



March 8, 2016

To: Mayor and Council

Re: Watershed Study Funding and Parking at Old St. Joe's

**OUR FIRST REQUEST: DEFERRAL OF THE DECISION UNTIL THE WATERSHED STUDY IS COMPLETED TO GUIDE DECISION-MAKING:** In keeping with the desire to use comprehensive information to protect our City drinking water source, we wish to emphasize the importance of waiting for the completion of the watershed study for Ramsey Lake before development decisions are made. GSWA suggests that because of the history of blue-green algae blooms and E.coli outbreaks on Ramsay Lake, we should use the precautionary principle, rather than allowing a parking lot development on its shores. Both organisms thrive in warmer lake temperatures which are a natural result of impermeable parking lots and road runoff. These hard surfaces also provide phosphorus which fuels blue-green algae growth.

We appreciate the generous funding contribution by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change for watershed studies which will allow for a fairly quick determination of what the stressors are for Ramsey Lake; in keeping with that grant, it would be more prudent to wait for watershed study information to better make an informed decision. It would also be considered prudent financial planning to take full advantage of the investment in watershed studies. It could avoid additional costs down the road if we have to mitigate damage to the lake. It would be prudent to prevent any impacts by waiting until the watershed study has been completed.

**IF COUNCIL GOES AHEAD WITH THIS DECISION, WE STRONGLY URGE A RECONSIDERATION OF THE COMMITTEE DECISION AND PUT FORWARD AN OPTION 4 AS FOLLOWS:**

- a. **Regreening of the old parking lot** (except for some accessible parking spaces);
- b. **A look-out point from the top of the hill** with some accessibility parking;
- c. **Natural stormwater run-off** since there would be less contamination overall than with the parking lot option;
- d. **No pathway would need to be built to the lake;** rather, more holistic planning would include modifications to the current access points nearby at York St. and Paris St. (A new

set of steep steps and interweaving pathways would denaturalize the landscape on the hill in that the lookout areas proposed could be blocked if trees are planted or extra maintenance would be required to keep the grass in check).

### **RATIONALE 1: The majority of the survey respondents said they value green**

**space.** The consultants' report on the public consultation leaves considerable ambiguity about the public's needs and desires as it was presented at the meeting. Please note that, in the prior meeting the public was encouraged to not feel constrained to choose the three packaged options presented.

We have requested follow-up information on the disposition of the 20.6% of the returns that did not indicate Options 1-3 as choices. Based on that information, we find the following is how the choices look with a redistribution based on the comments:

Option 3. HANDICAPPED PARKING ONLY: 20.7% (126.5 of the responses)

Option '4.' GREEN SPACE ONLY: 33.5% (205 of the responses)

Thus, **54.2% of all survey respondents identified with a preference to significantly reduce the number of parking spaces and increase the green space.**

### **RATIONALE 2: Without the need for parking, there would be no need to build a walkway down to the lake.**

- a. This proposed egress into the lake is very close and parallel to the existing walkway at Paris and York Street. No matter what is done with the St. Joe's lot, they will not be solved by having 96 parking spaces nearby. The entrance to the lake at Paris and York streets is already more gradual and work could be done there to make it more accessible to all.
- b. The steep slope requires a great deal of cemented walkways and steep steps that can be treacherous for fall, winter and spring.
- c. Without the walkway, and with green space at the top, the hill (with contaminated soil removed) would naturally be able to filter the stormwater which would only hold a minimal amount of contaminants from the handicapped parking (note that permeable pavers prevent water from running in streams down a hill but contaminants are still absorbed);
- d. The top of the hill would allow for a panoramic view of the lake which would be accessible to the public through walking, biking, using a bus with a nearby stop and through having handicapped parking spaces for those who need them.
- e. The green space at the top could be developed by community organizations and would invite community participation.

GSWA requests that you reconsider the decision made by the Community Services Committee in their attempt to assuage what are seen to be oppositional citizens. We ask that the Mayor and Council take the most visionary stance, and at the same time, the most fiscally responsible one, and withdraw all parking spaces. Not providing direct access to the lake would mean that the former parking lot could serve as a lovely vantage point for viewing the lake and act as a community green space. There may be money to be reassigned to community work on the gardens which the public can help to create. We recommend that you reconsider and choose the wisdom of Option 4.

Sincerely,

Margaret McLaughlin,  
Chair  
Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance