

ATTACHMENT 1

FACILITATED DISCUSSION SUMMARY – COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION (2018-2019)

I. “increasing the understanding and influencing the perceived monetary and intrinsic value of nature and greenspace, both regionally and locally.”

Key discussion points from the facilitated discussion:

Scope of the problem

There is a need to maintain or improve trail, and park access:

- Accessibility can be manifested in diverse ways including perceptions of safety, mobility.

Improve personal connection to nature:

- Through diverse methods, appealing to a broader audience promoting ownership of space, community stewardship, (e.g., introducing community gardens).
- Improving connection to nature will have a direct impact on the improvement of human health.
- Utilize Indigenous knowledge.
- Promote volunteer opportunities to facilitate a personal connection to nature, and ownership of greenspace (e.g., trail maintenance).
- Encourage greening on private property.

Use valuation methods to calculate monetary value of natural assets as a method to improve people’s understanding of the high value of nature (e.g., value of ecosystem services, not just replacement value).

Ideas for RWA action

Reach out to existing groups and utilize existing knowledge and/or programs.

- Talk to other Conservation Authorities
- Platform and experience sharing with other organizations.

Work with Welcome Centres.

- Improve relationships with New Canadians

Identify multiple entry points to engage with nature, for example:

- Cooking
- Tree planting
- “Black-out” no screen events

Election year

- Opportunity to push greenspace into key issues.

Staff Recommendations

Much of the discussion about greenspace and fostering sustainable citizenship echoed themes that were initially identified by TRCA staff in the collective priorities scoping exercise. Themes included; increasing personal connections to nature, fostering a sense of ownership of greenspace, reducing barriers to greenspace access, the connection of health to nature, and communicating the value of ecosystem services, as well as the more intrinsic value of nature. Actions focussed on utilizing connections to existing programs, advocacy, and the identification of diverse methods to foster individual connection to nature.

Connecting to existing groups and programs across the jurisdiction could provide new insight to improve or supplement existing TRCA programs, and inform the direction of new programs. Utilizing member's existing networks, the working group could seek to expand the stewardship network. The alignment of those external programs with existing TRCA programming, will help to improve TRCA stewardship programs, and may also identify programming gaps.

There are extensive TRCA programs that target many of the areas of interest identified by RWA members (for example, Outreach and Education's Cultural Connections program specifically targets international groups, with tailored activities/lesson plans to suit an international ESL audience). It would be beneficial for RWA members interested in the topic of fostering sustainable citizenship to become more familiar with the breadth of existing TRCA programming. This could be one of the first items on the working group's work plan.

II. "Increasing the preparedness and protection of communities from existing and future flooding and extreme weather events"

Key discussion points from the facilitated discussion:

Scope of the problem

- Many residents and communities are not aware of their vulnerability to flooding from either river flow or from urban drainage backups.
- Communities and neighbourhoods at risk of flooding need to be educated about the risks and what they can do to reduce them.
- Land use planning and development decisions being made in the upstream parts of TRCA watersheds are taking place without enough regard for the increase they create on flood risk in existing downstream communities.
- Programs that could help communities and neighbourhoods address flood risk are not integrated across government departments or between municipalities.
- Low-income communities are particularly vulnerable because they are often located in areas where flood risk and aging urban infrastructure keeps property values low, and they also have less access to information and lack a strong voice to get political attention.
- The true costs of flooding are not being taken into account in municipal budgeting and decision-making; if municipalities calculated the costs of flood damage it would completely justify large investments in improved infrastructure and flood protection.

Ideas for RWA action

- Review of best practices around the world in engaging communities in understanding addressing urban flood risk.
- Communications campaign, leveraging members' networks and communication channels including online presences, to help vulnerable communities understand their risks and how they can reduce them.
- Compile and communicate a list of all of the federal, provincial, municipal and other programs that are available to residents of TRCA watersheds to assess and reduce flood risk.
- Community-led risk and resilience programs, training community members to assess and communicate flood risk in their neighbourhoods, and advocate for improvement and investment.
- Pilot project in a flood-vulnerable neighbourhood to demonstrate how flood risks can be assessed, communicated, and addressed. Neighbourhoods possibly to be selected based on a competition and the program approach to perhaps follow the existing TRCA SNAP (Sustainable Neighbourhood Retrofit Program) model to bring resources and investment.
- Make flood resilience the theme of the 2018 or 2019 Watershed Forum, building capacity by including residents from vulnerable communities and calling attention to the need for action on the issue.
- Ensure that any RWA actions give priority to low-income communities.

Staff Recommendations

The interest of the RWA members that participated in the discussion appeared to focus on the need to understand and reduce flood risk in vulnerable neighbourhoods and communities. The actions suggested by members to address this challenge related primarily to general communication with and education of the public, and engaging vulnerable communities to help them understand and reduce their flood risk. Given these suggested actions, and the scope of work that a RWA working group could reasonably undertake, members who are interested in participating in a working group could potentially undertake one of the following:

- A public education campaign to raise the level of understanding about flood risk, risk reduction, and supports and programs that are available to residents and communities in TRCA watersheds.
- A one-neighbourhood pilot for a community-based resilience program that trains residents to understand and reduce risks and advocate for their community.

