



Written Submission — Infrastructure & Environment Committee Item IE27.7: Ravine Strategy 2026 Implementation Update

Submitted by: Protect Our Ravines Initiative (PORI)

In partnership with: Friends of the Glen Stewart Ravine

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To Chair Fletcher and Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

We are submitting this letter on behalf of the Protect Our Ravines Initiative (PORI) which is partnered with the Friends of the Glen Stewart Ravine (FGSR). PORI is an incorporated non-profit community organization formed to protect the Glen Stewart Ravine from overdevelopment.

We support the Ravine Strategy and its guiding principles to protect, invest, connect, partner and celebrate the ravines and applaud the achievements in this report: the restoration work, the Community-led Restoration Program, investment in stewardship, and partnerships that make this system work. These are real accomplishments, and we are glad to see them recognized.

PORI supports all five recommendations in IE27.7. The permanent implementation of the Community-led Restoration Program, the InTO the Ravines partnership, and the capital investment in the Loop Trail are meaningful achievements. We particularly recognize the Toronto Nature Stewards program: stewards now manage approximately 119 hectares of ravine parkland, a larger area than the City's own directly-delivered natural environment programs. The expansion of TNS, the assignment of dedicated forestry staff to work alongside stewards, and the piloting of joint City-volunteer projects on more complex sites represent the kind of genuine partnership the Ravine Strategy was designed to build. The Friends of Glen Stewart Ravine are proud to be part of that community.

We note that Ravine Strategy's first and foundational principle is Protect. **But there is a real consequential gap in that protection.** In this report, protection is operationalized almost entirely as ecological stewardship: invasive species, restoration, management plans. That work matters.

What's missing is protection from development pressure on ravine-adjacent lands which is an **irreversible** threat these ecosystems face.

The significant threat to Toronto's ravines is the incremental, cumulative loss of ravine integrity through rezoning and boundary-edge intensification. No single application may appear decisive in isolation, but the aggregate effect of individually-approved rezonings along ravine corridors is the slow erosion of the very edges that define and protect these ecosystems. The current City by-laws and Official Plan cited in the Report as protections have repeatedly been negotiated away. The Ravine Strategy has no answer to this cumulative threat.

Pressures for increased density and housing are resulting in development where it is inappropriate. Excessive building height and mass on narrow boundary lands are unwelcome and damaging urban intrusions on these wild spaces. Without specific and robust protections there will be creeping destruction of these lands that are so valued by Torontonians.

Our community's experience tells the story. In 2025 a developer appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal requesting by-law and Official Plan amendments to permit construction of an 11-storey condo on a narrow ledge of land that borders the Glen Stewart Ravine. This ravine is an ESA which is home to species under threat and one of the few remaining old oak Carolinian forests in the City. The community was and remains active and passionately opposed to this development: 3,500 petition signatures, 3,000+ letters to elected officials, seventy community members at the OLT Settlement Hearing.

A settlement agreement achieved in mediation between the developer, City and TRCA, is now with the OLT for a final decision. It permits a 13-storey building on the site and still doesn't meet setbacks required under the ravine by-laws. Something is structurally wrong. And it is not unique to Glen Stewart Ravine. This is not a failure of community effort or City staff commitment. It is the predictable result of structural gaps: no inter-divisional coordination mechanism for ravine-edge development applications, no non-settlement policy to anchor the City's position, and a prioritization tool that does not treat active development pressure as a reason to accelerate ESA planning. Those are the gaps our submission asks Council to close.

We are asking this Committee to direct three things:

- 1. Create a ravine-edge protection workstream.** Development immediately adjacent to an ESA, especially on narrow ledge ravine ledge sites should not be permitted at all. The ravine edge is not a building site; it is the boundary of a protected ecosystem.

We recognize that reaching a full prohibition requires policy development. So we offer a floor, not our position: within approximately 30 metres of a ravine edge, no application should be allowed to exceed what existing zoning already permits.

Two specific tools would have changed the Glen Stewart outcome directly

- i. **having a completed ESA-specific management plan as procedural prerequisite before any development application within the buffer of an ESA is processed.** This flips the current sequence: the ecological foundation comes before the application, not years after.
 - ii. **having a City policy of non-settlement on ravine-adjacent upzoning applications.** A clear policy that the City will oppose and will not negotiate away ravine-edge upzonings removes that discretion and changes the calculus for developers from the moment they consider filing.
- 2. Accelerate and resource ESA-specific management plans. (Ravine Strategy Actions #1&8)**
The ESA Management Plan framework is welcome. But a framework without funding is an aspiration. And a site prioritization tool must consider active development pressure. Otherwise, an ESA facing an OLT application today could wait years for the plan that would have strengthened the City's case to protect it.
- 3. Use strategic land acquisition to protect ESAs (Ravine Strategy Action #10).**
Identify specific ESA ravine-adjacent properties under development pressure now, and recommend an acquisition strategy. Once rezoned and built upon, permanent protection becomes impossible. Community organizations are ready and willing partners for these efforts.

