

Editorial

What do we want Ottawa to be?

There is a consensus that Ottawa is at a critical crossroads on many fronts. With respect to the environment, the City has adopted a number of admirable goals but has not put into place the specific policies and planned actions needed to meet these goals.



This is a problem in protecting natural habitat and wildlife in the face of extensive development. Will the competition for space change the character of Ottawa from one where people have historically valued greenspace and welcomed the opportunity to view wildlife, to one where other species are seen as a nuisance to be eliminated? Where greenspace, while aesthetically pleasing, becomes a sterile and antiseptic backdrop solely for human activities?

A healthy ecosystem is not only essential for our physical well-being but a connection to nature and other species provides an important spiritual touchstone for young and old alike. As for our children, Richard Louv's new book "Last Child in the Woods", conveys the growing concern that children are becoming increasingly alienated from nature, stifling imagination and independence.

Our education program, however, is showing that there is a great deal of hunger on the part of school children for reconnecting with the natural world. Wildlife, in particular, holds significant fascination for children of all ages. And, we know that it is children who are responsible for helping to change the habits and attitudes of their parents when it comes to the environment.

It is why the City must demonstrate leadership, ensuring that its environmental policies and decisions are based on best practices that promote living in harmony with nature. This is essential if Ottawa is to remain a progressive, caring and compassionate city.

Donna DuBreuil
President, OCWC

On behalf of progressive planning – Developing a biodiversity strategy



The Wildlife Centre is committed to seeing the City of Ottawa return to its former status as a city recognized for enlightened and progressive practices with respect to wildlife and habitat protection.

Many residents are very distressed that the City's current approach to dealing with human/wildlife conflicts has been to kill groundhogs in parks, beavers in flood plain and wetland areas where housing has, inappropriately, been built and that fear-mongering about unlikely wildlife diseases has been allowed to increasingly cause a negative climate for wildlife.

The first step needed to alter this concerning trend is for the City to finally move forward with its long-promised Biodiversity Strategy. A Biodiversity Strategy is not only the cornerstone for achieving environmental sustainability but is an essential complement to the City's Greenspace Master Plan. How can you plan for greenspace without taking into consideration the plants and animals that inhabit that greenspace?

In this regard, the Centre made a presentation in mid-June to the City of Ottawa Environmental Advisory Comm-

ittee (EAC), a group of community volunteers that advise the City on environmental matters, about wildlife concerns. Ann Coffey, a well-known Ottawa environmentalist and member of EAC, presented a motion to the Committee. The motion recommended that the City Council grant approval to EAC to initiate a Biodiversity Task Force. This Task Force is to be composed of three EAC members, one member of City staff and three members of the community.

Given that Ottawa City Council had approved the development of a Biodiversity Strategy three years ago that has yet to be undertaken, the Committee supported the Motion, with members speaking strongly in its favour.

We must now ensure that this Motion is approved by Ottawa City Council so that work can finally get underway. The City's Official Plan Guiding Principles for "A Green and Environmentally-Sensitive City" should mean that 'living in harmony with nature' becomes a plan of action, not simply empty rhetoric.