also of a Light Maintenance and Storage Facility, essentially a large train garage, in the vicinity of the terminal. There was some controversy regarding the latter, as the location proposed by the project team would have required the removal of a large section of the Crystal Beach Woods, a large woodlot extensively used by the local community. Thanks to the combined efforts of the local community association, the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre and the Greenspace Alliance through the public consultation process, the location of the LMSF was shifted to a less damaging site on a strip of Ministry of Transport land between Highway 417 and Corkstown Road, thereby preserving the Crystal Beach Woods.

1.2.1.2 LRT Extension to Kanata

Phase 3 of the LRT will extend the LRT from Moodie Drive to Kanata. The GA participated in the public consultation regarding the alignment of the line through the Greenbelt and supported the option that was eventually selected, closely following the north side of the 417 as far as Huntmar Road, which in our view was the least damaging to the Greenbelt. A final extension south to Hazeldean Road was proposed late in the study, for which we voiced concerns regarding the crossings of the Carp River, Feedmill Creek and Poole Creek and associated riparian greenspace.

1.2.1.3 Widening and Realignment of Leitrim Road

We participated throughout the year in the public consultation regarding the post-2031 widening and realignment of Leitrim Road, which traverses the Greenbelt south of the Ottawa International Airport. We supported an alignment proposed by the NCC which ran south of the Greenbelt as it would have caused the least fragmentation of greenspace. However the project team proposed a more northerly path, which was eventually approved by the Transportation Committee and Council. We remain concerned that as a result of this plan and changes agreed by the NCC and the Airport Authority regarding the delineation of their areas of responsibilities, the Greenbelt has been reduced to less than a few hundred metres wide in this area.

1.2.1.4 Widening of Old Richmond Road

A City plan to widen Old Richmond Road and West Hunt Club through the southwest part of the Greenbelt was handed over from planning and environment staff to engineering and construction early in the year. The Greenspace Alliance was given the opportunity to review elements of the plan such as wildlife crossings and greenspace and wetlands preservation and/or compensation.

1.2.1.5 Rezoning Application for Wesley Clover Parks

An application to alter zoning to facilitate the expansion of facilities and activities at Wesley Clover Parks, which is the new operator of the former municipal equestrian centre and campground situated in the Greenbelt west of Moodie Drive, came to the attention of the GA late in the year. This is of concern to us and will be addressed in the new year.

1.2.2 Central Experimental Farm

1.2.2.1 *New Campus of the Ottawa Hospital*

With the decision to build the new Ottawa Hospital campus on the former Sir John Carling site having been taken last year, our focus shifted to the administrative processes to implement that decision quickly and definitively so as to close off any opportunity for a reversal of the decision back to the open greenspaces of the Central Experimental Farm. We commented on the city zoning proposals with a view to protecting greenspace adjoining the site. We followed closely the evolution of the 99-year lease that was signed between the NCC and the Ottawa Hospital, further cementing the agreement. We commented on and supported a rezoning application brought forward by the hospital to zone the entire parcel as institutional, rather than retaining some mixed use zoning along Carling Avenue, as this was being used by opponents to the site as a pretext to denigrate the agreement. Finally, we accepted the Hospital's invitation to sit on the Campus Engagement Group, a formal consultation panel that will advise the hospital's Board of Governors throughout the next three years of the design and planning phase.

1.2.3 Kanata Highlands

Residential development is ongoing in the Kanata Highlands, in fulfillment of decades old agreements made by the former City of Kanata. This represents massive and ongoing loss of greenspace as all these areas are rocky forested outcrops, separated by wetlands and waterways.

1.2.3.1 *KNL*

The Kanata North Lands Development is a joint Richcraft and Urbandale consortium which is developing the final phases of what started as the Kanata Lakes development many decades ago. The tree cutting operations for Phases 7, 8 and 9 were mostly completed in winter 2017, with the final areas cleared once Blanding Turtles had left their known wintering areas in spring 2018. Our major concern over the last year was the potential for further destruction of greenspace depending on the storm water management options that will be selected for the development. We prepared a position on this, which was circulated to expert contacts for review and comment. The latest indications are that storm water drainage for Phase 9, the area just north of the Beaver Pond, will be via the Kizzell drain, to Watts Creek, with no change in water level in the Beaver Pond. This will preserve the greenspace that remains along the northern edge of the pond, as per the tree cutting permit. Plans are still not known for Phases 7 and 8. The fate of the "swing" greenspace, which was left standing after the tree cutting, and perhaps parts of Trillium Woods and the Monk Environmental Forest, will depend on the options selected.

