



Nature London

The McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London Ontario Inc.

P.O. Box 24008, London, Ontario N6H 5C4

December 12, 2013

Dear City Councillors:

I am writing on behalf of Nature London to oppose the recommendation of the Corporate Services Committee to declare surplus and sell land in the Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area to abutting landowners at 47 and 49 Agincourt Gardens. This proposed course of action sets a very dangerous precedent for the future protection of London's environmentally significant areas; sacrifices the natural heritage of all London's citizens for the private benefit of two residents; and runs directly counter to the direction recently adopted by City Council in its Return to Nature program.

In adopting the Return to Nature program, Council took a praiseworthy step toward protection of London's natural heritage. By encouraging homeowners abutting ESAs to eliminate their encroachments into the ESAs, Council reaffirmed its long-standing purpose of setting aside London's natural areas for preservation for future generations. By taking a decision to sell a portion of an ESA, no matter how small, Council would contradict itself by setting private interests of a few against a principled assertion of the needs of the many.

In pursuit of City direction to protect and maintain ESAs, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has worked with landowners abutting ESAs to eliminate their encroachments. Allowing two encroaching landowners to purchase City property instead of quitting their intrusion into the public domain sends a message to all such landowners that they can encroach on public property with impunity. The likely result will be to encourage others to resist appeals to stop encroaching, and still others, who have not yet encroached, to begin treating public property as private. The likely result will be a steady shrinkage of London's natural heritage.

On a personal note, I am particularly appalled that the City would consider such a course of action after I and others devoted many volunteer hours serving on the advisory committee that helped to formulate the Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA Master Plan (2005). We took on this task because we believed that the City was serious in its concern for natural heritage values. To turn your back on the devoted efforts of many Londoners to create, maintain and preserve our environmentally significant areas is to betray that trust.

Sincerely,
Nature London

Karen Auzins,
President