

## **May 14, 2016 - Provincial Environmental Advisory Committee Symposium notes**

**Diane Szoller attended**

Ajax Environment Advisory Committee has a number of interests – 3<sup>rd</sup> largest garbage facility nearby, bottled water ban, Blue Dot community, LEED buildings, phosphorus in the lakes, pollinators, grey water, cell tower and bird flight paths, waterfront protection, Green Living days, Adopt-a-Trail program.

**Planning for Community Gardens** – Stev Andis, Ajax Senior Policy Planner. The first garden underway is a result of an Official Plan review on climate change and environment policies, resident demand, focus on local food supply and Durham Region Food Charter. Enabling policy involves a permit for suitable locations, design to accommodate accessibility needs, building locations, parking, support of marketplaces in key locations where locally grown.

**Advocating for Community Gardens as Green Infrastructure** – Janet McKay, ED, Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition (a collaborative alliance of groups working to promote and support living green infrastructure across the province). 6 themes include urban agriculture, green roofs/walls, urban forest, stormwater systems, public spaces and natural heritage. Focus – policy advocacy, communications and knowledge sharing. 2012 report - Health, Prosperity and Sustainability: The Case for Green Infrastructure in Ontario – top 4 challenges are funding, political will/support, unclear or poorly enforced policies, lack of technical data on life cycle benefits compared to cost. EBR submission made. Provincial policy statement upgrades in 2014. Scan of Official Plans showed 18 of 103 OPs in Ontario include green infrastructure – all from 2014 or more recent. Advocacy has been for infrastructure funding - \$130B committed, cap and trade to support green infrastructure funding and municipal asset management plans. State of the Urban Forest report GTA, will be first ever assessment of regional urban forest canopy.

**Edible Native Species in the Urban Forest** – Melissa Williams, LEAF Program Manager. Focus to grow and sustain the urban forest with planting, education and stewardship programs in Ajax, Mississauga, Toronto and York Region. Programs include: backyard tree planting program, edible tree tours – ie pawpaws, serviceberry, white pine, paper birch. Garden kits delivered to the door (small kit 1 tree, 2 shrubs, large kit 2 trees, 4 shrubs), tree tenders leadership training program. Native species encouraged. For a subsidized rate of \$150-\$220/tree, participants receive consultation in their yard with an arborist, a 5-8' tree, delivery and planting.

**Urban Fishing** – Thomas Sciscione, TRCA, Coordinator, Aquatic Habitat Toronto. Lake Ontario NW waterfront strategy as a framework to enhance fishing opportunities, protect and restore fish habitat where needed, encourage people to fish GTA waters, and support access to sites for anglers to enjoy. Study area spans western border of Burlington to eastern border of Durham Region (approx. 200 km). Stewardship programs include: learn to fish events, family fishing days, signage and line recycling program. Recent projects include Ajax Park canoe launch, and Long Pond – shoreline restoration.

After lunch, **ideas/actions** on local food/stewardship were noted that could be brought into community. Topics ranged from community orchards, community harvesting, markets/food trucks, an organic food co-op, garden tours, seed libraries, mandatory community garden allocations in subdivision plans etc.

**Local Food and Climate Adaptation** – Diane Szoller, ACE London. Overview of London's 14 community gardens/500 gardeners, pollinator policy process, upcoming Nov 19 Urban Agriculture conference. Food security and climate issues impact supply, prices and trade. Loss of crops averaging 20% in Prairies, more difficult decisions related to crop management given invasive pests and diseases, interruption of supply chains and longer, warmer growing seasons. Government helps but community resilience planning is needed. Canada does not have a national food security policy. Two farm options – technology/improved management and emissions removals through carbon sinks/improved management. Food insecurity is highest in Nunavut. 75% global loss of agricultural biodiversity occurred in last 100 years.

**Community Supported Agriculture** – Kelty McKay, Farmer & CSA Retail Manager. 3 families involved, market store, supply markets across GTA, workshops, public can come and pick fruit/vegetables, school tours, CSA boxes – half share, full share, school fundraiser, bee hives, minimal waste, know your farmer.

**Pollinators & Local Food in an Urban Environment** – Jade Schofield, Ajax Environmental Sustainability Coordinator. Look for pollinator friendly plants. Bee declines given habitat loss, pesticides, disease and extreme weather impacts bloom times. We have experienced huge loss of Monarch butterfly. Provincial pollinator action plan, 80% neonic reduction by 2017. Ajax sustainable plan includes robust food system – with community gardens, pollinator gardens/meadowscape project underway and a public orchard, neighbourhood access to food growing opportunities, expanding farmers markets, Buy Local campaign, local food box program, school food programs, native plant nursery tours, tree care kit, workshops.

**Your Pane is their Pain** – Michael Measure, FLAP Canada (fatal light awareness program). Goal is to safeguard migratory birds in the urban environment through guidelines, policy and standards development, advocacy and education, data collection and research, rescue and rehabilitation. Windows and lights kill birds. Over a million birds collide with buildings across Toronto annually. From 1993-2015, FLAP has recovered over 75,000 birds from 170 species, 21 being species at risk. Many urban areas across NA are situated along migratory bird routes. Southern Ontario sits beneath 2 major overlapping corridors making it one of the busiest migratory passages on the planet. LEED certification allows a point for bird collision deterrence, BOMA offers bird-friendly guidelines. It is now an offence under Ontario law (EPA) to emit reflected light that kills or injures birds. Also it is an offence under the Species at Risk Act to kill or injure birds, even though it happens with reflective windows. Studies show common techniques do not prevent bird collisions. FLAP working with various experts in the field of ornithology, architecture and engineering in an effort to develop window treatments safe for birds such as visual marker density on outside surfaces otherwise it reflects, contrast of markers, etchings, opaque spandrels, screens- ie Town of Markham building responsible for 100 bird deaths/year now has 5/year.

**Ontario EAC Network** – Suzanne Elston, Oshawa Senior Environment Coordinator. Reminder that a website was made available in 2008 to add your committee's profile for networking purposes. In Ontario, land-use planning is one of the most important functions that municipalities have. Changes to the planning Act in 1996 shifted more of the land-use decision-making to municipal governments and local citizens, with less direction from the provincial government and less control exercised by it. Communities can approach the task in a number of ways, one of which is through an Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC). Such committees are increasingly in place across Ontario. Visit <http://www.eacs.ca/symposium.php>.