The City has a long and visionary history of protecting its ravines. In 1959 a developer bought 5.2 acres of land on a quiet neighbourhood street bordering the Glen Stewart Ravine to build an apartment complex. The neighbourhood, City Council and Mayor were outraged. Their arguments against this overdevelopment mirror those voiced today. The outcome: the City bought the land to protect it in perpetuity and it remains a forested, undeveloped entrance to this green and natural environment (see images on the following page). The City has done this before. The question is whether it will build the tools to do it systematically BEFORE the next OLT appeal.

Not Just Glen Manor

The proposal to build an apartment block in **Glen Manor ravine** in Toronto's East End received the defeat it deserved when it went before City Planning Board last week. The final decision is essentially in the hands of the Buildings and Development Committee of City Council, but there seems little doubt that the Planning Board's recommendation will carry.

Fortunately, the board went beyond the immediate issue of the apartment block and discussed measures to preserve **Glen Manor ravine** permanently. (Some bottom land is already owned by the City Parks Department, but the slopes are privately owned as extensions to dwelling lots facing on Balsam Avenue. The apartment block was to have been erected on this privately-owned property.)

As was pointed out at the Planning Board meeting, there are limits to what can be accomplished through zoning regulations.

For example, it would obviously be unfair to owners of the vacant ravine land to pass zoning measures forcing them to leave it in its present unspoiled state. This would amount to expropriation without recompense—an inadmissible invasion of basic property rights.

But Controller William Dennison's comment that the land should be preserved, whether under private or city ownership, is perfectly valid. The opportunities for securing it without purchase—and without invasion of property rights—should be carefully scouted. If none proves workable, then the city will have to consider buying.

Our unspoiled ravines are one of our richest natural assets. They are an adjunct to our system of public parks, and should be guarded just as jealously. Glen Manor is the case in point, but the threat to it should be used as a basis for a policy to save all our ravines.

Not Just Glen Manor, The Globe and Mail, 14 Apr 1959: 6.

Committee Bars Balsam Suites, Citizens Happy

City Hall council chamber echoed with the applause of nearly 100 east end ratepayers yesterday as they heard city property committee squelch a proposal for a multi-million-dollar apartment project on Balsam Road, overlooking Glen Manor.

The Ward 8 residents, who appointed Controller Summer-ville on the spot as their spokesman (the previously was alderman of the ward), were on hand to protest possible rezoning of residential and ravine land for apartment purposes.

Last week, the City Planning Board opposed an application for rezoning the 5.2 acres of land in **Glen Stewart ravine**, and recommended asking the city's parks department if it is feasible to rezone the unbuild portion of the land as parkland, to make sure no further applications would be made.

tions would be made.

While W. D. Lyon, counsel for the proponents of the apartment scheme, argued his case, the ratepayers, who overflowed from the main floor of the council chamber into the gallery, gasped and groaned in unison at some of his statements.

Order was restored by the acting chairman, Alderman Herbert Orloff, who was substituting for chairman Alderman Albert Cranham. Alderman Cranham spoke against the project.

Ald. Cranham and his colleague from Ward 8, Alderman Alex Hodgins, and Con. Summer-ville based their arguments primarily on the necessity of preserving parkland for the city. No member of City Council spoke in favor of the apartment scheme.

Additionally, as described in the report, the City is expanding community partnerships and stewardship (Ravine Actions #14&16). **Let's make local 'friends of' groups operational in Environmentally Significant Areas.** Direct staff to establish a formal Ravine Stewardship Partner pathway for ESA-adjacent community groups: a designated staff contact, a defined scope of work (monitoring, reporting, stewardship projects), and a clear process to authorize supervised access to ESA areas for trained volunteers where appropriate. Today, Friends groups are actively stewarding, but are not permitted into the ESA portion, which limits more meaningful stewardship, monitoring and early identification of issues.

Final Thoughts: This report documents real progress. But if Toronto continues approving ravine-edge intensification, we are funding restoration with one hand while allowing irreversible damage with the other. Ravines are climate infrastructure. They are irreplaceable. Council's job is to prevent the next loss, not celebrate the last repair. **We request Council to put Protection first by adopting governance tools that prevent harm at the ravine edge, not only repair it afterward.**

PORI is formally interested in participating in the Community-led Restoration Program under Recommendation 4, and in the Stewardship Partner pathway. We are ready to contribute to the structural protections this system needs. We welcome further discussion with Committee members and City staff.

Respectfully submitted,

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Protect our Ravines Initiative
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