1.2.3.2 *Richardson Ridge*

The Regional Group applied for an Overall Benefit Permit, which is required when species at risk are present in a development area, in regards to northern expansion of their development at Richardson Ridge. The GA reached out to the proponent to try to remain in the loop concerning this development and the mitigation measures that will be put in place to preserve/restore greenspace and habitat.

1.2.4 Federal Pathways and Corridors

The network of greenspaces along the NCC bicycle paths, margins of NCC parkways and the federal lands along the banks of the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers are a major greenspace asset for Ottawa-Gatineau.

1.2.4.1 *Woodroffe/Baseline SWM pond*

The GA participated in the public consultation for this city project, which is part of the Pinecrest Creek-Westboro Stormwater Retrofit Plan, which itself is one of the projects of the Ottawa River Action Plan. The purpose of this particular pond, which is located in the bicycle path corridor northeast of the Baseline Rd/Woodroffe intersection, is mainly to improve water quality, capturing and storing run-off from the upper reach of Pinecrest Creek to allow particulates to settle before continuing downstream to the Ottawa River. The GA supported the City's green infrastructure design and observed that staff seemed attentive to concerns of local residents, although there was significant local resistance to the project. It was approved by the Environment Committee on June 20.

1.2.4.2 *Rochester Field*

We participated with City staff and NCC representatives to discuss new developments in this longstanding issue. In the 2003 Official Plan, the City of Ottawa designated Rochester Field, along with part of the meadow west of McCarthy Woods and the Merivale-Woodroffe corridor, as Open Space. These designations were appealed by the NCC, which owns these lands, so as to preserve their potential for development. At the time, the Greenspace Alliance sought and obtained party status in the appeal, favouring the City's position. Mediation was conducted and then suspended indefinitely in 2008. However, with agreement having been reached between the City and the NCC for the western extension of the LRT to run along the parkway to the north of Rochester Field and the NCC's plans to develop a linear park all along the shore of the Ottawa River, conditions were now in place to deal with the zoning of Rochester Field and resolve that part of the appeal. The City therefore put forth an Official Plan and zoning bylaw amendment, in agreement with the NCC, that would see two thirds of Rochester Field kept as greenspace, and one third to be zoned for development. We declared our support for the proposal, with the prospect that the NCC might drop its appeal for the McCarthy Woods meadow and compensate elsewhere for greenspace loss at Rochester Field. In the event, through further discussion and involvement of the local community and councillor, Planning Committee approved an Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendment which would allow commercial development on part of Rochester Field fronting on Richmond Rd, while preserving the balance (80%) as Open Space. City Council approved the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw.

1.3 Other Greenspace

Many other threats and opportunities for greenspace preservation come to our attention, covering a wide array of size and types of natural features.

1.3.1 Hydro One transmission corridors

We were alerted early in the year to extreme clear cutting being carried out by Hydro One in its transmission corridors. This seemed to be a change from past clearing programs, which were more moderate in nature. We shared this information with the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club Conservation Committee and also reached out to the community. The Beaverbrook community was particularly affected by this program. Thanks to the efforts of the community association and the local councillor, a protocol was developed which involved agreements with homeowners regarding the nature and scale of the clearing. This provides a useful template for other communities facing a similar threat.

1.3.2 21 Withrow Avenue – City View

A development plan to build several single detached residences on the 2-acre historic property at 21 Withrow Avenue in Ottawa's City View neighbourhood was brought to our attention. It is the site of a

heritage residence known as Kilmore, which once belonged to the renowned Confederation poet William Wilfred Campbell. It is heavily treed, with many mature specimens. We wrote a letter to Planning staff to try and preserve this greenspace as the surrounding community has little accessible greenspace in its midst. We attended public meetings and met with members of the City View Community Association, which has been fighting to preserve this greenspace. We also intervened with the Committee of Adjustment, where the developer was attempting to have part of the planned development approved. This request was turned down. This property is also of interest to the Poets' Pathway, a group which originally stemmed from the Greenspace Alliance and which has been developing a thematic walking path around Ottawa, from Beechwood Cemetery to Britannia, over the last several years.

1.3.3 Shea Road Woods – Stittsville

The City of Ottawa, with the leadership of the local councillor, made an innovative arrangement to acquire Shea Road Woods in Stittsville, a 5-hectare parcel which is recognized as an urban natural feature. It will be preserved as a conservation and educational area. We wrote a letter to Planning Committee congratulating the City for this initiative and encouraging them to consider similar arrangements elsewhere.

