

January 4, 2023

Chair and Members  
Planning and Environment Committee  
City of London

Re: 5:00 pm Agenda item - Report of the Ecological Community Advisory Committee  
(submitted by the Chair, S. Levin)

I want to introduce the Committee to its Ecological Community Advisory Committee as well as **invite you to attend any meeting**. Our agendas, like yours, are posted on the city web site a week ahead of our monthly meetings. We presently meet virtually the third Thursday of each month, starting at 4:30 pm. I will return to this matter shortly.

For those of you new to PEC and Council, this Advisory Committee is a technical advisory committee. It reviews consultants' Environmental Impact Studies for new developments adjacent to the city's Natural Heritage System as shown on Map 5 of the London Plan. It has also been involved in the preparation of the updated Environmental Management Guideline adopted by the last City Council. It has also prepared brochures for distribution to residents about domestic pets and Environmentally Significant Areas as well as information about living adjacent to ESAs. The Advisory Committee is ready to be given direction by this Committee and Council on matters related to its mandate and hopes that Council will support initiatives brought to it by the Advisory Committee.

ECAC is a very diverse committee as it draws on Western and Fanshawe for volunteers. ECAC has varied representation from genders, religions, citizenship, ethnic backgrounds, experience, education and we value the diversity of thought that this group brings to the table. There are currently 14 members out of a complement of 15. As you will note in our 4<sup>th</sup> report, item 6 that appears on your agenda, we are seeking to fill the vacancy with a former member of the predecessor Advisory Committee. **I would ask PEC to support the recommendation to fill the vacancy with Dr. Mirindi (Eric) Dusenge, a post doctorate fellow in plant sciences at Western.**

Finally, I would also like to point out that your advisory committee, with about half being new members, first met in the middle of 2022 on line. And it has never met in person. I ask you if your Council, with so many new members, had never had a chance to meet in person, would you feel that you are able to do your best work? I am still not clear as to why no advisory committees are able to meet in person, even once, to be able to build the kind of relationships that only in person meetings can fulfill. I do not recall a Council direction in this matter. I am sure COVID limitations are reasonable. I am not asking to go fully back to in person meetings each month, but **would ask that at least every quarter or even twice a year to have an in person meeting**. I believe this would assist the effectiveness of this and other advisory committees. **Alternatively, hybrid meetings. I suggest PEC and Council direct staff to allow one of these options for advisory committees beginning no later than the beginning of Q2 of this year.**