

February 11, 2026

The County of Brant  
66 Grand River Street North  
Paris, Ontario  
N3L 2M2

**Re: North of the Nith Master Plan**

**Dear Mayor Bailey and Members of Council,**

We are incredibly fortunate to live in a region with exceptional trails that connect our community to our rivers and natural heritage. These spaces offer opportunities for individuals and families to improve both physical and mental well-being. When people can connect with nature, they are given space to reflect, reset, and value the environment not simply for the land it occupies, but for the joy, wonder, and sense of belonging it brings.

As our community continues to grow, expanding development and a growing population are placing added pressure on existing trail systems. To protect what we have while meeting future needs, we must also explore new opportunities that allow residents to connect with nature in meaningful and sustainable ways.

North of the Nith represents one of the greatest opportunities our community has to do just that. Situated on the opposite bank from Barker's Bush in Paris, the 450 acre parcel along the Nith River offers tremendous potential to connect community members to new natural spaces through outdoor recreation, education, and volunteerism. Its scale and location provide a rare opportunity for collaboration between the County, community organizations, and residents to shape an inclusive and lasting outdoor destination.

Initiated through the Brant Cycling Club in 2021 and informed in large part by community feedback gathered through Brant Waterways' TIRA fundraising campaign, the original vision included the development of a single-track mountain bike trail network. These purpose-built single-track trails are widely recognized as a way to concentrate use, reduce environmental impact, and discourage informal trail creation. Similar trail systems exist in many neighbouring communities, yet local residents lack the ability to safely enjoy this form of outdoor recreation close to home. Without purpose-built opportunities, we miss an important chance for residents young and old to engage in a healthy sport while developing a lasting connection to nature.

At the same time, we recognize that people connect with nature in many different ways. From the outset, North of the Nith was envisioned as a place that supports a wide range of passive

*Connecting People To Healthy Waterways*

outdoor recreation, including hiking, snowshoeing, birding, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking. The intention has always been for the property to serve everyone, developed in a responsible and sustainable manner. This is also why a community-led model has been supported by Brant Waterways since the project's inception, recognizing the value of stewardship, volunteerism, and local expertise.

As Brant County moves toward finalizing the North of the Nith Master Plan, an important step forward for the property, several themes have emerged through review and community discussion. These include a limited inclusion of dedicated single-track mountain bike trails, high projected implementation costs, and lengthy timelines. Together, these factors may delay access to the property and represent a missed opportunity for early, meaningful community connection.

In the spirit of collaboration, Brant Waterways Foundation encourages consideration of the following refinements within the Master Plan:

- A review of neighbouring community-led initiatives and operating models that would inform an effective and sustainable approach for North of the Nith
- Inclusion of purposeful single-track mountain bike trails that align with best practices for sustainability and managed use
- Prioritization of phases and initiatives that would allow residents to safely access and enjoy the property as early as possible

As our community grows and pressures on existing natural spaces increase, protecting what we have remains essential. Equally important is creating new, well-planned opportunities for passive outdoor recreation that foster appreciation, stewardship, and long-term care for our natural environment. North of the Nith is a generational initiative, one that can connect people to healthy waterways and trails while demonstrating how a community can work together to protect and preserve its natural heritage.

Sincerely,



Dana Darnbrough, President, Brant Waterways Foundation