

BU3.4_Budget Committee consideration on February 13, 2019



13 February 2019

VIA E-MAIL: buc@toronto.ca

Re: Funding for Ravine Strategy and Toronto's Natural Heritage long term protection

Dear Councillor Crawford and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of ProtectNatureTO, a coalition of over 20 nature- and stewardship-based groups advocating for the protection of wildlife and improvement of natural areas across the City of Toronto.

We wish to add our voice to other organizations and community members urging this committee to fund Toronto Ravine Strategy.

Recent initiative "Save Toronto's Ravines" led by the Councillor Colle, calling the attention to Toronto's ravines, only confirmed enormous public interest in these natural areas but also a growing concern resulting from many years of absent funding and overall protection of this city's highly valued natural areas.

Over this past week, the Budget Committee was presented with eloquent deputations headed by Toronto Field Naturalists and other residents associations outlining the importance of ravines within Toronto natural heritage system and singling out 3 most urgent tasks to be funded:

- Environmentally Significant Areas – the most valuable parts of ravines - need Management plans
- Monitoring Toolkit - tools to measure and report on ravines ecological health
- Empowering of volunteers - harnessing their power to help maintain ravine health

Toronto's ravines are significant part of the city Natural Heritage System.

Urbanization and growing population, habitat loss, climate change, invasive species and unsustainable use represent a serious challenge to this ecosystem and its resiliency.

Stable funding and the land use decisions consistent with the protection policies of the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 are the main pillars of the long term protection of Toronto's natural heritage, such as the ravines.

Provincial Policy Statement 2014 requires: *"2.1.1 Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term."*

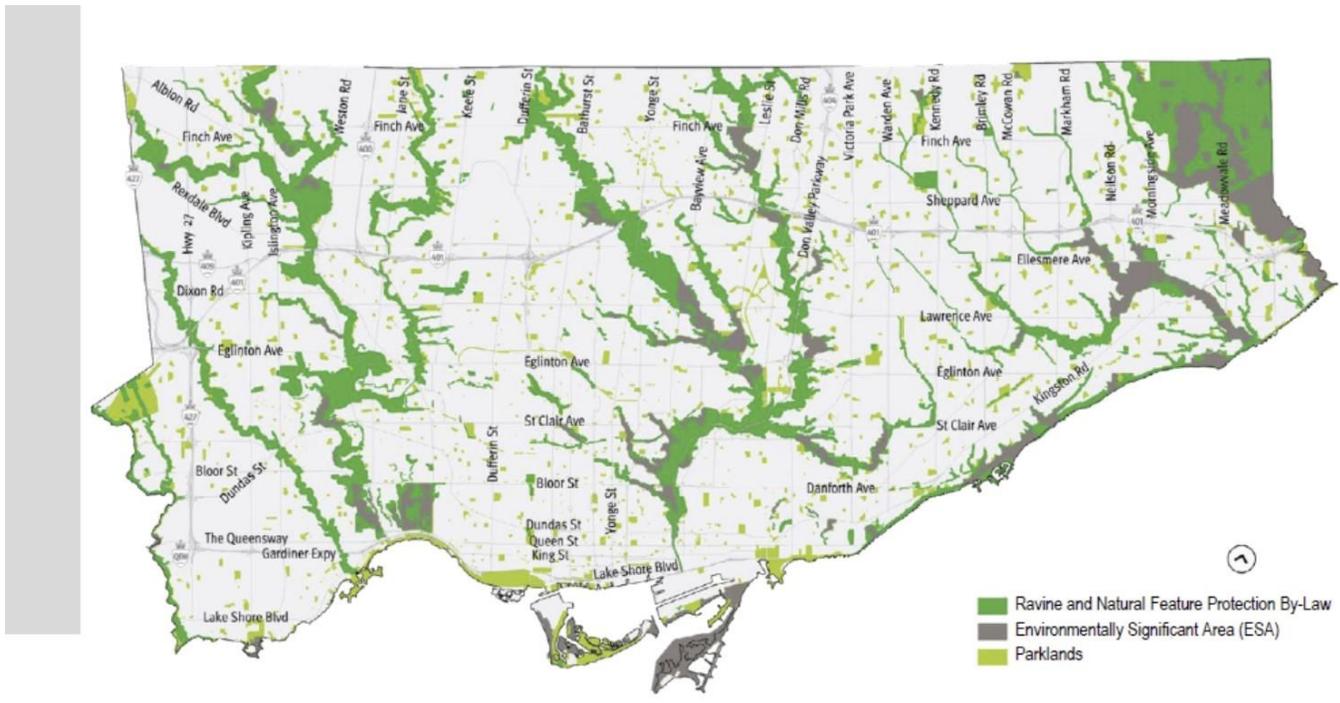
Recognition of vital importance of precious natural assets has a long history in Toronto and already in the nineties was fully engrained in Toronto's planning policies and the first Official Plan for amalgamated city.

