



INPUT FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Name of Advisory Committee

Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC)

Mandate of Advisory Committee

The Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee reports to the Municipal Council, through the Planning and Environment Committee. The Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee provides technical advice to the City of London on matters which are relevant to the City of London's Official Plan, including London's natural heritage systems as it relates to Environmentally Significant Areas, woodlands, stream corridors, etc.

What areas of the 2016 – 2019 multi-year budget are most important to your committee?

Building a Sustainable City with a strong and healthy environment are part of Council's Strategic Plan. EEPAC is most involved in the protection and enhancement of London's Natural Heritage System. Funding is found in the Parks and Urban Forestry sections of the operating and capital budgets.

Do you have any comments about how your priorities are addressed in the base budget?

There are many positives that the City can be proud of. These include having: a Woodland Acquisition Fund; strong Official Plan Policies that survived challenges all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada; EEPAC as a technical advisory committee; two staff ecologists; and a supportive City Council. Yet, we should strive to do more to protect and enhance our Natural Heritage System.

OPERATING BUDGET

ESA Management Contract (purchased services, page 93).

The Coves has been added to the management contract with the UTRCA. Eight of 10 city owned ESA lands have some management. Not included in the contract are a section of the Stanton Stream corridor (see last page); the newly identified Pottersburg Valley ESA (which does have \$50K budgeted for capital in 2016); and the City owned portions of the Lower Dingman Corridor ESA (see second air photo on last page). It is not clear what additional service (30 h /yr shown on page 123) will be added and where the service will be added. EEPAC points out that in 2014, **\$72K was cut from this budget** which reduced the UTRCA management team complement by one.

EEPAC notes that there are no additional staff budgeted for by law enforcement which is one way encroachments in ESAs are handled. While a staff ecologist is the point of contact for issues, and most major issues have been worked on, responsibility for encroachment has "bounced" between By Law Enforcement and Development Services (where there was no staff for the role). Can you clarify where this responsibility lies today? If this is the responsibility of by law enforcement, and Council decides not to add staff, then this is really a net decrease in service level over four years, given the increase of lands in City ownership and management, and the number of people living adjacent to natural areas. While we are glad to see staff plan to mail "Living With Natural Areas" to all owners abutting an ESA, EEPAC has a recommendation, particularly if no additional management or enforcement is added to the budget:

EEPAC Recommends:

Extending the 2016-19 service adjustment proposed in the Animal Services base operating budget (p. 140) to include ESAs in the service proposed.

There was a 2015 pilot under Parks Patrol and Proactive enforcement, where Animal Control Officers monitored bike accessible parks, off leash parks and city bike paths. Why not ESAs as well?

On a related note, the Chair of EEPAC, has been before PEC to discuss the lack of management or inventory or Conservation Master Plan for the Lower Dingman Corridor ESA. EEPAC notes that in the 2019 growth capital plan, there is \$450K for the Dingman Creek Trail. EEPAC remains concerned that if recreational amenities precede the management of the adjacent natural features and functions, there will be problems such as inappropriate trail locations, erosion and encroachment as experienced in other parts of the city where infrastructure and development precede management. **Prevention is less expensive.**

Invasive Species Management

EEPAC **recommends**, at **no additional cost** to the base budget:

A one-time diversion of the contribution to the Woodland Acquisition Fund (up to \$262K) to deal with invasive species management in ESAs. Alternatively, Council consider a 4 year diversion of half of the contribution. (see Detailed Budget pp. 547 and 555)

The City is a provincial leader in this area in demonstrating “a proactive approach to the management and control of invasive species in protected natural areas.” (Dillon Consulting, 2016)

At its January EEPAC meeting, Mr. Macpherson indicated that roughly \$70K has been spent and that “a million” might be necessary to deal with invasive species such as the new public enemy #1 - Phragmites (see photo following). The ESA management team, under City staff direction, is addressing this invasive and other invaders but the problem is large. There are no draws from this reserve fund forecasted through the 4 year budget period, hence the recommendation.



