

Open letter to Mayor Dawe and Aurora Town Council on Ivy Jay Nature Reserve

Nature Aurora's Ivy Jay Community Nature Reserve Design, Construction and Management Report (2014) recommended using beams under the Hartwell Way road bridge. We are pleased to report that a pair of Barn Swallows and a Phoebe are now nesting on those beams. We also recommended that a colony of more than Yellow Lady Slipper Orchids, a locally rare wildflower, be fenced during construction. Unfortunately, this advice was

ignored and a trail was built over them. We could easily have transplanted these to a safer location.

Grassland is the most threatened habitat in Aurora. Several hundred seeding trees have been planted as a community tree planting project into grasslands owned by Ducks Unlimited (without their permission as we understand it.) In agreement with them, we are planning this fall to remove all the trees and shrubs which have seeded naturally into this grassland since it was last mowed. It is rather pointless if our group are removing trees from this grassland while the Town is busy planting more. Far too many trees have also been planted around some of the recently constructed stormwater ponds which will eventually result in a major loss of both grassland and scrubland habitat. As these trees mature, the result will be a decline in the Nature Reserve's overall biodiversity. Additionally, the decision as to the purchase of the 2 acres of critical grassland in the centre of the Reserve (which is currently scheduled for development) is still outstanding. Buildings in this location will be both ecologically and aesthetically disastrous. We are still also awaiting a Council decision on the use of drop board water flow control rather than the expensive engineered water controls favored by the South Lake Simcoe Conservation

Authority to recreate a cold water creek for trout. Drop boards are the simplest to use, most economical to construct and maintain, and are still the most extensively used method of water control in nature reserves in both Canada and Europe. We have many other concerns over present design and construction trends which we feel will result in a decline in the potential of the Reserve to encourage as many wildlife species as possible. Our report can be viewed on our website at www.natureaurora.ca.

Many of these poor decisions would not have occurred if the technical committee (made up of biologists from the various stakeholder,s together with senior Town staff that guided the development of the Reserve in its early stages) had not been disbanded. This committee would have saved the Town thousands of dollars in consultant fees. It is time that this committee was reformed to guide future design and construction decisions before future errors are made.

We look forward to the Mayor in the near future using his column in The Auroran to explain to concerned citizens just what the Council's policies are in the issues raised in this letter and on the future design, construction and management of our community Nature Reserve.

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Chair, Nature Aurora