1.3.4 Forest View Trails, Orleans

We were invited by the North Chapel Hill Community Association to participate, along with City and Conservation Authority staff, in a walkabout of the trail system in the Voyageur Creek wooded area adjoining the community. Mountain bikers had been using the trails, which caused consternation for local dog walkers and other users of the trails. We reached out to the Ottawa Mountain Biking Association to assess their bona fide regarding stewardship responsibilities, which in our experience with them in the South March Highlands trail system, was pretty good. We wrote a report on our visit, which will be included in a final report/community proposal being prepared by the community association.

1.3.5 Immaculata High School Sport Field – Old Ottawa East

In late April 2018, we were alerted by members of the Old Ottawa East Community of a plan to convert an existing unlit natural grass sports field to a lit artificial turf field. The former is greenspace, the latter is not. The issue could be a test of the new Site Alteration Bylaw's prohibition of vegetation removal.

2 Policy Input

In addition to reacting to specific threats, we also are proactive in protecting greenspace by participating in the development of municipal, provincial and federal policies and plans that touch upon greenspace issues and concerns.

2.1 Municipal

2.1.1 Urban Forest Management Plan

This multiyear planning framework was developed by the City in 2017 with the assistance of consultants and effective consultations with a stakeholders group, including the GA. When it was presented at the Environment Committee in June, all intervenors, including the Greater Ottawa Homebuilders Association, spoke in favour of the plan and of the process by which it was developed. The item carried unanimously. With Council endorsement later in June, it became the city's official plan for managing Ottawa's urban forest. A budget has been allocated and work started immediately on year 1 activities, in

particular, the tree canopy study.

2.1.2 Significant Woodland Policy

The Provincial Policy Statement 2014 brought in a new requirement, namely that the definition of significant woodland had to comply with provincial guidelines. The definition in the City's Official Plan was of Ottawa's own making. It therefore developed a new Significant Woodland Policy, which we supported. It was adopted in December 2016, through OPA 179, but was appealed by a number of developers. Meanwhile, the motion to adopt the policy included the direction to establish a working group to develop an approach to dealing with woodlands in urban expansion areas; these had been excluded from the final Policy as the staff proposal did not garner full support at Council. We were invited to sit on this working group, along with representatives from the development industry and other stakeholders. The focus of the work has been on developing an approach to conducting environmental assessments of woodlands that take into account the social and economic benefits of urban woodlands, in addition to the ecological benefits usually considered. This framework would be used to determine the extent of protection that would be afforded to woodlands considered significant in urban expansion areas. The work progressed well over the year but with the determination in May 2018 that the appeal of OPA 179 would only be heard in mid-2019, it will not be finalized until the start of the new term of Council in 2019.

2.1.3 Site Alteration By-law

In the run-up to the 2014 Municipal elections, the Greenspace Alliance had made the adoption of a Site Alteration Bylaw a key priority in its electoral messaging. This was referenced by the Mayor himself when such a bylaw was in fact adopted in May 2018. Over this period, the GA worked closely with the Federation of Citizens' Associations to formulate proposals for the by-law. In August 2017, the City made an annotated draft by-law available on its site and provided stakeholders with additional information. We met with city staff and selected councillors to voice our concerns on three issues: (1) we would have preferred that the bylaw be enforced through a permitting system, rather than a complaint procedure. Ottawa would be the only municipality in Ontario with a Site Alteration by-law that does not include a permit system; (2) we were pleased to see that site alterations in the proximity of sensitive environmental areas would require approval from the General Manager of Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development. However, we questioned the sufficiency of the proposed distance of 30 meters considering that a similar policy in the current Official Plan sets the limit at 120 meters for significant wetlands and natural areas; (3) we were concerned that the Site Alteration By-law as currently drafted did not cover preemptive clearing of trees and woodlands in the peri-urban areas ahead of urban expansions. We submitted the comments of the joint GA-FCA working group on the site alteration bylaw and agreed that when this issue is taken up by committee and council, the GA and FCA would each make representations on their own behalf. We made representations in person and in writing at Planning Committee and also at the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. We supported a motion put forward at ARAC requiring that staff work on a definition of the peri-urban area, something we had been advocating as a necessary first step in dealing with pre-emptive clearing of woodlands in advance of urban expansions. In the end, we are pleased to see that a bylaw was adopted, that it applies to both the urban and rural parts of Ottawa and that it covers vegetation removal. However, the bylaw that was adopted was weaker than what we had hoped for.

2.1.4 Beyond 2036 Sounding Board

In preparation for the next Official Plan update, the City created a panel of around 40 community members across a broad range of interests and organizations to generate ideas and scenarios on the a long term vision for Ottawa. We were invited to sit on this Sounding Board. Through a series of four workshop-like meetings starting in October 2017, we helped develop scenarios that covered economic development, demographics and other drivers and disrupters, including greenspace and environmental considerations. A report from the exercise is expected in May 2018.