HYDROGEOLOGIST

The City has recognized the significant benefit gained from having ecologists on staff. EEPAC notes, however, a distinct void in City of London support for evaluating both Environmental Impact Studies and Environmental Assessments which have potential impacts on ground water features, hydrologic functions, surface water features such as wetlands and watercourses, and the linkages between them. Protecting and improving vulnerable surface and ground water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features and their hydrologic functions are a requirement of Provincial Policy (Provincial Policy Statement - Sections 2.1.2, 2.2.1d, 2.2.1e, 2.2.2). Building a Sustainable City with a strong and healthy environment are part of Council's Strategic Plan.

Currently all reports relating to the protection of groundwater, aquifers, and sensitive surface features are directed through the UTRCA. This slows down the review process.

EEPAC recommends that Council include in the four year budget either the creation of a City of London Hydrogeologist position shared by Engineering and Planning and/or Development Services, or budget sufficient funds in these areas for retaining or contracting the necessary expertise on a regular basis. This would enable the city to better and more quickly move through the regulatory processes related to development.

LIFECYCLE CAPITAL BUDGET

EEPAC is also concerned that despite the forecasted average addition of 30 hectares of city owned ESA lands each year, the lifecycle capital spending on ESAs is fixed at \$200K per year. This amount has been the same or less, (with one exception) since 2011 (see following table). This is essentially a reduction particularly when there is an invasive species problem and significant recommendations contained in completed Conservation Master Plans (CMPs) and for CMPs underway. This is less than \$1/person each year for the protection and enhancement of the 10 City owned ESAs. Double is spent on street tree planting which is really just standing still as this budget (p. 276) is to “Replace trees on City boulevards due to age, hazard etc. and as requests are received.”

The \$200K per year means a very slow implementation of the recommendations of the completed CMPs such as for invasive species management in Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA. The lion’s share of the meagre \$200K in 2016 and 2017 is for the Coves (\$50K in each year) and Westminster Ponds (\$100K in each year). However, this means little for the recommendations that will come from the CMPs underway for the Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA and for Meadowlily Woods ESA (\$50K in each of 2018 and 2019 for both of these). Our assumption is that some money from authorized projects in previous budgets remains available, but are concerned that the amounts are not sufficient.

Yr	Woodland Parks/Management	Major Open Space	Neighbourhood Park Infrastructure	ESAs	Street tree planting
2009	170	235	450	270	260
2010	140	320	430	280	260
2011	0	135	380	190	260
2012	150	70	450	200	260
2013	200	150	410	200	260
2014	150	220	400	200	211
2015	150	270	220	350	411
2016	100	350	180	200	411
2017	100	230	450	200	411
2018	100	450	500	200	411
2019	100	450	500	200	411

RECOMMENDATION: Council ask staff to review the life cycle capital budget for ESAs and to report back during the next year’s budget review on the cost to achieve the objectives of the completed and in progress Conservation Master Plans, and the Natural Heritage Policies of the Official Plan within a 5 year or 10 year time frame. This could be achieved through zero based budgeting.

EEPAC notes some growth capital dollars are budgeted for new ESAs (\$400K over the multi-year budget). EEPAC remains concerned that it is insufficient, for example, to ensure trails are located away from sensitive ecological features and functions or areas of erosion. **It is also unclear if there is any plan to carried out any additional Conservation Master Plans. Is there?**

GROWTH CAPITAL BUDGET

In 2017, there is \$700K for “CPRI Link to Riverbend” (p. 313 Detailed Budget) and \$60K for CPRI ESA in 2018 (Detailed Budget p. 315). Map 4 of the draft London Plan shows ESA designation along the valley slope within the CPRI lands. The woodlot between the valley and CPRI buildings is shown as “Potential ESA”. The Thames Valley Corridor Plan shows two patches of “existing ESA” in this area. The Corridor Plan also shows a multi-use path through there. In all cases, there appears to be a gap between the Potential ESA and the ESA in the valley. Is this the case? If the city wishes to pursue this route, presumably it will carry out an Environmental Assessment that will identify and avoid these parts of the Natural Heritage System and will recommend ways to protect these parts of the Natural Heritage System from encroachment. **While most people are respectful, when you increase the raw number of people, you also bring more of those people who are not respectful. EEPAC is unclear how the \$60,000 will be spent.**

