

May 27, 2007

Dear Friends and Neighbours:

As you may have heard, things are not looking good for our beautiful 19 acre Adelaide-Sprucedale forest. After months of negotiations, it appears we are no closer to a solution for saving the woods than we were early last fall when the owner, Vito Frijia of Southside Construction says that unless he and the City of London and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority are able to reach an agreement soon, he will return to his original plan to cut the trees for a driving range.

I have had the opportunity to speak with a number of people in recent weeks, including some members of Board of Control and Council, UTRCA and the Vito Frijia. While there are some in-camera discussions and negotiations still under way at City Hall, Vito made it clear to me that he does not think a land swap will happen, as he is not interested in the properties that have been offered to him to date.

As reported to you last fall, he had hoped to build a seniors' resident on the front four acres, but Upper Thames River Conservation Authority tells me there is no more than one-acre that is developable.

My hope is that the City of London will opt for another solution – to purchase the property – all of it. There are many good reasons:

- The City is spending a huge amount of money to plant new trees and seedlings and to encourage planting in the coming years. Here, not too far from the heart of the city, we have an existing mature forest and a wetlands that is already working to have a positive effect on our air, water and on our quality of life. It would take more than 50 years to produce a forest such as this. It has a high value. It is not simply “flood plain”.
- This woods is part of a connecting linkage of forests and green space that runs through the city. It is part of London's Official Plan.
- The City made an error in the past in allowing this property to be designated as “open space” leading the developer to believe it could be used for a driving range. The City now has a responsibility to take action to protect these woods.

We are fortunate in this – an increasing number of Londoners are recognizing the high value of trees and I know that we can get tremendous support. I hope you will enlist the assistance of friends outside the neighbourhood to help us save the woods.

In the coming days and weeks, City Council will be making some decisions about how far to go to save the woods. I would like to ask you to take some time to make calls and/or send letters or emails. If you can call each member of Board of Control before they meet this Wednesday May 30<sup>th</sup>, and members of Council before the follow Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, that will have the most impact. Focus especially any you know personally and on those who you believe might not usually be supportive of spending money to save trees. Tell them why they should buy these woods – tell them they

promised in the fall to do what they could. Remind them that they have a great responsibility to protect green space in London. This is not a neighbourhood issue – it is a London issue! Feel free to copy me on any letters and I can share your arguments and ideas with others.

Please also take the time to write to the Upper Thames Conservation Authority. Let them know that you believe that as a Conservation Authority they have a responsibility not only to protect us from floods, but to find creative and new ways to actually conserve forests that are on floodways. Ask them what they are going to do to protect this woods.

Please also write, call or email Vito Frijia at Southside Construction. Please be polite and respectful. He paid \$700,000 for this property when the City would not purchase it. Encourage him to work with the City to find a solution. Tell him you hope he will do what is right to save this woods – tell him that Londoners care. Tell him you hope he gets a fair deal – but he also must play fair.

I still have copies of all the letters that were signed at the public meeting in the fall, and collected by a number of people including Lorne of the London Dog Owner's Association. I will deliver a copy to the City in the next week or so, to remind them there are many people interested.

### **Protecting the Woods**

Keep in mind that Vito Frijia believes he has the right to cut down the trees in this woods if he wishes to. He may or may not be right. If he decides to take action, we will have to do what we can to stop the cutting. If you live near the woods, keep an ear out for the sound of chainsaws, and an eye out for people working on the property.

If you see or hear any trees being cut, here is what to do:

- Send me an email to my work email address - [ahutch2@uwo.ca](mailto:ahutch2@uwo.ca) . I carry a Blackberry and will get it very quickly. My cell number is 519-495-7717.
- Email or call Councillor Joni Baechler - [jbaechle@london.ca](mailto:jbaechle@london.ca).
- Call the London Free Press – 679-1111 – if you get voicemail, press 6. Reporter Joe Belanger has been covering the story of the woods since last fall – 667-4587.
- Call the A-Channel newsroom at 686-8810 ext. 7218.
- Call London City Manager Jeff Fielding. 519 661-2500 Ext.4997 Email him – [jfielding@london.ca](mailto:jfielding@london.ca) - he also has a Blackberry as do many members of Council.
- Call your friends and neighbours. Ask them to come and bring friends and neighbours. Do what you feel is right to stop the cutting.