2.1.5 City of Ottawa Budget Consultation

We made a written submission to the City's 2018 budget process, focussing on greenspace funding. It elicited a detailed response from the Chair of the Environment Committee, including \$500K in new funding for the Natural Areas Acquisition reserve, which we had proposed be increased.

2.1.6 Tree Conservation By-law Review

One of the action items for 2018 in the Urban Forest Management Plan is a review of the current tree conservation by-laws. We have been asked to join the key stakeholders group for this review.

2.2 Provincial

2.2.1 OMB Reform

This is an area in which we took a particular interest as so much loss of greenspace has originated from OMB land use decisions. We worked with the Governance Committee of the Federation of Citizens' Associations to formulate positions and provide feedback. We had prepared detailed input to an October 2016 consultation paper. The May 2017 announcement of the plans for OMB reform responded to many of the concerns that we and others had put forward. The reform was incorporated into Bill 139, along with amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act. We sent detailed comments on the planning aspects of the Bill to the Ministry in August 2017, and again to the Standing Committee on Social Policy in October; along with many other stakeholders, we were denied the opportunity to testify in person. The Bill was adopted in December 2017, opening a new chapter in recourse measures for land use planning in Ontario. There are still many issues to clarify regarding the implementation of the new local appeal tribunal and other aspects of the Bill, which was proclaimed into law on April 3 2018. We have commented on new proposed regulations and also submitted a list of detailed questions regarding implementation matters and began to receive some responses by the end of April. Overall, we see this as a positive development for greenspace protection in Ontario.

2.3 Federal

2.3.1 Gatineau Park Public Trails Consultation

The National Capital Commission is proposing to meld unofficial pathways and official pathways in sensitive areas and will be working to redo the maps within the next 5 years. The emphasis is on providing more education and the challenge is moving from recreation to conservation as the original mandate of the park was recreation. Everyone present at the consultation, including the GA, was supportive of the idea.

2.3.2 NCC Environmental Strategy Review

We attended the stakeholder workshop and also the public session on this topic. The full scope of the NCC's activities and involvement in the community is looked at in this Environmental Strategy update.

We raised the need to protect all woodlots, suggested improvements to the NCC's revamped web site and expressed our desire to see action on implementation of the Greenbelt Master Plan.

2.3.3 Gatineau Park Masterplan Renewal

We advertised these sessions and the online survey posted by the NCC website on our mailing list (the GA list). Board members participated in the English session on October 26, which was well attended, and also the French language session in Gatineau on November 1. Attendees, including the GA, were mostly in agreement with the conservationist view of the Park's future, restricting tourism and activity to the southern section and protecting the vast northern reaches of the Park.

2.3.4 Federal Environmental Assessment Act Review

One of our members attended a session of the Expert Panel assembled for this review on their visit to Ottawa. We prepared comments, which were submitted in May and published on our web site. Once the Bill was announced, we expressed our pleasure at seeing that the Fisheries Act would again include protections for fish habitat. However, two points of concern remain. The Expert Panel's recommendation to convert the Environmental Assessment Agency into a quasi-judicial board was rejected, and the protection of navigable waters has not been restored as per the former Navigable Waters Protection Act. These points were raised in our Submission on the Discussion Paper of Federal Environmental and Regulatory Reviews. In the spring, Bill C-69, (an Act to Enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts) passed second reading and is now before the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. We submitted written comments to the Standing Committee, in which we expressed our relief that the protection of navigable waters has been restored almost to the full extent of the former Navigable Waters Protection Act. We believe that the default position should be that all navigable waters are protected, with proponents required to make a case for development. In general, however, we are concerned that development applications in or around navigable waters will trigger what is called an impact assessment rather than a full environmental assessment. While not all of the details of the impact assessment process have been worked out, we are concerned that other considerations will crowd out environmental values and result in a land delivery system for development rather than an environmental protection system.

2.3.5 Federal Budget Input

The Liberal MP for Pontiac, Will Amos, sent a letter, co-signed by over 100 MPs and senators, to the Minister of Finance asking for increased conservation funding in the 2018 federal budget. We wrote our own letter to the Minister of Finance, cc: all National Capital Region MPs, in support of this budget request. Happily, the February 27 federal budget included \$1.3 billion for conservation measures.

3 Governance

The Greenspace Alliance governs itself as a well constituted not-for-profit corporation, in accordance with its charter and bylaws. Meeting agenda and minutes are produced and published and we maintain and publish extensive documentation about our issues and activities through our mailing list and on our website. In October 2017, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Greenspace Alliance with a reception and song circle held at historic Ferme Moore in Gatineau. It was well attended by current and past members, including several who were with the GA at its beginnings.

