

Infrastructure and Environment Committee
c/o Nancy Martins
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen St W
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

January 22, 2019

Dear Members of the City of Toronto Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

Re: Agenda Item EX12.1 Ravine Strategy Implementation

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on the implementation of Toronto's Ravine Strategy. As part of the leadership team who helped develop the strategy from 2015-2017, the Humber Arboretum is fully committed to the vision and priorities that the strategy represents. But goals and guiding principles put on paper mean nothing if they aren't followed by concrete actions, and the steps before the committee today are essential to advancing that vision and keeping Toronto on track to protect and enhance our most unique and important natural feature.

The Humber Arboretum stands ready to promote a Ravine Campaign within our community and to support the work of the Ravine Unit. We are already a proud participant in Ravine Days, having hosted multiple events in 2018 and 2019, and we are eager to support the further work of a new Partnerships, Outreach and Education Working Group. We also see opportunities to support the Ecosystem Services Working Group - Humber College faculty member and Humber Arboretum staff member Lynn Short recently conducted a successful multi-year research project to determine the best manual removal methods for the invasive wetland grass *Phragmites*, and is in the early stages of a similar research project into best practices for the manual removal of dog-strangling vine. The will and the knowledge is out there, and Toronto has an opportunity to become a model city showcasing leading practices for invasive control in urban areas.

One of the City of Toronto's Environmentally Significant Areas is located within the Humber Arboretum, and without a doubt one of the greatest challenges we face is combating the invasive species that threaten to encroach on this and other areas of the Arboretum's woodlands, wetlands, and shrubland meadow. New investment to control invasive species throughout the ravines is one of the most substantial actions the city can take to improve biodiversity, and it pays extra dividends - since invasive species are spread by flooding, wind, and seeds hitching a ride on footwear, clothing, and pets, actions that are taken to reduce invasive species anywhere can have a positive impact everywhere.

Similarly, litter that goes uncollected in the ravines can not only do direct damage to the health of plants, wildlife, soil, and waterways in the immediate area, but its uncontested presence also contributes to the normalization of the behavior. We see the psychological impact that litter can have on visitors to a natural space play out every day - a pristine area tends to stay pristine, while a little litter encourages more. Having a dedicated team to deal with this issue is a crucial component of any plan to make the ravines healthier and more welcoming, and can also have ripple effects on the attitude towards litter found throughout the city.

Since the Ravine Strategy launched, the Humber Arboretum worked with our founding partners – including Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Humber College, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority – to launch the Humber Pond Revitalization Project, an innovative multiphase project with social, health, and environmental benefits. This project will improve the water quality of a large pond in the West Humber Ravine that feeds directly into the West Humber River, while creating new habitat and new recreational and nature connection opportunities for the community.

We also recently launched our own five-year strategic plan based around three goals – creating world-ready citizens, healthy communities, and thriving nature. As we work to improve the ecological literacy of Humber College students, raise awareness of the connection between the health of humans and the natural world, and use the urgency of the climate change crisis to fuel a rejuvenation of our natural systems and our relationship with them, we do so with the knowledge that we are a very small part of a local, national, and international puzzle. We are excited for the City of Toronto to allocate the staff and resources needed to take the next step in the Toronto Ravine Strategy's implantation plan, and look forward to offering whatever support we can to see the vision become reality.

Sincerely,



Alexandra (Alix) Link
Director, Humber Arboretum and Centre for Urban Ecology