



P.O. Box 89052
HAMILTON, ONTARIO L8S 4R5

January 13 2020
Mayor Eisenberger and Members of Council
City Hall, 71 Main Street West,
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Re: Discharge of sanitary sewage and stormwater run-off into Chedoke Creek

Dear Mayor Eisenberger and Members of City Council:

Like many Hamiltonians, the 600-member Hamilton Naturalists' Club is very disappointed by the discharge of a staggering 24 billion litres of sewage and storm water run-off to Chedoke Creek over a period of four and a half years. The decision by City Council to withhold information about the leak for 11 months has undermined public confidence in the ability of Council to tackle this debacle as an urgent priority.

The apology by the Mayor and Council is a welcome first step. However, it isn't any substitute for an action plan to remediate and mitigate the ecological damage and ensure that another episode of environmental degradation on this scale is never repeated. Chedoke Creek has been greatly abused for far too long. It is time for City Council to finally recognize the importance of the fragile Chedoke watershed in maintaining the health of Cootes Paradise as a critical nature sanctuary and wetland, and enhancing the natural attractiveness and escarpment landscape of West Hamilton.

Improved sewer overflow monitoring and the sharing of public information on discharges are positive steps, as well as expansion of sewage treatment to handle larger flows, but they are not enough. We strongly urge the City to commit to a permanent cleanup and a robust, sustainable ecological remediation plan. The City should request the full participation of the provincial and federal governments, which have a major stake in rehabilitating Chedoke Creek and strengthening the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan.

An effective strategy should focus on reducing stormwater outflows as much as possible. Stormwater fees with rebates to property owners for cutting flows would certainly be helpful. We share the disappointment of the City's many formal and informal partners --- including the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Bay Area Restoration Council, the City of Burlington and many volunteers --- who appreciate a natural resource like Chedoke Creek. They recognize that a clean creek, thriving flora and fauna and an inviting valley is a valuable asset to a greener city, and have worked hard to make it better.

We strongly support accelerated testing to identify and fix the illegal hookups in the sewer system that have been a persistent problem. We also urge the City to encourage the province to support stronger protection of all existing wetlands, as recommended by former Environmental Commissioner Dianne Saxe.

Hamilton Naturalists' Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, appreciation and conservation of our wild plants and animals.
All work is freely done by Directors, Officers and Members.



As Chris McLaughlin, Executive Director of the Bay Area Restoration Council, wrote in The Hamilton Spectator on Dec. 7, 2019, "In the lamentable events that have further abused this already degraded creek and other downstream environments, there is an opportunity to do much more, and to do much better."

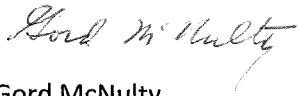
It is equally important for City Council to act in order to lessen the harm to Hamilton's national image and reputation by what Mr. McLaughlin rightly described as this "terrible mess." We urge Council to show leadership and bring all stakeholders together in developing what RBG CEO Mark Runciman has described as a Chedoke recovery plan that will "put our region on the global stage for best practices in waste and stormwater management."

In an unprecedented outcry, the citizens of Hamilton and area have made it abundantly clear they care about the fate of the Chedoke watershed and its importance in our quality of life. They demand that City Council make and execute a plan of which we can all be proud. City Council can count on the full support of the HNC in taking whatever steps are necessary to end the degradation of Chedoke Creek and make it a permanent symbol of urban environmental rehabilitation in Hamilton.

Sincerely,



Chris Motherwell,
President



Gord McNulty,
Conservation & Education Director

"Protecting Nature Since 1919"

