

February 3, 2008

Mayor Larry O'Brien  
110 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1J1

By Fax: 613-580-2509

Re: Carp River Floodplain Development  
What is the problem and what should be done?

Dear Mayor O'Brien:

I would like to bring to your attention a letter that I faxed to Premier Dalton McGuinty earlier today. The attached letter outlines serious problems that I have uncovered in the analysis that has been prepared by the City of Ottawa and the Kanata West Owners Group (KWOG) in support of the plan to allow the filling and development of 28 Ha of Carp River floodplain in Kanata West. Based on my findings, flood levels will rise at least 0.5m higher than has been understood by the consultants, that could put at risk the Highway 417 bridge structures, and existing and planned development in the area.

I have spent many, many hours examining this project because of my concern that Provincial legislation, regulations, policies and technical guidelines have not been adhered to over the last seven or eight years while this project was in various planning stages. The natural reaction is "How could this be possible"? Based on my examination of what has gone wrong, I believe that Councillors and Provincial Ministers have not been provided timely or accurate information from which they could base their decisions.

I fully appreciate the frustration that must exist in KWOG with the 18-month delay in moving forward with development of Kanata West, while the Province has been considering the Part II Order requests related to the Carp River Restoration Project and other affected Class EAs. I am sure that upon learning the news of my findings, there will be immense pressure to fix the "problem".

At times and circumstances like these, it has been my professional experience that a lot of time and effort can be wasted if the problem is not properly defined, before resources are applied to address the problem. In public administration, a good example of this occurred in the years, months and days leading up to the tragedy at Walkerton.

Through the Public Inquiry we learned of incidents that occurred in the years and months prior to the tragedy that were not thoroughly investigated. Then in the weeks and days before the tragedy unfolded, there were warning signals that something was desperately wrong. Queries were made to the public utilities staff operating the water distribution system, but no one admitted any problem.

After evidence grew that there was a serious problem, the operators of the system realized that their lack of diligence in operating the system had to be corrected, and in their misinformed way they believed that super chlorinating the Town's watermains could fix the "problem". We have since learned that there was no easy fix, and the actions of the operators actually aggravated the scale of the tragedy.

There have been at least a dozen warning signals that something could be wrong in the Carp River watershed:

- 1) The original 1983 floodplain mapping study of the Carp River discovered flood vulnerable areas due to insufficient capacity of the Castlefrank Road and Rickey's Place culverts in Glen Cairn, part of a previous floodplain development project;
- 2) Less than a decade later the Provincial Auditor investigated an incident involving \$500,000 flood damage to a recently constructed Public Housing project built in reclaimed Carp River floodplain;
- 3) Several hundred houses were flooded in 1996 and again in 2002 in Glen Cairn as a result of the exact scenario foretold in the 1983 floodplain mapping study;
- 4) While the Carp River Subwatershed Plan was underway – a Plan that recommended more floodplain development - City taxpayers were spending \$7 Million for flood remediation in Glen Cairn;
- 5) In 2004, dozens of homes and a nursing home were flooded with raw sewage when a floodplain development project on the Kizell Drain near the Kanata Research Park failed, flooding the March Pump Station;
- 6) After the Carp River Subwatershed Plan was Approved by Council in January 2005, the City mistakenly invited the Public to file Part II Order Requests on the Plan – something that is not possible. This error was not disclosed to the Planning & Environment (P&E) Committee in a November 2005 Report concerning Public Consultation on the Subwatershed Plan;
- 7) A November 11, 2005 P&E Committee report identified \$44,000,000 in capital works required to tackle flooding problems in the City. This amount would address less than one half of the known problem areas. The report noted 1800 homes were flooded on September 9, 2004 during a single rainfall event;
- 8) In February 2006 the City was informed by the MOE that the Kanata West Class EAs had to be approved under the *Environmental Assessment Act*, not the *Planning Act*, as the City had intended;
- 9) When Council Approved the Kanata West Class EAs in June 2006, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Transportation had not issued their clearances to the plan. Changes needed to be made to the Restoration Plan that Council had already Approved, before MNR and MTO would accept the City's proposal. No report came back to Committee about the required changes.
- 10) Council Approved the Carp River Class EA despite a recommendation by Public Works and Services that “design not proceed based on flows from this analysis”;
- 11) On October 26, 2006 the City's Auditor General commissioned an audit valued at \$43,340 for the “Carp River Watershed Studies and Related Projects”; and
- 12) In June 2007, I discovered a significant error in the watershed delineation that consultants and agencies had been using since 2000. The City, KWOG, and agencies have taken no formal steps to address the potential implications of the 600 Ha error.

Mayor O'Brien, like you, I have spent many years working in the private sector before I began working for the residents of the City of Ottawa. Through my private sector experience, I had the opportunity to work for many talented professionals, and gained valuable experience on water resources engineering projects across the Province. When I began working for the City of Ottawa in August 2002, I was looking forward to offering this experience directly to the public in serving its interest.

It was through that professional experience that my judgment told me that fundamental problems existed in the technical analysis used to support the Carp River floodplain development proposal. What I found surprising, and troubling, was the lack of diligence and care shown by the all agencies when I brought my concerns forward. In my professional opinion, the MNR's and MTO's failure to properly apply their own technical guidelines, and the apparent confusion about floodplain policy by the MVC has perpetuated a poorly conceived project

As I mentioned in my letter to Premier McGuinty, what makes this situation even more disconcerting, is the apparent lack of caution considering the recent history of flooding on the Carp River just upstream of Kanata West – and the vulnerability of the two Highway 417 bridge structures over the Carp River that are already substandard under design flood conditions. These structures must remain open at all times for emergency response vehicles.

So where do we turn now? What we should not do is follow in the footsteps of the Koebel brothers in Walkerton trying to tackle only a symptom of the problem. What I mean by this is the solution should not involve the same people who created the problem attempting to fix their own mistakes. This only serves their interest, not the Public's Interest.

I would be pleased to assist Council in any way I can.

Yours truly,

*Original Signed and Sealed*

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c.c	Councillor Peter Hume, Chair P&E Committee	(by email)
	Mr. Tim Marc, City of Ottawa	(by email)
	Ms. Nancy Schepers, City of Ottawa	(by email)