OUR CITY. OUR FUTURE.

Rennies River Flood Mitigation
Phase 2 – Portugal Cove Rd. to Kings Bridge Rd



Public Engagement

What We Heard
March 2022

ST. JOHN'S

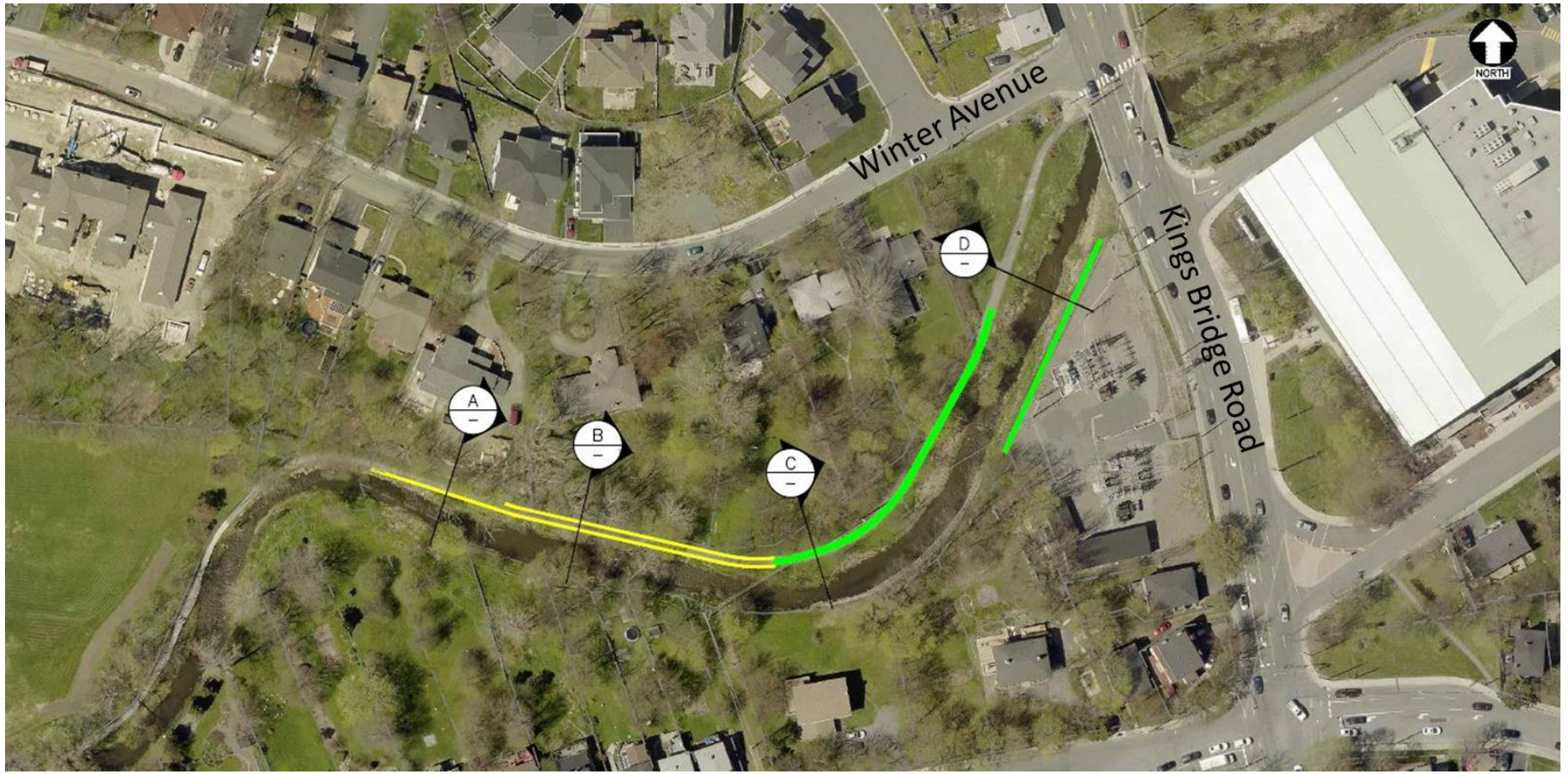
Disclaimer

- This document provides a summary of what was heard during this engagement process. It is not meant to reflect the specific details of each submission word-for-word. However, as this project involves environmental assessment and submissions to the Government of NL, questions and responses from the public meeting held on March 22 are included.
- The City produces a What We Heard document for every city-led public engagement project. This collected commentary is shared with the community to ensure we heard you correctly.
- The City protects the privacy of those who provide feedback as per Access to Information and Privacy Legislation.
- The full scope of commentary is used by city staff and Council to help inform recommendations and decisions.

Context

- Rennies River Catchment Stormwater Management Plan completed in 2014 (CBCL 2014)
- Prioritized list of improvements; Some have been completed: Health Sciences Centre Berms, O'Leary Avenue Bridge
- Long Pond Flow Control currently going though Environmental Assessment Review
- Public engagement on Rennies River Flood Mitigation completed in 2021; as a result, scope of project changed to focus only on area between Portugal Cove Rd. and Kings Bridge Rd.
  - Colleting feedback as part of Environmental Preview Process

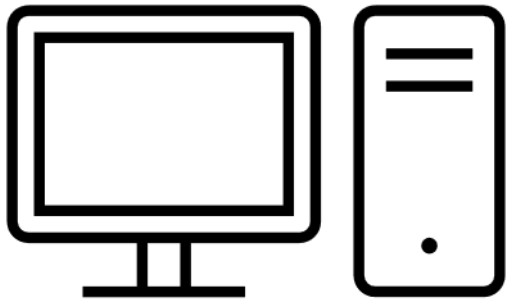
Project Location



Public Engagement Plan

- Provide an update on the status of the Rennies River Flood Mitigation project since the 2021 public engagement process
- Provide residents in and around the impacted area an opportunity to ask questions, provide comments on the proposed plan
- Provide an opportunity for anyone interested in the project to provide feedback and ask questions
- Prepare a What We Heard document to inform the plan and the Environmental Preview Process

Engagement and Communications





