

# Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee

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## Activities Report 2009 & 2010

December 2010

Provided to Ottawa City Council

## **Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee Mandate:**

The Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee (OFGAC) provides advice and guidance to Ottawa City Council. Its mandate is to help safeguard the environment of the city through the use of trees, forests and greenspace by:

- Providing input into policies and budgets related to greenspace preservation and the management of urban and rural forests
- Recommending ways in which the city can meet its greenspace, biodiversity conservation, preservation and restoration, and forest-related objectives as outlined in the Official Plan and other planning documents
- Promoting public awareness of the role of greenspace and forests in protecting and enhancing quality of life.

## **OFGAC's Responsibilities are:**

- Providing advice and guidance to Council through the Planning and Environment Committees on city policies, programs, by-laws, regulations, and budgets related to forest and greenspace management
- Providing a forum for citizens who are interested in forests and greenspace to raise issues and concerns
- Advising on areas where the introduction of trees and tree cover would be beneficial to the environment or where their removal would have a negative impact on a site or ecosystem
- Identifying issues that may have an impact on trees, tree cover, biodiversity or natural systems and recommending ways to minimize the impact
- Advising on the introduction of windbreaks, the shading of transportation corridors, the greening of streets, roads, parks and conservation areas, the preservation of tree cover, and forest management in the city
- Promoting and facilitating cooperation with local community groups and environmental organizations on education and other initiatives related to forest and greenspace management
- Conducting advocacy on issues relating to Ottawa's forests and greenspace
- Providing advice on the protection, management, acquisition, and conservation of greenspace and other environmentally sensitive areas in Ottawa
- Working to reduce the burden on the city's Environmental Resources Areas Acquisition Fund by promoting partnerships with developers (in the form of land bequests and conservation development) and with other stakeholders (in the form of land trusts and conservation easements)
- Liaising with other City of Ottawa advisory committees as appropriate.

## **Activities of 2009 & 2010**

Highlighted is some of the work OFGAC has accomplished over the last two years:

- Assisted city staff in developing the Urban Tree Conservation By-law, which brings Ottawa into synch with many other Ontario municipalities; The Urban Tree Conservation Bylaw (UTCB) was seven years in the making. Participated in the Technical Advisory Committee for the by-law.. The UTCB represented one of the most significant investments of OFGAC's resources, including outreach through local media and targeted awareness-raising initiatives which included Councillors. Presented OFGAC's position and recommendations on the UTCB before Standing Committee and Council. The UTCB was passed by City Council in June 2009 and came into effect in September 2009;
- Participated in and contributed comments to the Official Plan Review completed in 2009;
- Contributed a 26-page comments document to the Provincial Policy Statement 5-Year Review in 2010, for improving planning in the province, especially with a view to better environmental consideration and protection;
- Contributed to more than 65 Development Application Reviews from all regions of the city (rural, suburban and urban) in 2010, providing knowledgeable comments on how development proponents can preserve trees and treed spaces by using the principle of Designing with Nature (working with what is already there) as stipulated in the City's Official Plan, to create healthier, livable communities;
- Participated as a member of the current Wildlife Strategy Working Group, a council-mandated process, to find ways to minimize and educate about avoiding wildlife-human conflicts, which have been a contentious problem in recent years, especially in rural and suburban parts of the city;
- On-going collaboration with the city's Forestry Department in efforts to educate the public about issues with the invasive Emerald Ash Borer which is devastating the City's Ash trees, estimated to be 25% of Ottawa's current tree canopy;
- On-going common effort with the city's Land Use & Natural Systems unit in the Policy and Urban Design Department (part of the Planning & Growth Management Department which is within Infrastructure Services & Community Sustainability), regarding issues related to policy, planning and growth, and community sustainability;
- Contributed to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Guidelines;
- Contributed to the NCC's Greenbelt Master Plan Review;
- Organized and delivered guided walking tours as part of our responsibilities to educate and provide awareness events with a forest and greenspace focus within our communities – an outreach activity that has garnered much interest from the public at large. Over the last four years we have held 16 guided walking tours, of which six took place in 2009 and 2010;
- Maintained a stand-alone website, created several years ago by OFGAC volunteers, providing guidance, a resource and information on issues relating to trees, forests, wetlands, greenspace and biodiversity. Responded to numerous email enquiries and provided a venue for citizens to raise issues and concerns;
- Communicated the message to a variety of audiences with displays and presentations that it is imperative to protect Ottawa's forest and wetland areas, distinctive trees and unique natural spaces for their importance to biodiversity and for the support of essential ecological linkages between greenspaces (ponds, wetlands and forested areas).

**OFGAC focuses its work in three areas:  
Policy and Planning; Emerging Issues and Requested Advice; and Outreach.**

As outlined in the following OFGAC Activities and Accomplishments Matrix.

