

**ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD
COMMISSION DES AFFAIRES MUNICIPALES DE L'ONTARIO**

IN THE MATTER OF subsection 17 (36) of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13, as amended

Appellants: Greater Ottawa Homebuilders Association,
Zbigniew Hauderowicz, Karson Holdings Inc., Ken McRae;
and others

Subject: Proposed Official Plan Amendment No. OPA
#76

Property Location: All lands within the City of Ottawa

Municipality: City of Ottawa

OMB Case No.: PL100206

OMB File NO.: PL100206

WITNESS STATEMENT OF NICHOLAS STOW

I, NICHOLAS STOW, of the City of Ottawa, state as follows:

1. I currently hold the position of senior planner in the Land Use and Natural Systems Unit in the Planning and Growth Management Department of the City of Ottawa. This unit is responsible for the preparation of land use and environmental policies and providing advice and information on these policies to Council, City staff, other agencies and the public. The unit is also responsible for the City's Official Plan and its periodic review. Within the unit, the Natural Systems team is responsible for the preparation of mid-level, environmental land-use plans, especially subwatershed studies and environmental management plans. As the senior planner in Natural Systems, I manage the preparation of such studies and support intermediate and junior planners in their preparation.

Qualifications

2. I have 15 years of experience as an ecologist and environmental planner. My experience includes work as a wetland biologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and as a Senior Ecologist with two environmental consulting companies. I am certified as an Environmental Practitioner (EP) by ECO Canada,

and I have provided evidence as an environmental planner to the OMB on three occasions.

I joined the City of Ottawa in May 2009 and provided expert advice on the final revisions to the environmental policies in Official Plan Amendment No. 76, including, but not limited to, policies regarding natural heritage, endangered and threatened species, and protection of surface water features. I did not participate in the preparation of the urban expansion policies, the identification of the urban expansion candidate areas, the development of the urban expansion evaluation methodology or the initial evaluation of the urban expansion candidate areas. However, in accordance with Council direction of July 13, 2011, I did participate in the screening for any new information since May 2009 which should be considered in the evaluation of the urban expansion areas. My resume is attached as Appendix A.

Issues to be Addressed

3. I will be addressing Issues 1-3 from the Procedural Order Issues List.

Opinions on Issues

4. Greenspace Alliance Issue 1: are the criteria and weighting employed by the City consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement policies regarding watershed planning and protection of linkages between natural areas?

Policies 2.1.2, 2.2.1(a) and 2.2.1(e) are most relevant to this question. The intent of these policies is to ensure that natural landscape linkages – both terrestrial and aquatic – are maintained, restored or improved. Such linkages should recognize and build upon the inter-relationships and dependencies between natural heritage features, surface water features and groundwater features, especially in consideration of their functions within the relevant watershed.

The urban boundary evaluation process is consistent with these policies, given the level of available information. The general criteria used to identify candidate

areas (p. 71 of 4 May 2009 Report to the Joint Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and Planning and Environment Committee) excluded Natural Environment Areas and promoted a compact urban form. Furthermore, each candidate area was screened for natural heritage features, including some potential linkages such as valleylands and floodplains, and these were excluded from the calculation of net developable area. However, the methodology did not include an assessment of larger natural linkages at a watershed or subwatershed scale (generally referred to as “landscape corridors”).

In theory, the lack of such an assessment could contribute to the degradation of such landscape corridors, where they exist, through the expansion of urban development to the interstitial lands between natural heritage features and/or natural environment areas. However, such an assessment would have been impractical in 2009, and would still be impractical now, due to the current lack of comparable, consistent and current information on landscape corridors. Only seven of the 11 candidate expansion areas currently have coverage by a watershed or subwatershed study, and only in the case of candidate area 1 does the relevant subwatershed study explicitly address natural linkages at a watershed or subwatershed scale. In the case of candidate expansion area 1, the relevant subwatershed study (the Shirley’s Brook and Watt’s Creek Subwatershed Study) is 12 years old, and the information on landscape corridors in that study is out of date. One of the landscape corridors identified in that study has already been removed by previous urban expansion, and the remaining corridor lies outside candidate area 1. Furthermore, the actual development of appropriate criteria, scores and weightings to address landscape corridors in time to incorporate into the urban boundary evaluation methodology would be very challenging, due to the potential overlap with other evaluation criteria, and the indefinite or “fuzzy” nature of natural linkage boundaries.