Today, the City's obligation to protect remaining Toronto natural heritage is even more imperative to make city more resilient from climate change and to give our vision of sustainable city a better chance.

Yours Sincerely,

Lenka Holubec on behalf of ProtectNatureTO
<https://www.protectnatureto.org/>

Maps:



DATA SOURCES: City of Toronto, 2017

RAVINES, ESAs, & GREENSPACE

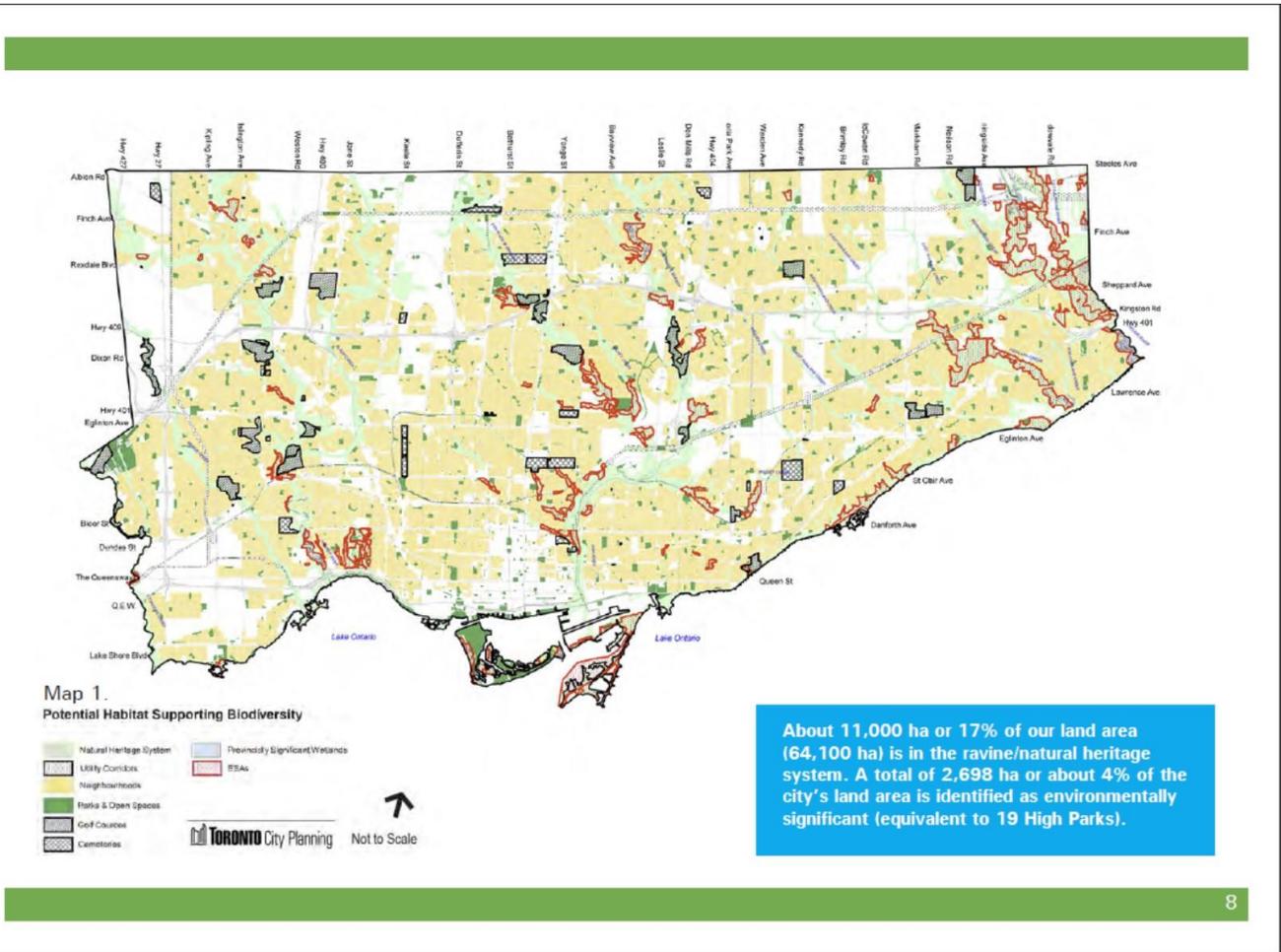
No other city in the world has a ravine network as extensive and integrated as Toronto's, which boasts over 10,500 hectares of green space and wilderness. The ravine system, which covers 17% of Toronto's total land area, is protected by the Ravine and Natural Feature Protection By-Law and includes nearly 87% of the city's ESAs within it.