<b>A: Policy &amp; Planning</b>	<b>B: Emerging Issues &amp; Requested Advice</b>	<b>C: Outreach</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2009</b>
Assisted city staff in developing the Urban Tree Conservation By-Law bringing Ottawa into synch with other Ontario municipalities.	Brought opportunities to increase the inventory of downtown greenspaces to Councillors' attention.	Raised awareness of the importance of conserving trees, forests, wetlands and biodiversity within the city with media interviews (radio, television and newspapers).
Participated in the Technical Advisory Committee on Guidelines for the Tree Conservation Reports.	Raised awareness of opportunities to increase downtown tree canopy.	Participated in public education and awareness events helping to spread the information related to the need for the Urban Tree Conservation By-Law in the city.
Participated in the Official Plan 5-Year Review and provided an extensive report to Council (see note below (*)).	Contributed to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Parkland Dedication By-Law, and the Cash-in-lieu Parks Report.	Provided interviews to the news media on the Urban Tree Conservation By-Law and the preservation of Urban Natural Spaces and Distinctive Trees.
Provided advice on more than 27 development application reviews, including zoning bylaw amendments, site plan controls, plans of subdivision, Official Plan amendments.	Held regular discussions with city staff in the Land Use & Natural Systems, Policy & Urban Design Department regarding policies and current legislation.	Participated in public education and awareness events helping to spread the important messages and issues relating to the invasive Emerald Ash Borer insect problem.
Participated in the Petrie Island Stewardship Plan.	Participated in the Choosing our Future public events and workshops.	On-going information exchange with OFGAC's network of community groups and NGOs.
Contributed to developing guidelines for Naturalized Gardens in the Property Standards By-Law 2005-207 and Property Maintenance By-Law 2005-208 (a joint effort with EAC).	Met with city's Forestry Services to discuss budget related issues at the mid-year and end of year budget review process.	Participated with a display booth in the Wildlife Festival Event and the Museum of Nature Forum Lectures Series.
Contributed comments on the City's White Paper on the Greenbelt Master Plan Review.	Participated in the Manotick Community Design Plan public consultation process.	Continued maintenance by an OFGAC member of a stand-alone website, created several years ago by OFGAC volunteers.

<b>A: Policy &amp; Planning (cont'd) 2009</b>	<b>B: Emerging Issues &amp; Requested Advice (cont'd)</b>	<b>C: Outreach (cont'd) 2009</b>
Participated in the National Capital Commission's "Vision on the Future of the Greenbelt" public consultation workshops as part of the Greenbelt Master Plan Review.		Attended meetings of the Canadian Institute of Forestry, of the Eastern Ontario Model Forest, on a regular basis, and have a member who is part of the governing bodies of both; participated in the Regional Forest Health Committee.
Participated in the mid-term city governance review.		Organized a summer awareness Event - Emerald Ash Borer Invasive Species and its effects on the Ash Trees in the City held at Dovercourt Community Centre.
Received a presentation from the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust Conservancy to share information on successful projects.		Responded to media enquiries and provide interviews on matters that relate to OFGAC's Mandate (CBC Radio 91.5FM on the State of our Urban Forests).
		Provided interview with Ottawa Magazine for an article in "How to save and protect our Urban Forests."
		Conducted three seasonal guided walking tours throughout the city as a public outreach activity: Winter Awareness Event – The life and economics of a tree farm in North Gower; Morris Island Conservation Area – Explore this important ecosystem " Its A Real Gem"; A downtown walk to catch an invasive alien insect.

<b>A: Policy &amp; Planning 2010</b>	<b>B: Emerging Issues &amp; Requested Advice 2010</b>	<b>C: Outreach 2010</b>
Contributed to and supported the new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Guidelines developed by city staff.	Assisted Forestry Services with Emerald Ash Borer trapping/monitoring project.	Participated in public education and awareness events helping to spread the important messages and issues relating to the invasive Emerald Ash Borer insect problem.