- Addressed mail notification to over 4000 households/property owners in the area
- Newsletter sent from EngageStJohns.ca to nearly 3300 subscribers including those who follow this project and similar projects such as Long Pond Flow Control
- Social Media
  - 1 post on Twitter
    - 2,818 Impressions – 38 Engagements - 4 Profile Visits – 17 Link Clicks
  - 1 post on Facebook
    - 3,435 Impressions – 34 Engagements – 10 Link Clicks – 3,279 Reach
- Advertisement in The Telegram- March 12, 2022

Who Engaged

- 66 people attended a virtual public session on March 22, 2022
- 1 person provided a comment/question on EngageStJohns.ca
- 1 person called 311 with feedback
- 13 people submitted feedback via email – most of these attended the public session as well



What We Heard Highlights

- Most people expressed concerns about upstream issues and questioned why this project was being done at this time and who was requesting it.
- There were questions/concerns about funding and whether funding is driving project. Some suggested redirecting the money to Long Pond project.
- Many people suggested other alternatives such as :
  - Redirecting runoff upstream
  - Using existing drainage systems upstream
  - Installation of stormwater retention from the headwater by using wetlands/existing ponding upstream
- People living on the Empire Ave. side of the river expressed concerns about the impact of the berms in creating additional water issues for them. Some people also suggested it would create or make issues upstream worse.
- People living in the affected area asked if the drainage pipes would be installed on all properties and whether that would mean their properties would be free from water in the future.
- There were questions and concerns about temporary ponding.
- There was general concern and opposition to the project for a variety of reasons including the need for more data, more time to review and analyze options, concern for fish habitat, trees and personal property, and the need to address the larger issue upstream first.

