

June 14, 2024

Re: Biodiversity Action Plan, June 18, 2024 Delegation

Dear Members of the City of Hamilton Planning Committee:

Hamilton's first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is not only an incredibly well-researched and well-written document, it also validates the work that ordinary citizens have been doing for many years, to preserve Hamilton's unique ecosystems and habitats. As a testament to the special place that Hamilton is as a biodiversity hot-spot, the BAP lays out a commitment to continuing to heal our remaining natural environments, as well as suggesting how we can continue to add more productive and beneficial spaces to our communities that support a biodiversity of life which in turn keeps our people healthy and happy.

At a time when our Greenbelt, urban boundary decisions and farmland security continue to be under siege, there is no time to waste in being leaders who will defend the land upon which we stand, and the waters and air that sustain us. I particularly want to celebrate that the plan describes how lands and habitats can be linked as natural corridors are created through communities (21). Many citizens have participated in the Pollinators Paradise and Butterfly Way Projects for many years already. If we can find ways to officially encourage more citizens to create habitat in their front and backyards, and neighbourhood parks, our urban areas themselves can become biodiversity hotspots that can begin to repair the loss of habitat that has happened (and continues to happen) all around us.

Hamiltonians need to know that they live in Carolinian Canada and that the actions they may take on their own properties as well as volunteer work they may choose to support in their own local communities will have an immediate and lasting impact on nature. Success stories like the Hamilton Harbour Remediation and the Cootes Paradise invasive species projects are inspiring and should be used to help educate and encourage citizens to support similar projects (for example, within Confederation Park, where a smaller scale invasive species clean-ups could also have huge benefits for ecosystem repair before they continue to become further out of hand). The BAP will help to collect the data needed over time to measure our success and to continue identifying future goals for maintaining our ecosystems across the city. This investment can not come soon enough!

I look forward to seeing how an official recognition of the BAP by the city's Planning Committee will help to bolster its impact over the next five years. It feels so hopeful to know that the work that has been happening behind the scenes may begin to be understood by more people. I hope that if the city invests in helping support BAP's recommendations around education and outreach, more people will become engaged and empowered to take personal interest in the plants and animals around us and how they help to support our soils, waterways and air.

This summer, as I find myself working to remove bindweed, European Buckthorn, garlic mustard, Phragmites and Dog Strangling Vine from green spaces, or as I work to add more pollinator habitat around the city, it will feel great knowing that this work isn't futile. Specifically through supporting the "Key Priorities" in the BAP, the city will benefit greatly from the many fantastic partners that are ready to work alongside the city of Hamilton. If the city recognizes the value of biodiversity, and supports the organizations that are eager and ready to help with this work, more people, organizations and businesses will also surely join together and become involved.

The BAP will have a positive impact on the decisions and actions that our city makes and takes over the next five years (and beyond).

Thank you for supporting this plan and finding ways to make its visions reality,

Truly,  
Vanessa Scali