

Presentation to Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
22 June 2006
Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee

OFGAC commends the City and its staff, especially Ms. Levesque, for the tremendous effort in trying to come to grips with this issue. The report contains a gold mine of information that will, we hope, be useful in the years ahead. The information on conservation mechanisms is especially valuable; OFGAC hopes that residents in all of Ottawa will be able to make use of that information. In general terms, OFGAC is supportive of this report and its objectives. But, we do have some concerns about some of the recommendations but we will focus our comments today on Recommendation 5.

We are concerned that the words “cancelled and withdrawn” in Recommendation 5 will lead to an “open season” on wetlands when wetland owners in the rest of the City say “Me Too”. How will the city resist the calls for re-evaluation of currently-designated wetlands and how will the city respond when there is a wet area that needs to be evaluated and designated elsewhere in the City.

We and the Environmental Advisory Committee are in agreement that Recommendations 5a and 5b need to be amended to put a time limit on the process. It is possible that wetland protection in Goulbourn Township could be held in abeyance until 2013. How many developments and wetland losses will occur in that time? We don't know the landowners' intentions but it does seem clear that at least some of them do have development objectives that the City is now facilitating.

As these recommendations stand now, landowners in the Flewellyn Road area will be able to propose development of their lands at any time between now and 2008 and quite possibly 2013. If the City is committed to supporting those developments at the OMB (subject to those lands not being already designated as Rural Natural Features) will the City be equally supportive of protection of water and groundwater? Where are the priorities?

We also believe that the city needs to be more emphatic in its statements in regard to its commitment to wetland protection. That objective would be met if Recommendation 5b were amended to make it absolutely clear that “those lands outside the influence of the planned drainage corrections” means only those lands in the former Goulbourn Township that were initially part of the evaluation process. The same is true of Recommendation 5c. We are concerned that 5a and 5b may be read in isolation without reference to the general heading in 5.

We are supportive of continuing this working group process and we will be monitoring progress as well as participating in the meetings. OFGAC looks forward to the next steps and work to complete the Work Plan. We will be suggesting some changes to staff in how the Stakeholder Group functions in the next phase.

Iola Price
Chair
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