

MOTION ON THE TERRY FOX DRIVE EXTENSION

BY THE OTTAWA FORESTS AND GREENSPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APRIL 26, 2010

Whereas, the mandate of the Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee (OFGAC) is to help safeguard the environment of the City through the promotion of sustainable landscapes, and the protection and conservation (wise use) of trees, forests, wetlands, other natural systems, greenspaces, and biodiversity;

Whereas, the OFGAC has grave concerns about the ecological damage caused by the Terry Fox Drive Extension project, and the future development of housing in the ecosystem within the arc of the road;

Whereas, the area through which the Terry Fox Drive Extension is part of the South March Highlands Conservation Forest, which, in turn, is part of the larger South March Highlands ecosystem;

Whereas, the South March Highlands Conservation Forest represents a ca. 400 ha portion of the South March Highlands, a **wild 'island'** of natural landscape in a landscape otherwise transformed long ago by agricultural development;

Whereas, the South March Highlands Conservation Forest maintains the highest level of native floristic diversity of **any** natural area in the City of Ottawa. (Brunton);

Whereas, the ecological integrity of the flora and vegetation in the South March Highlands Conservation Forest is also exceptionally high, as measured by the 'naturalness' of the native flora. The native flora of the study area demonstrates an average Coefficient of Conservation (CC) rating of 5.08 - **higher than any City of Ottawa Urban Natural Area** (Muncaster and Brunton 2006);

Whereas, the Conservation Forest represents **one of the most important reservoirs of ecological potential in the City of Ottawa**, providing resources for the renewal of depleted natural areas elsewhere, as well as, encouraging diversification within established habitats;

Whereas, eco-linkages in this unique ecosystem are being disrupted through development of the Terry Fox Drive Extension and future housing developments;

Whereas, important recommendations on mitigation measures for fragmentation of habitat have already been made by Brunton in an ecological report to the City, *Natural Environment Implications of the TFD Alignment (2000)*

Whereas, these recommendations include:

- 1) up-grading the retained portion of lands from NEA(B) to NEA(A) in keeping with the adjacent zoning of the South March Highlands Conservation Forest and to better reflect its ecological significance;
- 2) replacing lost NEA features and securing future ecological linkage functions between the Trillium Woods' NEA(A) and remaining NEA lands to the west through the addition of NEA lands between them (i.e. north of the Trillium Woods east of the Second Line ROW and/ or west of the Trillium Woods south of the new Terry Fox Drive ROW), as well as to establish a contiguous natural linkage between Trillium Woods & SMH in the north to the Kizell Pond and Beaver Pond in the south (including the Richardson forest, West block, and the North Beaverpond areas);
- 3) closing Goulbourn Forced Road to vehicle traffic through the Trillium Woods NEA(A) and encouraging natural revegetation of the roadbed;
- 4) relocating the transmission line from the First Line Road right of way (ROW) to the Terry Fox Drive ROW and permitting natural revegetation along the First Line Road ROW;
- 5) providing protection for Regionally significant floristic values found in Bedrock Barrens habitat south and west of the location of the former communications tower south of Richardson Side Road;

Whereas, there are 654+ species, including 17 of special interest and species at risk identified to inhabit this area (Brunton, 2008);

Whereas, the impacts of this project on significant wildlife habitat have not been adequately addressed;

Whereas the mitigation measures proposed for only three of these species at risk do not seem to be adequate to protect the habitat or breeding areas, because appropriate studies have not been done;

Whereas, the OFGAC has a special interest in what it perceives to be inadequacies of the Butternut Mitigation Plan;

Whereas, in spite of extensive research and repeated requests from OFGAC and others, some details of information on mitigation from the proponent (the city) has been difficult, or impossible to obtain;

Whereas, at least one fish species at risk has been identified in Shirley's Brook (Bridle Shiner);

Whereas, the environmental assessments for the project do not address the presence of the abovementioned fish species at risk that may be using the habitat in the path of the proposed Shirley's Brook realignment;

Whereas, the original demographic and transportation rationales for this project do not appear to still be viable, given that population growth in the area has been approximately 80% less than originally forecast;

Whereas, the path for the road has been realigned several times and new information on the unique ecology and biodiversity of the location that was finally chosen appears not to have been given the high priority requested by local residents in public consultations for any of these choices;

Whereas the final route chosen for the road and the clearing of the forest has resulted in the destruction of at least one 200+-year-old Black Maple and one 150+ year-old Black Maple, an uncommon species in Ottawa and in Ontario;

Whereas, many mature and older White Pines and other species have likewise been destroyed;

Whereas the Environmental Assessments that have been done for the project appear to have serious flaws, omissions, and deficiencies;

Whereas the City, as proponent, is being seriously deficient in its environmental and public responsibilities to protect species at risk and preserve significant habitat within city limits;

Whereas, the city has received Federal Infrastructure funding for this project with tight deadlines to finish it before March 2011, requiring the project to proceed with haste, creating environmental impacts that are detrimental to the unique and special ecosystem of the South March Highlands;

Be it resolved that the OFGAC:

Recommends that the City show leadership in the preservation of heritage trees and tree species-at-risk in all its operations to publicly provide an example in support of its own policies and legislation;

Recommends that the City should immediately re-examine the demographic, transportation and economic rationale for the Terry Fox Drive Extension, and halt further construction until an in-depth ecological analysis is undertaken;

Endorses the recommendations made by Brunton (2000), and urges the City to implement these recommendations as quickly as possible;

Recommends that the City of Ottawa should acquire biologically-adequate eco-linkage lands between Trillium Woods, Kizell Pond, and the South March Highlands, as well as the parcel to the northeast of the Conservation Forest identified by Brunton in 2008 as essential to the integrity of the South March Highlands Conservation Forest;

Recommends that the City of Ottawa should undertake a comprehensive ecological study and public review of the South March Highlands and Carp Hills ecosystems with a view to better understanding the nature of the ecosystem and what will be required to protect it intact, and developing appropriate management strategies for conserving it;

Recommends that the City should then convene a public forum to determine the future of the South March Highlands and Carp Hills ecosystems;

Recommends that the City should put a moratorium on any development in this area, including an immediate halt to the Terry Fox Road Part B project, until such an analysis and public forum have taken place;

Recommends that the City look at the possibility of using funds from its Natural Areas Acquisition Fund to buy key ecological linkage components of this ecosystem;

Recommends that the City explore partnerships with Land Trust organizations active in this area;

Recommends and strongly encourages the City to explore possibilities with the National Capital Commission of acquiring the lands and jointly preserving the South March Highlands and Carp Hills ecosystems, especially given that the NCC has already shown interest in this issue in a report by Andrew Haydon, 2004.

Recommends that the City should examine the proposal made at this Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee meeting to connect Stoney Swamp, Constance Bay and the South March Highlands in a protected eco-corridor.

Recommends that the City request that the province, through the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources, in conjunction with other relevant levels of government, initiate a regional strategic environmental assessment process to help guide appropriate ecological planning in the City of Ottawa, and the surrounding region.