

REPURPOSING SPRINGBANK DAM

A proposal

To be considered in an EA of Springbank Dam

8 March 2016

SUBMITTED BY: COUNCILLOR BILL ARMSTRONG

The Proposal

Councillor Armstrong proposes a **unique form of decommissioning¹ for Springbank Dam**: to **repurpose** and **convert** the existing structure **into a pedestrian bridge**, thus capitalizing on the investment that has already been made in erecting the structure. It is proposed that the repurposing option be **considered** and **endorsed** in a future Environmental Assessment (**EA**) on the Springbank Dam.



Figure 1 Artist Rendering of Springbank Bridge, facing north. Featuring coloured glass panels, light fixtures, binoculars, and benches. Concrete structure removed.

PART I

To **repurpose** and **convert** the existing dam structure into a **pedestrian friendly bridge/lookout** that meets Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) provincial requirements.

Details

- Structure Width (deck): +/- 5.5m; Wide enough for pedestrians;
- Landscape at the south terminus of the dam must be elevated to get pedestrians/cyclists on the bridge deck;
- Bridge deck can be made secure by improved handrails and removal of obstacles to walking and cycling;
- Brick-like concrete structure on dam measures 4.1m x 9.3 m; Opportunity to *remove structure entirely*, convert into public washrooms, or an interactive public information site.

Policy and Regulatory Considerations

The only option for the Springbank Dam that would not require an EA would be to fix the dam; **all other options** legally require a Schedule B EA as necessitated by the provincial *Environmental Protection Act*.

The components of the dam to be removed or left in place will be determined by an EA when taking into consideration the following factors: social, natural, economic, and input from regulatory agencies. Regulatory agencies to be consulted are:

- **Federal:** Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO): *Fisheries Act* and *Species at Risk Act*
- **Provincial:** Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry (MNRF): *Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act* and the *Endangered Species Act*
- **Local:** Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA): *Conservation Authorities Act*

This proposal does not take a position on what is the best option for the gates/hydraulics, as that is not possible to determine at this point in time. The option which meets the most stringent *environmental* criteria and is the most *cost effective*, will probably be preferred.

Action Items

For Council

1. **COUNCIL REQUEST** that staff remove the Springbank Dam from the “One River EA”; if Springbank Dam is not removed from the “One River EA”, Council to ensure Action Point 2 (that a decision to fix/not fix be made prior to the launch of any EA).
2. **COUNCIL SELECT A DATE TO VOTE** YES or NO to fixing the Springbank Dam;

If Council **chooses to not fix** the dam, an **EA** process for Springbank Dam **will be triggered**, preferably as a standalone EA, leading to the following Action Items:

For Staff - Springbank Dam EA

3. **INCLUDE** Repurposing Option (Part I – Bridge Conversion);

4. REPORT ON:

- a. Cost of converting dam into a pedestrian friendly bridge/lookout point;
- b. Recommendations regarding dam gates and hydraulics;
- c. Sources of funding for full or partial removal of gates/hydraulics, for ex: *Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program*.

Funding

- The first priority will be to meet the regulatory requirements necessitated by the EA.
- **Part I** (Bridge Conversion) of the Repurposing Proposal will be funded by the settlement awarded to the City of London.

Possible Benefits

- Superb views of the river landscape from the middle of the river;
- The opportunity to observe wildlife directly above the river;
- A potential tourist attraction to complement existing opportunities in the Springbank area;
- Access for anglers to the river;
- Bird watching from bridge;
- Promotion of eco-tourism;
- A demonstration of environmental stewardship for the City of London and its habitants;

¹ There is no one legal definition of “decommissioning a dam”. The common theme however in “decommissioning a dam” is that the dam would no longer be in operation.