



## **GUFF Supports Part 5 Designation for the Ontario Reformatory Lands.**

Guelph Urban Forest Friends (GUFF) supports the designation of the Ontario Reformatory (OR) Lands under Part 5 of the Heritage Act so that they are retained as a Cultural Heritage Landscape. The pandemic has made it clear how important access to parks and natural areas is to the health and well-being of the population. There are diminishing amounts of land available in Guelph for the creation of public parks, trails and natural areas especially in parts of the city slated for significant urban development (such as the York Road area). It is inconceivable that the City of Guelph would not do everything in its power, under the Heritage Act, to keep the Reformatory lands - a much used recreational area - under public ownership.

This property was a working rehabilitation and correctional facility for many years and the residents' labour transformed portions of the acreage into an area of beauty and recreation that continues to this day. Many residents were often marginalized, outcast persons and the preservation of this area is a tribute to their efforts and its importance. The landscape contains a history of many initiatives in landscaping and planting including the use of "exotic species", the creation of intentional effects and the skills of utilizing existing rocks and hillocks. This created not only the beautiful fences, but planned vistas, water features, and the sweeping curves of the roadways. It is important that the trees are protected and looked after in this landscape.

The area must be maintained in the public domain and appropriate portions used to provide space for the continued planting of trees and understory that reflects our environmental knowledge today. As a large, publicly owned natural area, the OR lands could be managed to become a significant component of the urban forest in Guelph

GUFF supports the recommendations of the Heritage Guelph Committee that the Ontario Reformatory lands and buildings be designated a Heritage Conservation District under Part 4 and 5 of the Heritage Act. This area should have a tree inventory completed that would form the basis of planning for the future as we face climate change and an increasing human footprint on our natural spaces.

### **GUFF Steering Committee**

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