3.1 Volunteer report

We received much appreciated assistance from volunteers this year. A team of three volunteers completed the year-long project of screening each of the 600+ pages on our website for corruption caused by a virus attack and reloading them to a new website in a more secure environment. They were each awarded a certificate of appreciation and a small gift for their work. Another volunteer took over our geomatics project (see below) and moved it much closer to completion than we had ever hope for. Finally, a team of two volunteers is leading our 2018 Municipal election project (see below).

3.2 Membership report

We welcomed 8 new members to the Greenspace Alliance this year. Two of them, Andrew Johnson and Kate Punnett, have joined the Board, and another, Ben Christy, has taken on the task of Recording Secretary. The membership and the GA mail list continues to grow. Through our collaboration with the Federation of Citizens' Associations, the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club, Ecology Ottawa and many other groups, our reach goes considerably beyond our immediate membership and subscriber list.

3.3 Fundraising

Other than membership fees and occasional donations, our largest source of income was the donation from the spring plant sale. Many thanks to GA member Janice Seline and her helpers for organizing this annual fundraising activity once again.

3.4 Webmaster's report

After the cleanup project performed by a team of volunteers was completed, we migrated our website to a new server, with better security and backups. We also took the opportunity of this review and transfer operation to implement the website in Wordpress, opening the door to more and better design options. Some small improvements have been made and plans for further upgrades have been approved by the Board.

3.5 Geodata report

One of the Greenspace Alliance's goals in 2017-18 was to move forward with the development of a greenspace inventory and mapping application, which would provide an additional evidence-based foundation for its advocacy work. A demonstration was made of the approach at the March 2017 meeting of the Federation of Citizens' Associations. Following this, we obtained the support of city staff and permission to use their latest aerial photography. The project was framed as a partnership, with the GA focusing on the urban part of the City. We submitted a funding application to the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. The City provided a letter confirming that it was partnering with us on the project and that they would assist by supplying a digital land cover map, accompanying GIS database, and technical advice. The funding was to be used to hire someone on a full-time basis for a 10-week period to complete the mapping part of the project. Unfortunately, the application was turned down.

In November, we met with a group called Open Street Map Ottawa, which is the local chapter of an international group of GIS and mapping enthusiasts who work on a volunteer basis on mapping projects. The main organizer of this group agreed to schedule a “meet up” for the greenspace mapping project, which was held instead of a regular general meeting on December 18th. The City provided detailed geographic files for city parks and urban natural areas for the event and a work process and plan was agreed for importing this detailed geographic information into the Ottawa OSM. The collective worked very diligently over the holiday period and by the end of January all of the data had been uploaded into OSM. We could now analyze the data so as to answer the questions which prompted this project in the first place: is Ottawa meeting its Official Plan target of having 4 hectares of greenspace per 1000 population, and do all Ottawa residents live within 400 meters of accessible greenspace? One of the attendees at the workshop has volunteered to take the lead on the analysis phase of the project. By the end of March she had consolidated the data and developed the methodology required to perform this type of analysis.

3.6 Association report

The Greenspace Alliance extends its reach through cross-organizational memberships. For example, the Alliance is a member of the Federation of Citizens’ Associations and it, in turn, is a member of the GA. We have similar arrangements with the Healthy Transportation Coalition. Several community associations are also members of the GA and we have cross organizational links with the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club and Ecology Ottawa. These external links are what makes us truly an Alliance.

In 2017-18, we worked closely with the FCA on policy issues such as the Site Alteration By-law and Bill 139. As members of the FCA Governance Committee, we developed approaches and attempted to bring about improvements in the City’s public engagement practices. We attended the FCA AGM, a planning workshop for community associations which they organized, and, several monthly general meetings. We attended meetings of the OFNC Conservation Committee and we collaborated on the issues of Hydro One’s clearing of hydro corridors and the extensive slashing at Mud Lake by the NCC in the spring of 2018. With Ecology Ottawa, we participated in Eco-fest celebrating their 10th anniversary in October and also in the Park Summit in April 2018. Finally, we accepted their invitation to sit on an advisory committee for a report they are producing on green infrastructure.

3.7 2018 Municipal Elections

We have decided to conduct a campaign leading up to the 2018 municipal elections, covering the period of June to October 2018. We agreed that our goal is to ensure that all mayoral and councillor candidates are aware of the environmental and greenspace issues they will confront, if elected, in the next term of Council. We expect to run a survey of candidates on the issues and to publish frequent messages through various media to highlight these issues.