



DELEGATION TO COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE GUELPH HIKING TRAIL CLUB

DATE: MARCH 21ST, 2023

AGENDA ITEM: 3.1 Ontario Reformatory HCD-Phase 1 Report

Mr Mayor, Councillors and City Staff,

My name is John Fisher and I am the President of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club

I want to lend the Club's support to the Staff recommendations to approve the HCD report Phase 1 and proceed with the preparation of Phase 2 the HCD plan and guidelines.

Congratulations to staff and the Heritage committee on the research that was done in prior years which has led to this Phase 1 report being presented to council so expeditiously and thoroughly. However, we suspect Phase 2 will not be presented to council until 2024 or early 2025 and that puts the heritage Wooden Trestle bridge at great risk.

Character Area F, identified as Rail Corridor and Limestone quarries, is made up of the same Heritage ecosystem you have heard me advocate for in a number of delegations as it's development is interwoven in so many aspects of city business. I mentioned it in the March 7<sup>th</sup> Operations Facilities site plan revision, where we recommended a Parks and Trails plan be developed in tandem with the Operations Facility plan.

The Wooden Trestle Railway Bridge is identified as #12 on the HCD Highlight Features which include the Quarries #13 and Concrete Bow String Bridge #14. Infrastructure Ontario owns the Wooden Trestle Bridge. The Guelph Hiking Trail Club had been working with I.O. to repair and repurpose the bridge over the last 2 years. Guelph Today wrote a news article on March 2<sup>nd</sup> which quoted the I.O. communications dept. of IO's intention to begin the process to demolish the bridge. In response GHTC wrote a letter to the editor (published Mar 7<sup>th</sup>) which urged the major stakeholders to come together and "think "outside the box" to craft a repair agreement. Unfortunately, IO have since notified GHTC through their legal department that they will no longer communicate with me, or the GHTC with respect to the bridge.

We are trying to repair that relationship, but regardless of the outcome it still leaves the responsibility for persuading IO that the bridge has value, completely in the hands of the City and Fusion Homes. They must discuss options to save the Eramosa Bridge otherwise inertia will take over, the bridge will be demolished, and we will be asking ourselves regretfully and much too late,

"How could we let that happen"?

GHTC would like to propose a framework for a solution for Council and Staff consideration..

- The City makes a formal approach to I.O. to say they are interested in purchasing the bridge. Fair market value should be about \$1.
- The purchase will remove the liability from I.O. which is their primary mandate and concern.
- Rational for the acquisition: the Vision Statement for the River Systems in Guelph adopted by council in Oct 1993, which commits City staff in perpetuity, to “treasure and protect” the rivers and river corridors in Guelph in recognition of their vital role in the life of the city. The current Official Plan reflects that vision and dictates the city will acquire river properties in pursuit of that goal.
- There are additional economic, financial and cultural reasons to support the acquisition.
- Source of Funds: The City should fund the repair (\$350000) out of the Reserve fund that has specifically been built up to acquire river side properties. ( The reserve fund currently stands between \$10-\$15 million).
- Project Management : The City follows the precedent that was set with the Crane Park Bridge where a Third party, the Guelph Hiking Trail Club delivered a “community led city supported” bridge to the city with minimal city involvement in January of 2023. (GHTC working with community partners demonstrated similar competencies by installing the Gosling Bridge on University owned property in 2021).
- Fusion Homes supports the project by providing access to the west side abutments and access for repair mobilisation.

Regardless of the HCD Phase 2 plans and guidelines there are no protections for the Trestle Bridge if it is owned by Infrastructure Ontario. The risks of ongoing deterioration and catastrophic failure of the bridge demand we collectively act now to protect it,

Thank You

John Fisher President Guelph Hiking Trail Club.