5. Greenspace Alliance Issue 2: *are the criteria and weighting employed by the City respectful of Official Plan policies regarding watershed planning and protection of linkages between natural areas?*

Policies 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 of the Official Plan are most relevant to these issues. Both the policies in the 2003 Official Plan and OPA 76 intend that the City should identify and protect natural landscape linkages, and that these linkages should be identified in watershed and subwatershed plans. The urban boundary evaluation process was respectful of these policies, given the level of available information. The methodology identified and protected known natural heritage features, and the City's development planning and review processes provide for subsequent opportunities to identify and protect local linkages between them. However, the methodology did not include an assessment of landscape corridors at a watershed and subwatershed scale. As discussed above, such an assessment would have been impractical in 2009, and would still be impractical now, due to the current lack of comparable, consistent and current information on landscape corridors for the urban expansion areas.

6. Greenspace Alliance Issue 3: *was appropriate consideration given to subwatershed studies.*

At first glance, it does not appear that the urban boundary evaluation process gave the appropriate level of consideration to subwatershed studies, in that it does not appear to have considered the potential for identification of natural landscape linkages in those studies. Several of the urban expansion candidate areas lie within the study areas of subwatershed plans (*e.g.* the Carp River Subwatershed Plan, the Shirley's Brook and Watts Creek Subwatershed Study). In theory, consideration of any natural landscape linkages identified within those plans could have influenced the staff recommendations regarding urban expansion. As noted above, however, such an assessment would have been impractical in 2009, and would still be impractical now, due to the current lack of comparable, consistent and current information on landscape corridors for the urban expansion areas.

As part of the screening for new information ordered by Council on July 13, 2011, Land Use and Natural Systems staff again reviewed the candidate expansion areas. In terms of natural landscape linkages, only candidate area 2 was flagged as having additional information: an EIS identifying the property as a potential landscape linkage between the South March Highlands, the Carp River and the

Carp Hills. However, because candidate area 2 was not included in the original staff recommendation for inclusion in the urban boundary, and it was understood that no-one was appealing its exclusion, no further action was taken on it. This review suggested that the risk to the City's natural heritage system by the lack of appropriate consideration for natural landscape linkages in the evaluation methodology appears low.

Because of the low risk, the lack of necessary information, and the great challenge of trying to develop retroactive criteria, scores and weightings for inclusion of landscape corridors in the urban boundary evaluation methodology, I do not recommend modifying the evaluation process in OPA 76 to consider them. There are, however, several initiatives underway by the City of Ottawa and the National Capital Commission to identify and map the natural heritage system, including natural linkages, at a regional level. I believe that these initiatives will provide a good information basis for evaluating natural linkages in future reviews of the urban boundary, and I recommend their explicit consideration in the 2014 Comprehensive Official Plan Review.

List of reports or Documents to be relied upon at the Hearing (prepared by City or Appellants)

- Comprehensive Five-Year Review of the Official Plan – Public Meeting. 4 May 2009. Report to Joint Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and Planning and Environment Committee and Council. Ref No.: ACS2009-ICS-PLA-0080.
- Provincial Policy Statement 2005.
- City of Ottawa Official Plan 2003.
- OPA 76 Comprehensive Official Plan Review.
- Shirley's Brook and Watts Creek Subwatershed Study 1999.
- Carp River Watershed/Subwatershed Study.

NICHOLAS STOW