



Niagara Parks Commission, Regional Institute - University of Buffalo; University of New York (SUNY), Great Lakes Center - Buffalo State; University of New York (SUNY), the Environmental Sustainability Research Unit (Brock University), Niagara College, Western New York Land Conservancy, the Niagara Restoration Council, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Kerry Mitchel and Jocelyn Baker (unaffiliated)

February 12, 2021

Planning and Economic Development Committee
Niagara Region
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, P.O. Box 1042
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

Dear Chair Huson:

RE: Request for Public Disclosure of Niagara River Ramsar Report PDS 2-2021

On behalf of the Niagara River Ramsar Binational Steering Committee, we strongly request report PDS 2-2021, *A review of implications of a Ramsar designation for the Niagara Region* **be made publicly available**. The entirely open and transparent pursuit of a Ramsar designation for the Niagara River has been underway with strong Indigenous, public, political and partnership backing since 2013. With heightened community interest, we believe public disclosure of the report aligns with the current Council's platform of transparency and accountability. Given your review looked at designation implications, what is the specific property or identifiable individual concern that would trigger a closed session, denying the public from what should be a participatory and inclusive process. We find this to be a superfluous recommendation forwarded by staff, especially in light of a recent investigation by the Ombudsman regarding a Ramsar closed door session held by the City of Niagara Falls on October 6, 2020.

Members of the Ramsar Canadian committee have recently published a review of [Governance and Management in Canadian Ramsar Sites](#), the link is embedded for your reference. The research is clear; communities should be afforded transparent opportunities to fully engage in conservation governance structures. Niagara community taxpayers should not be denied the opportunity to understand the result of their contributions, especially when they have overwhelmingly believed they shared the same commitment and goal of Council's endorsement of this internationally important designation.

We request this letter be included on the PEDC agenda, and in the spirit of transparency and accountability, we would be pleased to address Committee, if requested. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance, we look forward to achieving this globally significant designation together.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Ann-Marie Norio, Niagara Regional Clerk
Chair Bradley, Niagara Region
All members of Regional Council
Local media