

Added Item 5.1(h)

ATTN: City Of Hamilton Public Works Committee
Re: Item 10.1 Monday September 20th 2021

Dear Committee,

My name is Alex Wilson. I am a resident of Ward 13 and I am writing to you today in opposition to any sewage “solution” that would involve sewage flowing into Ancaster Creek as a relief to existing sewage and stormwater systems. I am asking that as a committee you uphold staff’s [Report PW14107(a)] as well as the 2020 consultant’s [Appendix A] recommendations that no sewage outflows into Ancaster Creek be added to the system.

As stated in the consultant’s report, this does not mean doing nothing about the ongoing flooding problems in the area but encouraging and supporting the uptake of preventive measures like backwater valves and acting on the other recommendations discussed in the 2014 *Old Dundas Road Sewage Pumping Station (HC005) Wet Weather Relief Master Plan and Class Environmental Assessment Study*. One such recommendation from this 2014 report is to remove sources of inflows from private properties, of which staff have noted a plan is forthcoming.

In the remainder of my submission I explore how in reflecting on the gaps in the discussion to date, this forthcoming plan is not only a chance to improve, but to take real and meaningful action on the climate crisis and righting relations as residents between our city and the waterways we rely on to live here.

Climate Emergency

Despite declaring a climate emergency over two years ago in 2019 it remains concerningly opaque how this declaration has informed the actions we are taking as a city. For example, despite committing to review all municipal decisions through a climate emergency lens **no mention of the climate emergency appears in the staff report** and climate is only narrowly discussed in the 2020 consultant’s report [Appendix A]. It appears that to date, the only climate emergency consideration within this discussion relates to the modelling of the expected strain of increased precipitation and extreme weather events on the existing sewage and stormwater infrastructure. While this limited inclusion is both noticed and valuable, this leaves out the big picture. What will the combined impact of climate related stress on local waterways combined with increased wastewater contamination have on our urban watercourses? Already, these habitats are struggling with our current use. Will our waterways be able to stand up to the combined pressures of urban infrastructure pollution from increasing extreme weather events and the warming and biodiversity loss already occurring?

Concerns:

- Climate Emergency lens absent from discussion
- While the Biodiversity Action Plan is still being drafted, work is needed now to ensure all municipal decisions protect and enhance biodiversity
- No consideration of the combined impact of climate and human impacts on already fragile ecosystems

Health of Ancaster Creek: A Sub-Watershed Under Threat

[The Hamilton Conservation Authority Fact Sheet on the Ancaster Creek Subwatershed](#) details the subwatershed's current habitat in comparison to Environment Canada's "How much Habitat is Enough" guidelines. Notable stresses include dangerously low wetland coverage, lack of riparian buffers, presence of substantial impervious surfaces, and the degradation of terrestrial habitats.

Concerns:

- Only 5% of recommended wetland coverage is present. While Environment Canada guidelines encourage 6% wetland coverage, land use planning decisions have resulted in only 0.3% of the subwatershed being covered by wetlands.
- This remaining wetland coverage is itself at risk with ongoing attempts to develop the only originally located wetland in the subwatershed which is also the headwaters of Ancaster Creek located along Garner Rd.
- Insufficient riparian buffers lead to habitat degradation and warming. Notably areas impacted from flooding are located within the 30 meter recommended riparian buffer zone (Figures 1 and 2).

Infrastructure Solutions - From Grey to Green

As Identified in the staff report a plan targeting private inflows is forthcoming. This is not only a cost-effective solution to reduce stress on existing infrastructure but marks an opportunity to act on the crises facing us and prioritize "green infrastructure" in this plan.

Green infrastructure stormwater systems use natural processes and green technologies to manage stormwater and improve water quality. Green stormwater infrastructure intercepts, absorbs, and holds stormwater, helping reduce the amount of runoff entering sewers during rain events. By absorbing rain where it falls, it decreases the untreated runoff discharged into water bodies from combined sewer system overflow events. The absorption and storage process also filters pollutants which improves water quality. Examples of these systems include: Bioswales; Permeable pavement; Rain gardens; Stream naturalization; and, Downspout disconnection. Public Works can learn more about Green Infrastructure from local leaders like Environment Hamilton and Green Venture as well as from Green Infrastructure Ontario.

Not only are green infrastructure solutions a cost effective solution to this specific stormwater infrastructure problem, but when implemented at scale across our city would have the following benefits:

- **Climate Change Adaptation:** Green infrastructure stormwater systems help manage the impacts of severe weather, particularly from increased precipitation.
- **Mitigating Stormwater caused Flooding:** Green infrastructure stormwater systems mitigate flood risk by providing permeable surfaces for stormwater to be absorbed into the ground.
- **Ecosystem Health:** Green infrastructure stormwater systems absorb rain water, which helps sustain infiltration to aquifers, recharge groundwater reserves and maintain base flow in rivers.
- **Public Health:** Green infrastructure Stormwater systems safeguard the quality of our drinking water by reducing erosion and preventing stormwater from flowing into streets or

parking lots where it can pick up contaminants. When vegetative technologies are used they also improve air quality by removing pollution and particulate matter from the air.

- **Capital Cost Savings:** Green infrastructure stormwater systems can have lower up-front project construction costs for the same level of service as 'grey' infrastructure solutions.
- **Lifecycle Cost Savings:** Green infrastructure stormwater systems can reduce maintenance costs and offer extended lifespans which provide long-term cost savings.
- **Cost of Floods:** Investment in green infrastructure stormwater systems can prevent large-scale damage and reduce the financial impact of floods.
- **Green Jobs:** Green infrastructure stormwater systems create design, construction and maintenance jobs.
- **Aesthetics:** Vegetative green infrastructure stormwater systems bring nature into urban areas and can provide attractive features that improve the aesthetics of a streetscape or parking lot.

As noted in Figures 1 and 2 below, flooding impacted areas lie within the riparian buffer zone as such vegetation based green infrastructure solutions here could have layered positive impacts.

Recommendations:

In summary I am requesting that the Public Works Committee accept staff and consultant's findings and do not pursue adding additional sewage outflows to the Ancaster Creek Subwatershed. Additionally, I ask that the the Public Works Committee reflect on the broader context of this decision within the Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis and take action on the following:

1. Recommend that the **forthcoming plan to address private inflows into the stormwater system include and prioritize green infrastructure solutions.**
2. Council and committees including Public Works provide staff with **clear guidelines and expectations as to how the climate emergency lens is to be applied** to reporting.
 - a. These guidelines include both an impact on natural systems and human systems our city and it's residents rely on to live safe and healthy lives here.
3. A comprehensive multi-stakeholder action plan driven by indigenous knowledge, community consultation, and conservation science be undertaken to **rehabilitate and repair relations with our waterways.**
 - a. This action plan should begin with the immediate implementation of stormwater fees;
 - b. This action plan should include prioritizing the protection of essential and at risk habitats such as removing the headwaters of the Ancaster Creek Subwatershed located at 140 Garner Rd E from the Airport Employment Growth District and protecting this habitat as a Core Area with P6 zoning. Rezoning, protecting, and rehabilitating other natural areas at risk as needed.
 - c. This Action Plan should include a commitment to and funding towards the implementation of "Green Infrastructure" solutions that enhance local habitats, climate resilience, and existing grey infrastructure.

1. Montgomery Dr. Watercourses with approx 30m buffer via HCA Regulated Area Mapping Tool



2. Old Ancaster Rd. Watercourses with approx 30m buffer via HCA regulated Area Mapping Tool

