

ProtectNatureTO

Submission to Executive Committee

September 26, 2017, EX27.8 Toronto Ravine Strategy

I am making this submission on behalf of ProtectNatureTO. We are an umbrella group advocating for the protection of wildlife and natural areas across the City of Toronto.

We welcome this Ravine Strategy and appreciate the effort that went into its preparation. This strategy recognizes the “overarching goal of protecting [our ravines] by maintaining and improving their ecological health”. It highlights a number of activities to support this goal, including management plans for the Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs), expanded community stewardship programs, invasive species management, and outreach aimed at particular groups such as adjacent property owners, cyclists and pet owners, to foster good stewardship practices.

To achieve the stated goal of protection, we propose three recommendations:

1. Provide ongoing sustainable funding for the Ravine Strategy. The 10-year implementation strategy should focus not only on capital plans but also on a mechanism for ensuring adequate funding for the operational activities identified in this report, many of which need to be funded as soon as possible. For example, 86 ESAs were approved in December 2015; aiming to develop and implement management plans for just three of them over the next three years is clearly not enough. Similarly, public education to change harmful behaviours in ravines takes time and needs to start right away.

2. Develop a vetting or permit system for work being done in the ravines to ensure coordination and protection of the natural heritage. It’s not only art installations and special events that can damage our natural areas; other projects and maintenance work can also cause harm. Protection of wildlife and habitat should be given at least the same priority that is presently accorded, for example, to buried utility lines.

3. Maintain meaningful transparent consultation as the Ravine Strategy is implemented. Community groups, non-profit environmental and naturalist groups, and local site stewards bring valuable knowledge and experience to the table, and should be included in advisory groups such as the Ravine Leaders and/or other forums on an ongoing basis.

Toronto is truly fortunate to have substantial remnants of centuries-old natural habitats in the midst of our highly urbanized city - mostly in our ravines - which support a remarkable diversity of plant and animal life. Nature can be surprisingly adaptable but it has a tipping point beyond which the losses are irreversible. By implementing this Ravine Strategy, and including sustainable operational funding, careful vetting of work activities and ongoing community consultation, our City has a unique opportunity to get it right.

Thank you.

Karen Yukich, on behalf of ProtectNatureTO

