



Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital
Alliance pour les espaces verts de la capitale du Canada

ECOLOGY
OTTAWA



ÉCOLOGIE
OTTAWA



PRESS RELEASE

Groups decry “outrageous” act by Ontario’s Attorney General

Province aims to shut down Local Planning Appeal Support Centre

OTTAWA March 5, 2019 —Community associations and concerned citizens seeking redress for municipal planning decisions will be important casualties of the Attorney General’s decision to close a centre that was helping them understand, prepare for, and even avoid appeals to municipal planning decisions.

The dust has not settled on this issue. A coalition of environmental and citizens’ groups in Ottawa is demanding to know how the province can announce the shutdown of the LPA Support Centre (LPASC) that was created under the [Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017](#).

Outrageous behaviour by Attorney-General of Ontario

“Last week, somebody from the Attorney General’s office told Mary Lee, executive director of the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Support Centre, that she and her staff were no longer needed,” said Paul Johanis, chair of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada’s Capital. “This action dealt a blow to citizens across the province who may not be able to exercise their rights effectively without the advice Lee and her staff have been set up to provide.”

“Creation of the LPASC was one of the bright spots of the previous government's land use planning reforms,” said Johanis. “After only nine months in operation, the government cannot rationally justify a move to close this centre. As far as we can tell, the Act that created the Centre has not been repealed, which makes us wonder if the closure is even legal.”

Calling the move “outrageous,” Johanis said that he is spearheading a [provincial advocacy campaign](#) to demand accountability from the Attorney General.

Destroying the possibility of a level playing field

The Federation of Community Associations of Ottawa (FCA) has joined the Greenspace Alliance in opposing the Attorney General's move. "This Support Centre was working within a legal mandate to help level the playing field considerably for citizens across Ontario," said Alex Cullen, acting president of FCA.

Cullen said the Support Centre handled 570 requests for assistance from 168 different communities since opening its doors last summer. "Each case is unique and each community association that went to the Centre for advice did so in good faith. The Attorney General of Ontario is now revoking any good faith we held."

Ontario's land use and building industries have deep pockets that fund staff lawyers and planners, said Angela Herzog-Keller co-chair of The Glebe Community Association's Environment Committee. "We know that only by getting sound advice can community associations make informed decisions on whether to appeal local planning decisions. For us, hiring a lawyer and planner can cost \$25,000—not something any of our groups can take on without serious thought."

Saving money in the long run

"Our community association has been reviewing a looming zoning by-law amendment application that we think would also require an Official Plan amendment", said Paul Goodkey, a long-time activist in Old Ottawa East. "The applicant and city staff don't agree with us. So, we contacted the Support Centre, provided them with the relevant documents, and were pleased to receive confirmation that our opinion was correct.

"The Centre's advice puts us in a strong position to possibly avert an appeal."

Knowing where a group stands at the outset can lead to fewer appeals in the long run.

"This was the kind of value that the Support Centre offered community associations," said Cullen. "It gave our member groups a chance to be clear about our likelihood of success and not clog up the provincial appeals system with poorly drafted community interventions."

Meeting the public's need

"We had struggled through a Committee of Adjustment and a Tribunal hearing before we learned about the LPASC," said Joan Clark, President of City View Community Association. Her neighbourhood is fighting against a high-profile subdivision plan on a large heritage and treed property at 21 Withrow Ave.

"Regardless of the Tribunal decision, we knew that the issue would come before Committee and Council again. When we contacted the Centre about next steps,

staff was very responsive and helpful for people like us who really need professional advice."

Loss of Support Centre is "win" for builder industry

"It's clear to us that LPASC was designed to help manage the gulf in resources and expertise between developers and people in our communities," said Robb Barnes.

"We see developer-dominated processes as a recurring theme when there are fights over community environmental benefits," he added. "It's not okay for the Attorney General to simply pull the rug from under a service that was helping to safeguard greenery in the push across this province toward intensification."

-30-

For media inquiries:

Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, Paul Johanis, Chair,

Phone: 613 513-8372

Email: contact@greenspace-alliance.ca

Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa, Alex Cullen, Acting President

Phone: 613 252-5634

Email: alexcullen@rogers.com

Ecology Ottawa, Robb Barnes, Executive Director

Phone: 613 276-5753

Email: robb.barnes@ecologyottawa.ca