The suggestion of a neighbourhood scale, SNAP-type pilot for flood risk reduction is also an excellent idea but may require more time and resources than a RWA working group can reasonably be expected to contribute. However, we would be pleased to connect working group members with staff from the TRCA SNAP team so that the members can present their idea. Making flood resilience the theme of the Watershed Forum is another valuable suggestion and we will ensure that it is considered by the RWA working group that will lead the development of the Forum. Should it be selected as the topic for the 2018 or 2019 Forum the two working groups may choose to work together on the Forum programming.

III. “Improve the integration of environmental protection and community well-being in land use planning and design, growth management decisions and consideration of future climate change impacts”

Key discussion points from the facilitated discussion:

Scope of the problem

- The proposed issue of improving “Integrated Planning” is currently too narrow and should be expanded to include local economic prosperity that incorporate principles of a Circular Economy (see definition below).
- Many residents are unfamiliar with the terminology of “Integrated Planning” and need to be better educated on the policies and public process that govern land use and growth management decision making, specifically including the opportunities for public input. This problem extends to the younger generation and potentially in-coming/new municipal councillors.
- There is currently no forum to have an ‘honest conversation’ about determining what watershed condition is actually desired by the collective stakeholders, which includes citizens, public/government sector, private sector, special interest groups, etc. Further, integrated planning decisions should be guided by this collective vision with acknowledgment that how ‘we’ currently build-out our watersheds needs to change.
- There is a gap in citizen knowledge around what “developable” land is actually available in our region and lack of awareness of the complex issues around urban build-out, for example, what are the suite of potential trade-offs between the environment, economy and social well-being in relation to the next wave of GTA urbanization?
- There is a lack of media presence about this issue and the need for community involvement.

Circular Economy definition: Looking beyond the current take-make-dispose extractive industrial model, a circular economy aims to redefine growth, focusing on positive society-wide benefits. It entails gradually decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources, and designing waste out of the system. Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural, and social capital. It is based on three principles: Design out waste and pollution; Keep products and materials in use; and Regenerate natural systems.

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/overview/concept>

Additional issues identified

- There is piecemeal communication about TRCA community events or opportunities for public participation in providing comments or input programs or processes affecting watershed health decisions, where appropriate.
- The services and “points of contact” for subject-specific inquiries at TRCA are difficult to understand or navigate by general public and watershed resident.

Ideas for RWA action

- Communications campaign, leveraging members' networks and communication channels including online presence, to help educate communities, advertise upcoming opportunities to participate in the public process and encourage/support citizen input.
- Leverage member's networks to convene and engage in meaningful dialogue with industry and business leaders around land use planning and wicked problem of achieving 'sustainable development'
- Member-led workshops or outreach events to specifically educate students (grades 5 and 6) and new municipal councils following 2018 election.
- Member participation in writing events to translate and simplify current TRCA or other technical policy documents and produce outreach material to ensure accessible language for public audiences.

Staff Recommendations

The interest of the RWA members that participated in the discussion appeared to focus on two aspects:

- 1) the need to expand the land use planning issue by integrating environmental, social and economic considerations into a way forward; and
- 2) the need for citizens, students and community leaders to understand and increase meaningful participation in the public process that governs land use decision making in the region.

The actions suggested by members to address this challenge related primarily to clear, accessible communication with and education of the public, engaging industry, business sector, professional associations to improve the dialogue on this issue, and reach out to other community organizations who have greater success in this space to share lessons learned. Given these suggested actions, and the scope of work that a RWA working group could reasonably undertake, members who are interested in participating in a working group could potentially undertake one of the following:

- Development of plain language communications describing the collective priorities we are addressing for use for all RWA members in their various engagement and outreach activities.
- Targeted neighbourhood workshops to raise the level of understanding about the land use planning process, issues and opportunities across the social-economic- environmental spectrum and enable greater participation in the public process.
- An invitation-based series of round table discussions with industry, business associations and other appropriate groups to find more common ground and understanding of what it means to have a healthy watershed in light of significant growth, existing land use impacts and future risks associated with or exacerbated by climate change.

IV. New Ideas for RWA action

Key discussion points from the facilitated discussion:

- Existing programs and partnerships be enhanced and supported by RWA, including community engagement. RWA needs to hear about the activities TRCA is already doing.
- Cultural Heritage recognition; Bolton now designated a heritage village on a designated Heritage River.
- There was an additional and helpful suggestion to create an “Ask TRCA Portal” on the Basecamp platform to give RWA members a tool to determine correct responses to questions they may receive from people in their networks about TRCA programs, policies, projects and more generally, issues pertaining to our watersheds.