

**From:** [PF-Mailbox-01](#)  
**To:** [Norio, Ann-Marie](#); [Trennum, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Online Form - Request to Speak at a Standing Committee  
**Date:** Thursday, May 13, 2021 5:15:37 PM

**From:** Niagara Region Website  
**Sent:** Thursday, 13 May 2021 17:15:22 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)  
**To:** Clerks  
**Subject:** Online Form - Request to Speak at a Standing Committee

## Request to Speak at a Standing Committee

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

Name

Annette Gibbons

Address

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City

Grimsby

Postal

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Phone

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Email

[REDACTED]

Organization

standing committee

Regional Council

Presentation Topic

Natural Heritage System

Presentation includes slides

No

Previously presented topic

No

Presentation Details

The importance of a strong and resilient Natural Heritage System. Asking for the Very Best Protection possible.

Video Consent

Yes



Good evening Chair Bradley and Councillors. Thank you for allowing me to speak on this most important issue that you will be deciding on tonight: which of the Natural Environment System (NES) Options best serves the long-term goals of the Region and the interests of its citizens.

My name is Annette Gibbons and along with my husband own and operate an electrical contracting business in Grimsby. I have lived in Grimsby for 58 years, all my life, I was born at West Lincoln Hospital, the youngest of 8 children. My dad, James Long served with the RCAF as a tail gunner in the second world war, my mother, along with raising us also worked at the Red & White grocery store just to make ends meet & I am blessed to be able to say she is alive & well at 96 years old. My parents did the best they could to instill true values, one being to stand up and fight for what is right & just.

I am urging you all to vote for Option 3C. In fact, I wish it were possible for you to vote for the 3C+ option Liz Benneian outlined to the Planning and Economic Development Committee (PEDC) last week because I have seen firsthand the price residents have to pay in terms of flooded basements when developers are allowed to build in urban areas without the proper environmental protections in place.

The argument has been made that 3B is a more “balanced” approach that allows more “flexibility” & is “less restrictive” for developers. Others have argued that 3B gives local municipalities more control. But it seems to me the balance is already tipped heavily in favour of developers and developers already have the flexibility they need to ride roughshod over local planning.

How much control do municipalities truly have now or in the future when developers threaten LPAT appeals if a municipality says no to their plans? Our Town simply can’t afford endless court costs and so, more often than not, they give in to developer demands.

Putting a robust natural environment system in place should be seen by municipalities as a tool they can use to direct growth to the right places, and if the NES, is put in place by the Region, it would put an end to some of the local development battles.

Local residents want our environment preserved. It has been heartbreaking for many of us to see so much greenspace gobbled up over the past few years. We are not against development, but a truly balanced approach would acknowledge how important a functioning ecosystem is to Niagara’s future, and would protect it, including in our urban areas, where most of Niagara’s residents live, with important natural features preserved, and then protected with linkages, buffers and enhancement areas — all of which 3C, and only 3C, allows. A healthy eco-system will help the entire Region adapt to climate change and improve people’s quality of life by having healthy, sustainable, and resilient communities.

To be a truly functioning system, the NES can't be created in a piecemeal fashion. Despite what was said by a Regional staff member last week, natural features and linkages do not stop at municipal borders. NES planning is the kind of work that Regional governments were created to do, addressing issues that cross municipal borders. If you have 12 municipalities making up their own rules, then you will not have a system and you will continue to have an uncoordinated planning policy across the Region.

There was also talk at the PEDC meeting about the increasing unaffordability of homes. Clearly that problem is not caused by the NES because that problem is occurring now and we don't have a NES. And it won't be solved by building still more homes that are priced out of many people's budgets. In a recent article in The Toronto Star a spokesperson from RBC noted that one of the best ways to solve the affordability crisis was to build different kinds of housing; more purpose-built rentals, stacked townhomes, triplexes and fourplexes termed as the "missing middle". The bottom line is we can't fix the problems we have now by building more unsustainable and unaffordable sprawl.

The article also noted that municipalities do have flexibility, now, in creating different housing types through zoning bylaws including using exclusionary zoning that would allow for secondary suites. None of that local control will be impacted by the NES.

It was noted during the PEDC meeting that Niagara is at least 10 years behind other municipalities in terms of Natural Heritage planning. Now is the time to address that by choosing the most forward-thinking Option, 3C.

As stewards of this land, we all have a duty to protect and enhance Niagara's remaining natural environment. Hard work needs to be done to combat the Climate Crisis and having the strongest and the very best protection is one key element. We need to protect what is left, before there is nothing left to protect. This is a pivotal moment and one you will be signing your name to, the choice you make on behalf of all its citizens human and non-human will inevitably affect future generations of all life within each municipality.

Finally, I would like to conclude by saying the citizens of this Region made their views very clear during the public consultation process: they want the environment protected, they want access to green spaces, they want action taken on climate change and they want good urban planning. Niagara is yours to protect now. 3C best addresses the concerns of your citizens. Please vote for it. Thank You!