

From: [PF-Mailbox-01](#)
To: [Norio, Ann-Marie](#); [Trennum, Matthew](#)
Subject: FW: Online Form - Request to Speak at a Standing Committee
Date: Friday, May 14, 2021 7:53:00 AM

From: Niagara Region Website
Sent: Friday, 14 May 2021 07:52:52 (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

Ken Kawall

Address

[REDACTED]

City

Jordan Station

Postal

[REDACTED]

Phone

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

Organization

standing committee

Regional Council

Presentation Topic

PEDC Report on Natural Environment System

Presentation includes slides

Yes

Previously presented topic

No

Presentation Details

I would like to speak to the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommendation on the Natural Environment System. I would like to encourage Regional Council to support Option 3C.

Video Consent

Yes



**Delegation to Regional Council – May 20, 2021
Ken Kawall – Town of Lincoln**

Slide 1 – Niagara's Natural Environment System

Good evening Chair Bradley and Regional Council. My name is Ken Kawall, a resident of Lincoln and I am here to address the decision you are being asked to make this evening on Niagara's Natural Environment System.

To be specific, I am asking you to approve Natural Environment System Option 3C.

At last week's PEDC meeting, a number of the delegations provided compelling arguments in support of Option 3C. My delegation this evening is to add to that discussion and address some of the concerns raised at the meeting.

Slide 2 – Where Are We Today?

Let me start with the challenge at hand. These are well-known to you but worth repeating as having a common starting point is critical to where we end up. As was stated by a project consultant, at the PEDC meeting, the Region of Niagara is 10 years or more behind other regions in natural environment planning – so, we are playing catchup and we have a tight timeline to deliver the Official Plan by July, 2022. Fortunately, Regional staff have provided you with a comprehensive set of natural environment system options and I want to thank them for the many reports and the extensive public consultation they have conducted.

Your decision tonight will define the character and uniqueness of our Region over the next 50 years.

Slide 3 – Regional Responsibility

At last week's PEDC meeting concerns were expressed by some committee members that Option 3C amounted to the Region overstepping its responsibility and that developing the best options for a natural environment system should be left to local municipalities.

As Chair Bradley noted at the PEDC meeting, one of the reasons for creating Regional governments was for the purpose of regional planning. This slide is from the Regional Official Plan Consolidated Policy report and speaks to the objectives of the Regional structure. It explicitly includes natural heritage planning as a Regional responsibility.

As well, determining where growth will and will not be directed is also a Regional responsibility.

Planning is at best a reductive process. By that I mean at each subsequent stage there are applications made to adjust and reduce higher levels of policy. Local municipalities cannot be expected to add higher levels of protection than what is required by Regional policy. They are already overloaded and don't have the capacity or broader perspective that Regional Planning staff have. Success requires a standardized top-down approach.

Slide 4 – Natural Heritage System

Natural Heritage systems have been an integral part of municipal land use planning in Ontario for over a decade. There are well-established scientific based best practices and proven results that the Region can leverage.

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This slide is from the Region's Natural Environment Background Study and shows the definition of a Natural Heritage System in the Provincial Policy Statement, the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan. As these sources point out, the key to a natural heritage system is functional interconnectivity or recognizing linkages between natural heritage features. In addition, it points out that linkages could include lands that have the potential to be restored to a natural state.

With this as the baseline, I would like to examine what's being proposed in Options 3B and 3C

Slide 5 – Option 3B in not a Natural Heritage System

These illustrations show natural heritage features and other woodlands inside and outside of settlement areas.

Option 3B on the left supports buffers (light green) and medium and large linkages (shown in yellow) outside of the settlement area but not in settlement areas.

On the right is Option 3C that allows buffers around natural heritage features and small linkages in settlement areas and supporting buffers and small, medium and large linkages outside of settlement areas.

