

On behalf of the Thames River Group, I am writing to request Delegation Status for the recreational dam (seasonal barrier) at Springbank Park, which is currently not on the agenda of the Civic Works Committee meeting scheduled for August 15th.

Our group is eager to speak about the economic development prospects, aesthetics and recreational value of reintroducing the option for an operable dam in the river at Springbank Park. We believe that Delegation Status would allow us to effectively convey our message.

We have looked to cities in Canada, the USA and Europe where waterfronts have been utilized as major tourism attractions. In these places, the economic benefits of such recreational options have been evident. However, in our own community, we have seen a decline in the London Canoe Club membership, with numbers dropping from 2500 to 200. Furthermore, those canoeists must paddle at Sharon Creek. Rowers are limited to accessing only one area to train, Fanshawe, which necessitates driving thirty minutes ,an example of contravening the City's environmental plans.

It is important to note that there have been various explanations given for not repairing the dam in the past, including the need to be consistent with policies to let Ontario rivers run free, improved health of the water and concerns about the turtle population. We believe that it is equally important to address sources of harm to the river, such as the discharge of pesticidal by-products from farmers' fields, the erosion of the river banks, the inability to connect to nature , lost economic opportunities and the potential to lose our Heritage River status. The UTRCA Five Year Reports demonstrate that the river is no more healthy than twenty years ago.

In addition, we would like to draw attention to the lack of consultation with First Nations regarding the decision to permanently keep the dam open. As we foster a culture of truth and reconciliation, it is important that we involve and respect the indigenous communities who have been the custodians of these lands for years. The Chiefs and the Oneida Nations of the Thames have expressed their interest in establishing a storytelling canoe tourist attraction to preserve the history of the River and our lands. This project not only highlights the significance of the river in our nation's stories but also has the potential to attract people to our city and contribute to our economic development.

Currently, our city does not possess a unique draw that compels visitors to spend a weekend here. By repairing the dam and tapping into the tourism potential of the river, we can change this. We urge this Council to reconsider a decision by a former council to not repair the dam but instead view it as a means to revitalize our city. The current state of the downtown core is concerning. To rejuvenate our city, we need to explore all possible avenues for economic vitality.

Thank you for considering our request. We hope that you will grant us Delegation Status so that we can ultimately present our case to this Council and work towards a positive change for our community.

Kind regards,

Martyn Judson
The Thames River Group