Thank you to all neighbours and friends of greenspace in London. Spread the word please!

*Ann Hutchison*

## City of London Board of Control

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Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best  
519 661-2500 x 4920  
[ADeCicco-Best@london.ca](mailto:ADeCicco-Best@london.ca)

Tom C. Gosnell (Deputy Mayor)  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 0332  
Business: 519 850-7070  
E-mail: [tgosnell@london.ca](mailto:tgosnell@london.ca)

Gina Barber – Board of Control  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 7011  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [gbarber@london.ca](mailto:gbarber@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 472-4790

Gord Hume – Board of Control  
95 Chalet Crescent  
London, Ontario N6K 3C5  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4877  
E-mail: [ghume@london.ca](mailto:ghume@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 657-7755

Bud Polhill – Board of Control  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4882  
E-mail: [bpolhill@london.ca](mailto:bpolhill@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 455-6953

### Administration

Jeff Fielding – City of London  
City Manager  
[jfielding@london.ca](mailto:jfielding@london.ca)  
519 661-2500 ext 4997

Rob Panzer – City of London  
General Manager of Planning and  
Development  
519 661-2500 Ext.8435  
[RPanzer@london.ca](mailto:RPanzer@london.ca)

## Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

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Jeff Brick  
Coordinator, Hydrology & Regulatory  
Services  
519-451-2800 x228  
[brickj@thamesriver.on.ca](mailto:brickj@thamesriver.on.ca)

Ian Wilcox  
General Manager  
[wilcoxi@thamesriver.on.ca](mailto:wilcoxi@thamesriver.on.ca)

### Developer

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Vito Frijia  
355 Horton Street  
London ON N6B 1L7  
Phone: 519.433.0634  
Fax: 519.433.9849  
[vito@southsidegroup.ca](mailto:vito@southsidegroup.ca)

## City Council Members

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Roger Caranci – Ward 1  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4597  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [rcaranci@london.ca](mailto:rcaranci@london.ca)  
Cell: 519 636-3407  
Residence: 519 455-8613

Bill Armstrong – Ward 2  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4943  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [barmstro@london.ca](mailto:barmstro@london.ca)  
Business/Residence: 519 453-1188

Bernie McDonald – Ward 3  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4884  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [bmacdona@london.ca](mailto:bmacdona@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 453-2231

Stephen Orser – Ward 4  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 7012  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [sorser@london.ca](mailto:sorser@london.ca)

Joni Baechler – Ward 5  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 2444  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [jbaechle@london.ca](mailto:jbaechle@london.ca)

Nancy Branscombe – Ward 6  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 7014  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [nbransco@london.ca](mailto:nbransco@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 432-1100

Walter Lonc – Ward 7  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 7015  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [wlonc@london.ca](mailto:wlonc@london.ca)

Paul Hubert – Ward 8  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 7016  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
Home/Office: 519 657-4934  
E-mail: [pHubert@london.ca](mailto:pHubert@london.ca)

Susan Eagle – Ward 9  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4876  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [seagle@london.ca](mailto:seagle@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 657-8720  
Business: 519 434-7173

Paul Van Meerburgen- Ward 10  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 1558  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [pvanmeer@london.ca](mailto:pvanmeer@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 641-6515

David Winninger – Ward 11  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 6505  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [dwinning@london.ca](mailto:dwinning@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 472-2296

Harold Usher – Ward 12  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4879  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [husher@london.ca](mailto:husher@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 686-7502

Judy Bryant – Ward 13  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 0370  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [jbryant@london.ca](mailto:jbryant@london.ca)

Cheryl Miller – Ward 14  
City Hall: 519 661-2500 Ext. 4880  
City Hall Fax: 519 661-5933  
E-mail: [cmiller@london.ca](mailto:cmiller@london.ca)  
Residence: 519 681-0863