

Comment of Bill 23 - Planning Act and DC Act (Schedule 3)
By the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

The City of Ottawa has produced a Parks and Recreational Facilities Master Plan, in which we engaged as a stakeholder as parks represent a major component of accessible greenspace for urban residents. Access to greenspace is highly valued by residents for the social, ecological and health benefits they provide. In recognition of this, the new Master Plan has set a target of 2.0 hectares of parkland per 1000 residents by 2031.

The City's Parkland Dedication By-law was subsequently passed, which set a conveyance requirement of 1 ha per 300 dwelling units, with a conveyance cap of 10% or 15% of gross land area for apartment buildings. It was recognized at the time of passing that this rate of dedication would be insufficient to meet the parkland targets set in the Parks and Recreational Facilities Master Plan.

The proposal in Bill 23 to reduce the rate from 1 ha per 300 dwelling units to 1 ha per 600 will cut in half the amount of parkland that will be set aside for future residents. This will take Ottawa further away from reaching the target set in its Parks Master Plan and render its achievement nigh impossible.

In the state of climate emergency in which we find ourselves, access to parks and greenspaces is an essential adaptation measure for residents, especially in core and near core areas where these are deficient and which are most subject to heat island effects. The failure to provide these will be measured in preventable fatalities. It really is a question of life and death.

We only need to recall the over 600 deaths due to the extreme heat event in British Columbia in 2021 to realize that this can happen anywhere in Canada. One of the recommendations of the Death Review Panel report on the heat related deaths to the Chief Coroner of B.C was to "require the protection and restoration of the urban tree canopy and permeable surface areas". This proposal in Bill 23 goes in the opposite direction.