Ecological systems do not start or stop at the boundary of settlement area or at a municipal boundary. With the lack of linkages in settlement areas, Option 3B does not meet the definition of a natural heritage system. On the previous slide the PPS description of a natural heritage system did not allow for exceptions in settlement areas, so I am wondering whether Option 3B is compliant with the PPS, or how it exceeds the provincial minimums, as noted in the staff report?

So let me repeat this, in Option 3B there are no linkages or buffers in settlement areas. In fact, 3B looks similar to what is done today in settlement areas, just protecting isolated natural heritage features without interconnectivity. This is what we have experienced for the past several decades and has led to the current fragmented and degraded state of natural heritage.

At the PEDC meeting, in his response to Councillor Zalepa, Director Giles said that in recommending Option 3B it would be best to leave buffer protection in urban areas to local municipalities. In other parts of staff reports it notes that buffers do not need to be prescribed to significant features inside of settlement areas as Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority policies apply. However, the NPCA itself says that its wetland buffer policies are flexible and provides for exceptions to reduce the size of buffers. Furthermore, the NPCA does not regulate woodland buffers, that is a regional responsibility.

This patchwork and confusing set of policies will not protect our natural heritage features. This is exactly why the Region needs to set the standard, which it does in Option 3C, with linkages and buffers inside and outside of settlement areas.

Slide 6 – What's Required to Implement Option 3C?

So, what would it require to support Option 3C?

If you take nothing else away from my delegation, remember this slide. It shows the difference between Options 3B and 3C. You can think of it as the incremental cost of Option 3C or better yet, as the small investment needed to deliver a Natural Environment System. This investment is minor. It equates to

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1.5% of the total urban area. **Let me repeat that, for the small investment of 1.5% of our urban area you can deliver Option 3C.**

The argument has been made that the 1.5% is needed to provide lower tier municipalities with flexibility. Its difficult to understand how such a tiny percentage can create much or any significant flexibility.

I think your decision comes down to this – are your prepared to make the 1.5% investment in the future of Niagara.

Slide 7 – Public Participation

I would like to expand on another topic from the PEDC. Regional staff discussed the very extensive public consultation process to date. What wasn't addressed is what the public said – In the 2nd Point of Engagement Report, presented in February 2021 it notes, that the public, “prefer an approach with the highest number of optional features and areas be included” in the natural environment system, and that natural heritage and environmental protection need priority.

You asked for input from your citizens, and they provided it. It's important to give weight to their input.

Slide 8 – Maintain & Enhance Ecological Health and Biodiversity

The title and the text on this slide comes from the staff report and reminds us all that **Niagara is the most biodiverse region in Ontario.**

We are fortunate that we already have two systems-based approaches to natural heritage in our Region – the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the first large scale environmental land use plan in Canada. We need to look at these not as impediments or constraints but a solid foundation to build on.

It is important to point out that with Option 3C regional staff are proposing the harmonizing of the planning regime across all three plans (GBP, NEP, NES) in order to streamline and standardize the development process.

Synchronizing a regional natural heritage system (i.e. Option 3C) with the other two provides an opportunity for protecting the natural environment for our community and future generations. You have the power to make this happen. As Chair Bradley noted at the PEDC meeting, “this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to protect our natural heritage”.

We can't afford to let this opportunity slip from our grasp.

Slide 9 - Conclusions

In the Natural Environment Work Plan, Technical Report #2 presented in June 2020, Staff identified Option 3C as the best option to Achieving the Vision, Goals and Objectives of the new Niagara Official Plan.

The Technical Report also identified Option 3C as the best option for ensuring the protection of a region-wide Natural Environment system, including within settlement areas.

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At the PEDC meeting on May 12th, a number of delegations spoke to the benefits of Ecosystem services, and other valued contributions of Option 3C. This slide adds to those benefits in highlighting nine significant areas that Option 3C positively addresses.

I, as well as many others that you have heard from, support what staff have noted in the Technical Report – **3C this is the best option for achieving the Region's goals and protecting the Region's ecosystem.**

Slide 10 – Please Select Option 3C

My ask is that you please select Option 3C.

Thank You