Source: RAVINE XING: A LANDSCAPE CONNECTIVITY PLAN FOR TORONTO'S RAVINE SYSTEM MAPPING BOOKLET prepared for: City of Toronto by School of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University

From THE DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR TORONTO

Major Natural Systems:

The highest biodiversity in Toronto occurs within the Natural Heritage System (Map 1) which includes the city’s significant natural heritage features and functions including habitats such as forest, wetlands, meadows, beaches and bluffs that provide shelter, food sources, and breeding areas for hundreds of species of plants and animals. The natural heritage system also supports the city’s 86 ESAs which are primarily located within valleys, ravines and along the waterfront – areas which also function as important migration corridors through the city and beyond our boundaries. Habitat size is important. Relatively large areas of natural habitat are particularly important because they contain, or have the potential to contain, high quality habitats such as interior forest which are fundamental to preserving and enhancing native biodiversity such as Carolinian forest species. Examples of relatively large tracts of high quality habitat are found in the Rouge Valley, Tommy Thompson Park, High Park, Toronto Islands and Lambton Park Prairie.



Background - Policy Documents in chronological order starting in the past:

1. A Natural Heritage Framework

A Strategy for the Protection and Management of Natural Heritage in the Greater Toronto Area, November 1991

Greater Toronto Area Branch, Ministry of Natural Resources

Executive Summary

“Why Protect Natural Heritage?”

It is a central premise of this report that society should adopt a systematic approach to protecting and managing natural heritage features to maintain or restore many of the benefits they provide. Without protection of these benefits on a comprehensive basis, it will be virtually impossible to improve or even maintain the environmental health, quality of life or variety of experience available in the Greater Toronto Area.”

2. Metropolitan Waterfront Plan, prepared by Metropolitan Planning Department, Feb 1994

Excerpt, pg17

Ecosystem Approach

In the urban context, the planning priority is to ensure that we benefit from the natural system while not unduly impairing natural processes. The state of the ecosystem's health is vitally important to Metropolitan Toronto. Water quality, for example, influences public health and recreational opportunities for residents. Public works facilities play an essential role in safeguarding a high quality of life.

Too often in the past, we have considered green space as an afterthought, what was left over after development took its course. We now realize that if any natural spaces are to remain, we must take a pro-active approach to saving them.

The ecosystem approach requires us to look beyond a particular site to what is happening in the next bay and in the whole watershed, and to have regard for cumulative impacts. A new structure in the lake at one site may destroy the beaches at another. Factors outside the shore area, such as upstream activities, have a major impact on the quality of the shoreline environment. All elements of the community have complex and changing relationships that require coordination and consideration.”

3. City of Toronto Natural Heritage Study - Final Report

A Project in Partnership between City of Toronto and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Toronto, December, 2001

Section1:

“The City of Toronto is developing a new Official Plan (OP) for the amalgamated city. As part of this process, the recently published report, **Toronto at the Crossroads: Shaping Our Future**, identified five campaigns to improve the quality of life within the city. Specific to the environment is the Campaign to Green Toronto, an important component of which is to identify and to understand the natural heritage of Toronto.

The importance of Toronto's natural heritage is recognized in the City Council's Environmental Plan: Clean, Green and Healthy, which identifies the city's green spaces as our "green infrastructure." The city's natural heritage system is as important to the city's continuing health and vitality as its transportation, water and sewage systems.

4. What's new in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014?

"The Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 provides clear direction for planning matters and decisions under the Planning Act to protect our water, woodlands, wetlands, coastal wetlands, and endangered and threatened species habitat, and recognizes **the need for the most protection in areas of the province with the greatest development pressures**. Natural heritage features and areas contribute to Ontario's long term economic prosperity, environmental health, and social well-being and it is in the public interest to protect these resources even where they are abundant."

5. Toronto Official Plan, 2015 Office

3.4 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Our natural heritage features and functions require special attention. They are an evolving mosaic of natural habitats that supports the variety of nature in the City. The City's significant natural heritage features and functions are shown as the natural heritage system on Map 9. The natural heritage system is made up of areas where protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural features and functions should have high priority in our city-building decisions.

We must be careful to assess the impacts of new development in areas near the natural heritage system. The size of this adjacent impact zone will vary across the City, depending on the local characteristics of the natural heritage system and adjacent areas.

6. OPA 262, City of Toronto By-Law No. 1158-2015, was adopted by the City Council in 2015 to make OP fully conform to PPS 2014.

OPA 262 was approved by the Province in May 2016 .Accordingly ". City Council's planning decisions are required to be consistent with the PPS 2014.

OPA 262 "While the Official Plan's environmental policies are generally consistent with the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement, the revisions to the environmental policies in the amendment **reflect the PPS' increased emphasis upon the protection of natural heritage, water, biodiversity, energy conservation and efficiency and climate change.**"
