

## PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

**(OTTAWA)** – Representatives from the People’s Official Plan<sup>1</sup> – a coalition of community and environmental groups focused on strengthening climate action and equity in Ottawa’s new Official Plan – are calling on Ottawa City Council to defer a major decision regarding urban expansion. Currently, Council’s decision is scheduled for February 10, as it meets to vote on urban expansion recommendations from the January 23 Joint Meeting of the Planning Committee and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Council should send the staff report back to the Committee until it has successfully addressed the following concerns:

- Decisions related to unceded Indigenous land must be within a transparent, robust, inclusive reconciliation protocol. An appropriate protocol would centre on broad Indigenous engagement and benefit, and not be based on a rushed development process within age-old colonial processes that continue to drive wedges between communities;
- Failure to account for the greenhouse gas emissions and related public costs of options, despite declaring a climate emergency;
- The Joint Planning Committee and Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee’s disregard of the unanimous council directive to not even consider prime agricultural land in this urban boundary expansion; and
- Poor quality and duration of community consultation on many dimensions of the new Official Plan, particularly the Growth Management Strategy.

“These major decisions are being rushed for no reason other than political expediency”, says **Paul Johanis, Chair of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada’s Capital**. “We were already concerned that the City has approved an urban expansion even though no expansion is the better option in response to the climate emergency. The long-term implications of COVID-19 are not taken into account in this plan and the massive (250 pages plus Schedules) draft Official Plan only circulated at the end of November is clearly not ready for primetime. Bungling into a controversy over Indigenous rights and land claims is the last straw. We call on the City to, at a minimum, adopt the staff recommendation to take the time to properly assess the implications of the expansion options that were proposed, or, even better, to extend the deadline they arbitrarily set for completing the review of the Official Plan. Climate justice, reconciliation and the well-being of all our communities deserve our best shot.”

“Respectful consultation takes time. It has become clear that the City has not yet meaningfully consulted with all the Algonquin communities. This should take precedence. Indeed, the Province legally requires that the City engage and coordinate with Indigenous communities on land use planning matters”, said **Angela Keller-Herzog, co-chair of Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES)**.

“Expanding the urban boundary to include 450 hectares that rates poorly under Council's own methodology, is not sound public policy”, says **Alex Cullen, President of the Federation of Citizens Associations**. “We urge Council to take the time needed to properly consult with all affected stakeholders and to make a sound, evidence-based, decision”.

“[One Planet Living](#), the sustainable development framework put forward for the Tewin proposal by the Algonquins of Ontario, with funding from Taggart investments for the purchase of the land, is an aspirational label that relies on members to monitor their own progress. It lacks the rigor of [independent assessment](#),” says **Daniel Buckles, Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University**. “The Zibi development, which is the only other project in Canada with the label, has already had to push back its target for zero carbon energy. It would be risky for the City to count on developers with little prior experience in this arena to hold themselves accountable to sustainability goals.”

“Over 106 hectares (250 acres) of the best farmland in the City of Ottawa was added into the proposed new urban boundary at the last minute without proper debate, illustrating the problems of a rushed process. The evidence shows that this land swap is not supporting ‘Transit-Oriented Development’”, says **Phil Mount, Associate Director, Just Food and member of the last Land Evaluation Area Review (LEAR) conducted by the City of Ottawa**. “Councillors should not be discarding the principle that they unanimously supported less than a year ago—to defend agricultural land from urban expansion without exception.”

“We know urban sprawl is a climate killer,” said **Robb Barnes, Executive Director of Ecology Ottawa**. “Council voted for more sprawl in May 2020, but there is still time to minimize the damage caused by this decision. The current process – rushed, with minimal consultation and completely lacking analysis on climate impacts – means council is flying blind on one of its most important votes this term. We need council to step back from the brink.”

Ottawa City Council’s upcoming vote on urban expansion is part of a broader series of decisions affecting Ottawa’s new Official Plan. The new Official Plan is the city’s major land use and policy document, meant to guide development of the city until 2046 and beyond. Council is currently slated to vote on the new Official Plan in June 2021.

**For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:**

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1. People's Official Plan member organizations who endorse this message include: Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES); Ecology Ottawa; Greenspace Alliance for Canada's Capital, Federation of Citizens Associations and Just Food.