

## **Submission of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital on Ottawa's Wildlife Strategy Joint Meeting of ARAC and Environment and Climate Change, June 17 2024**

We commend staff and support a number of the proposed action items in the report including

- the prime importance of conservation of habitat (Action 1);
- establishment of an advisory board (Action 2);
- the focus on diseases transmitted via wildlife (Action 3);
- the commitment to make a plan for wildlife crossings (Action 4);
- provide assistance to farmers who suffer losses due to wildlife (Action 6);
- adding an FTE devoted to wildlife management (Action 7); and
- a proposed contract with Coyote Watch Canada (Action 10)

Still, regarding Action 1, this will only be effective if the new provisions of the Official Plan are fully implemented. As it stands, a promised Greenspace Master Plan does not yet exist and there are no means of implementing provisions such as achieving no net loss of woodlands and wetlands in the rural area. In this regard, we would note the importance of the Site Alteration Bylaw currently under review in fully protecting the natural environment city wide.

Regarding Action 2, we would like to see more effort to ensure that broad community interests are represented on the Advisory Board. Groups and organizations that have long been active in wildlife care and education should have a place at the table. The Ottawa Carleton Wildlife Centre is one such centre of expertise and we would advocate for it to be part of the proposed Advisory Board.

Regarding Action 4, we would also wish to see broad public engagement on the methodology for selecting candidate crossings and in the decisions made to build specific crossings.

We have questions about, and do not support, proposed Actions 8 and 9.

Regarding beavers (Action 8), we fully appreciate the City's legal obligation to maintain municipal drains and the need to have SW ponds function properly. However, other municipalities in Ontario have shown that these objectives can be achieved while keeping beavers on the landscape. The commitment to test new approaches such as flow devices outside of stormwater infrastructure is much too restricted. It will not address most of the beaver mortality. At a minimum we would like to see trials of these approaches in selected municipal drains and other stormwater infrastructures to ascertain how in Ottawa's context flow devices could potentially be used.

Regarding the large animal protocol (Action 9), there is no indication that much will change. A robust and sustained education campaign is required, not just aimed at the general public but also at service providers such as call centre staff. Since large mammals almost invariably wander out of the Greenbelt or other NCC-owned land, the NCC should unambiguously be given the lead on responding to any issues.

Regarding the unaddressed issues noted in the report, we are very disappointed to see that the Protocol to protect wildlife during construction will not be elevated as policy but instead will remain simply a guideline. This will lead to destruction of habitat all through the year rather than restricting it to late summer or early fall when impact on wildlife is minimized. We dispute staff's contention that adopting

such a policy would drive forestry companies out of business. Major developments that require such destruction are planned years in advance and can be scheduled to "work with nature" in at least this respect.

Finally, there are NPOs in town that provide real services in the protection or rehabilitation of wildlife. We believe they deserve to be financially supported in some way by the City.