In addition to this \$60,000, there is another \$340K in the Growth Capital Budget (p. 315) for new ESAs over the 4 year budget, with another \$500K from 2020 to 2025. Most of this is for new ESAs identified in area plans. In other words, to be determined. Of this remaining \$340K, there is \$125K for Kain’s Woods ESA in the westerly portion of this ESA. EEPAC looks forward to being involved in the planning of how this money will be spent (and hopes that it will be added to the ESA management contract in a timely manner). Worrysome, EEPAC has seen preliminary subdivision planning for this area. It includes part of the paved TVP **within** part of this ESA. (There is \$780K budgeted for 2018 for the Norquay/Riverbend portion of the TVP on page 314). This appears to be incompatible with the objectives of the London Plan to protect and enhance the Natural Heritage System and past comments by members of Council during its last term while debating pavement in the Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA.



INPUT FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES (cont'd)

Do you have any comments about how your priorities are addressed in the strategic initiatives section of the 2016-2019 multi-year budget?

Business Case #3 – Urban Forest Strategy

Tree planting on boulevards and parks. The strategic investment is to increase it by less than 8000 in total (2017 – 1150, 2018 – 2500, 2019 – 3850) over the 4 years above base case of 1600 per year. Much of the current budget is to replace lost ash trees. EEPAC notes that it is the developers who plant trees in new subdivisions. Both the Urban Forest Strategy and the developers' tree planting are admirable. **But street trees do not a forest make.** The budget notes it takes 30-40 years for a new tree to provide significant cover while a clear cut can remove hundreds of mature trees in a matter of days. The Urban Forest Strategy is more than just planting replacement trees and new trees. It is also about the retention of mature woodland. Loss of canopy continues. **However, there has been NO movement on a city wide tree cutting on private land by law.** How many more Teeple Terraces and 704/706 Boler Roads are we to see?

EEPAC also notes that the draft London Plan includes this following section (320). It does not appear that the present base budget would allow Council to achieve this part of the London Plan:

Progress toward meeting these targets will be monitored as follows: A tree canopy cover analysis will be prepared every five years to determine if tree canopy targets are being achieved. An analysis of the structure, function, and value of the Urban Forest will be prepared at least once every ten years.

An inventory update and analysis of trees in boulevards, rural streets, manicured portions of parks and municipal properties, will be completed at least once every ten years.

Business Case #4 - \$1.2 M for TVP

EEPAC has commented on this project through the Environmental Assessment process and just received the Environmental Impact Study to review. Given the presentation by staff and consultant at EEPAC, EEPAC notes it is likely funds will be needed to compensate for loss of Natural Heritage, closure of informal trails and a long term and meaningful Monitoring Program due to the conflict with Species at Risk that must be mitigated.

Business Case - #17 – Winter Maintenance

EEPAC does not support winter maintenance on pathways in parts of the Natural Heritage System due to environmental impact of materials used (even if salt is not used) as well as the impact of increased activity when the ground is most sensitive. Big sloppy footsteps in mud break up and loosen soil making it more prone to washing away in melting snow and rain. If you go around mud, the trail gets wider, starting the cycle all over again.

Do you have any other comments from the Committee with respect to the budget?

Although outside our mandate, EEPAC would like to comment on the Goal of Building a Sustainable City. EEPAC would recommend that council include in its budget including in new building projects such as the new community centres in the SE and E and new library in the NW, that there be **green walls and green roofs and if not green roofs, solar panels.** Alternatively, there could be a dedicated budget all areas could draw from for initiatives such as butterfly gardens on under-utilized city property such as Reg Cooper Square.

STANTON STREAM CORRIDOR (1) / DINGMAN CREEK CORRIDOR (2)