<b>A: Policy &amp; Planning (cont'd) 2010</b>	<b>B: Emerging Issues &amp; Requested Advice (cont'd)</b>	<b>C: Outreach (cont'd) 2010</b>
Discussions with Councillors and city staff regarding better coordination of City By-Laws (2009-200 & 2006-279) in relation to the protection and preservation of city trees and conditions for building permits.	Participated to the mid-year budget review and provided a submission to PEC regarding the "Growing a healthy forest for the Nation's Capital".	Continued maintenance by an OFGAC member of a stand-alone website, created several years ago by OFGAC volunteers.
Provided advice on more than 65 development application reviews and on occasion presented to the Planning & Environment and/or Agricultural Rural Affairs Committees.	Met with Forestry Services to discuss budget related issues at the mid-year and end of year budget review process.	Conducted a plaque ceremony to commemorate the early settlers and the preservation of Butternut and Black Walnut grove in Barrhaven.
Reviewed more than 14 land disposal proposals.	Participated in the Carling-Bayshore CDP.	Conducted three seasonal guided walking tours throughout the city as a public outreach activity: McKay Lake "A renewed landfill with community help"; Rideau Hall -- Tree protection measures; Medeola Woods – Features of an Old Growth Forest in the Greenbelt.
Identified potential properties for possible downtown public greenspaces.	Participated in the Bayshore-Moodie Drive West Transitway Project.	Participated in the Wildlife Festival Event.
Participated in the the 5-Year Review Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) workshop. Contributed an extensive report on the 5-Year PPS Review to improve planning in Ontario, especially with a view to better environmental consideration and protection.	Met with city staff from Land Use & Natural Systems, and Policy Development & Urban Design Branch regarding workplan priorities and budget related issues.	Proposed that the City host the 10 <sup>th</sup> Canadian Urban Forest Conference in Oct 2012.
Participated on the working group for the Wildlife Strategy, a council-mandated process. Comments on the need for a Wildlife Strategy to PEC. (*)	Received public delegations on the South March Highlands Conservation Forest and Provincially Significant Wetlands Complex; met with the Councillor re issue.	
Provided comments on the Lansdowne Park Re-development Project and made three presentations to PEC, Design Review Team and Council. (*)	Participated in the Mid-Centertown Community Design Plan (CDP).	Raised awareness of the importance of conserving trees, forests, wetlands and biodiversity within the city with media interviews (radio, television and newspapers).

<b>A: Policy &amp; Planning (cont'd) 2010</b>	<b>B: Emerging Issues &amp; Requested Advice (cont'd)</b>	<b>C: Outreach (cont'd) 2010</b>
Continued participation in the Petrie Island Stewardship Plan	Participated with city planners identifying a pathway within a city owned urban woodlot situated in the suburbs.	Did interviews with the news media on the preservation of Urban Natural Spaces and Distinctive Trees.
Apprised City Staff of the unapproved site clearing on city property related to a proposed road closure allowance. Recommendations provided and presentation made to ARAC regarding the enforcement of the city's by-law and a proposed land swap. (*)	Provided comments on the Canadian Urban Forest Strategy Review.	Continued to respond to media enquiries and provide interviews on matters that relate to OFGAC's Mandate. Provided another interview for CBC Radio, this time on the theme of Striking a Balance amidst all of the construction development and Urban Forests.
Provided a detailed report to PEC's Chair and Vice-Chair, City Staff & the NCC, as part of the Greenbelt Master Plan Review.	Partnered with the Urban Forestry Stewardship Network (UFSN) and assisted with the creation of its website design, and evaluation sheet.	Partnered with the Ontario Stewardship Council and the Wildlife Festival Group on the Lecture Series for the 2011 Forest Forum.
Presented a Motion regarding the construction of Terry Fox Drive Extension through the South March Highlands Natural Area, to ask the city to "re-examine the demographic, transportation and economic rationale" for the project and to halt construction until an "in-depth, ecological analysis is undertaken.	Continued discussions with city staff in advancing the Forest Strategy and ways to deal with invasive plant species.	
Participated in the city's mid-term governance review.	Collaborated with Forestry Services in examining the merits of a volunteer leaf removal pilot project for city trees.	
Received a presentation from the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority on the Conservation Authorities Act.	Participated in the Environmental Strategy Refresh initiative.	

(\*) Including Presentations to Standing Committees and before Council; Planning and Environment Committee (PEC), Agricultural & Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC), Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee (CSEDC)

Through the numerous activities described in the above matrix, the OFGAC plays an important role to help safeguard the natural environment of the City, promote sustainable, biodiverse landscapes and the conservation of trees, forests, natural systems and greenspaces.

In addition to the above activities, as part of the duties of the Chair and Vice-Chair, they have provided leadership to members. In 2009, during the city's official recruitment process the Chair and Vice-Chair reviewed applications, conducted interviews and recommended new members and reserve members for

the OFGAC. The recruitment process was successful in providing a full membership of 15 voting members and 9 reserve members (non-voting) for 2010 and longer terms. .

**The OFGAC’s main message to the City is twofold:**

-- That there needs to be more commitment to the provisions of the Official Plan to maintain, and where possible, enhance, forest cover in the City of Ottawa with a goal of achieving the target of 30% forest overall cover, and,

-- That there needs to be more commitment to the provisions of the Official Plan in its direction to conserve and preserve important natural spaces, and to incorporate into practice “designing with nature” principles.

Prepared by the Chair and Vice-Chair  
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