

**From:** margo does

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 12, 2020 8:25 AM

**To:** SPPC <sppc@london.ca>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments re: One River/Back to the River/Forks of the Thames and the Upcoming Budget

Hello councilors.

Over the years I have been watching with interest the studies and recommendations of the One River projects, the titles of which seem to change regularly while the rhetoric remains basically the same, i.e., what to do with the Thames River area. The language used to describe what should or should not happen at the river in the city's brochures and web sites is catchy and enriched with beautiful photos and phrases to try to entice the public into believing that some extraordinary revitalization or transformation needs to take place along the river. The most important element, the quality of the water, is hardly discussed. I find this is problematic. One cannot separate the water from the river.

Therefore, I am particularly concerned about the use of funds, public and private, for the proposed suspension walkway at the Forks, for example, the cost of which at this time is set at 12.5 million. Also, from what I understand, 5 million \$ has been taken from a Hydro reserve fund to go towards this initiative. I find this an extremely irresponsible use of our tax dollars. To use reserve funds for a decorative, impractical project does not make good business sense. We already have several vantage points to look out over the Thames, especially at the Forks. We also have several spaces such as Harris Park, and other places, for opportunities to hold events and gatherings along the river.

As well, I have read on the city's web site that in Jacobs engineer's study of the ribbon walkway project, they have concluded, "the suspension walkway softscape terrace can proceed to detailed design and construction without further EA (environmental assessment) effort." Yet, in the city's recommendation, the use of the words hard scaping is definitely present. This is confusing, and there is a concern about the environmental impact of hard scaping.

. Also, I see in the city's next 4 year budget. recommendations, specifically Part B Implementation of Recommendation, which speaks to spending 1.3 million dollars for 'enhancement' projects along the river. There is mention of several small scale projects (approximately 13, I believe) to be completed along the river over the term of the budget period, partly for the Springbank Dam work, and mostly for fishing docks and boat launch areas. I would like to know how much of the 1.3 M is budgeted for erosion prevention and naturalized ecological preservation. If this highly important riparian work is not dealt with the fishing docks and boat launches will not hold up for long. Not only should we properly look after the places along the river, moreover, we need to think about the quality of the water for the sake of the natural inhabitants, and for our own safety. Everything we do at the river will impact the health of the water. In this time of climate crisis we certainly need to be highly vigilant.

In the city's recommendations, I have read that London is afraid it will "...lose competitive ground to the attraction of other cities that are revitalizing their central waterfronts". London does not have a waterfront, it has a river which forks at the end of Dundas Street. Although I think it would be good to create and maintain something of beauty by the forks, why not simply put in beautiful flowers, and bushes with blossoms of multi-colors, bold and brilliant to create a spectacular display and array of unforgettable color. Simple, but beautiful spaces could put London on the map. We could brighten up the whole city with many more floral beds which are good for pollinators and easier on the budget than a large walkway. Spending millions of our tax payers money on huge, expensive structures when we have other much more pressing issues in the city to me is an extreme, unnecessary expense; it is simply wasteful. It would appear as if London, a medium size city, has developed big city aspirations.

So, dear councilors, when deliberating over the upcoming budget plans, please consider the more important items. Water quality should be very high on the list. Also, and as important, remember our population of those who are not properly housed. Every human needs support and a place to live. Should we not be looking at these issues first? No amount of enhancement or revitalization, be it with flex streets or ribbon walkways, will eliminate or ameliorate the visible face of poverty in the downtown or elsewhere. Housing and health should come first. Decor should not be near the top of the priority list.

Sincerely, Margo Does  
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