What We Heard Highlights

- There were comments and questions about the use of catch basins.
- There were comments about the impact of the bridge repairs in the area which have made the space under the bridges smaller and created stagnate water issues/flow issues.
- Two people from the affected area support the project.
- Some people wondered why there was no direct consultation with the most affected areas prior to the meeting and whether there would be consultation prior to any design work being completed and why this would only happen once the project was released from ERP.
- Some people asked about the role of the province in the process.
- One person noted the erosion control near tennis courts was good.
- There were concerns about the impact of the berms on the walking trail.
- There were concerns about waterlogged soil and impact on trees.

Note: For a detailed summary of the discussion from the virtual public session, check out the notes attached.

Summary and Next Steps

- Share What we Heard with Council and community
- Complete report for Environmental Preview Report

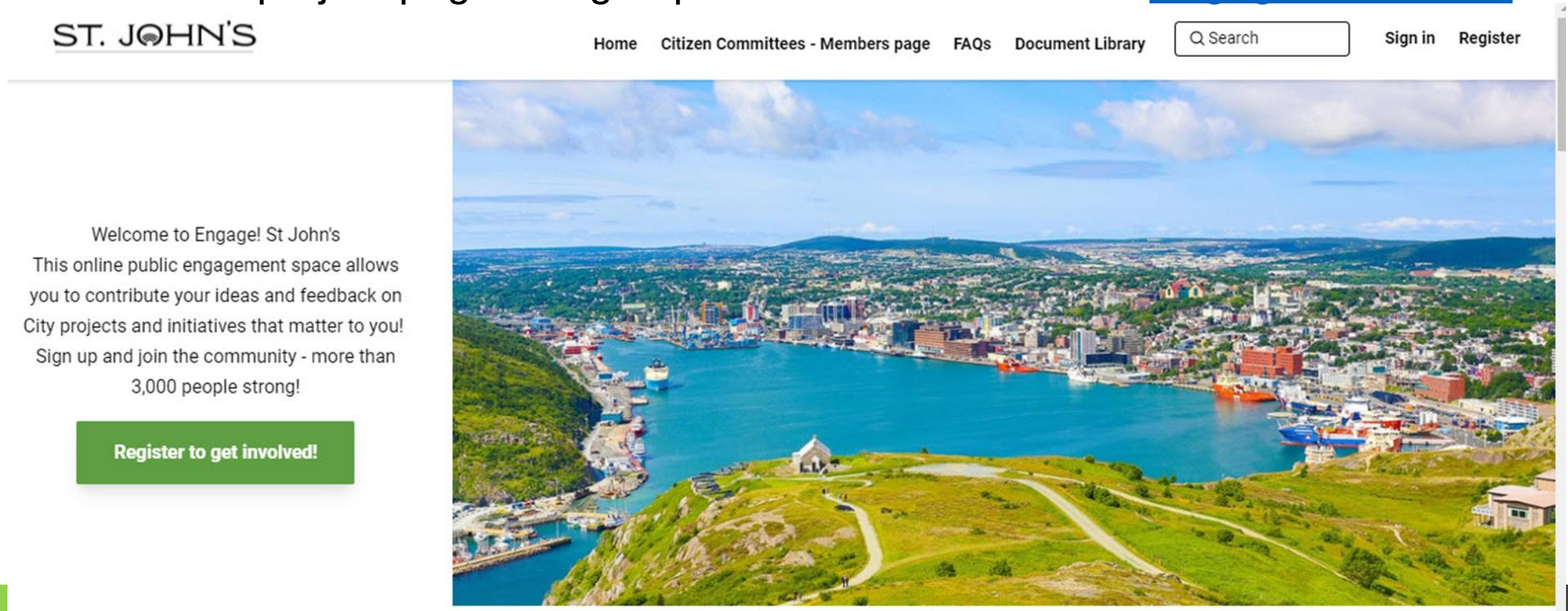
Environmental Assessment Process

Minister of Environment and Climate Change (ECC)

- 7 days to post the receipt of the EPR document following submission
- 45 days to review EPR
- 10 days to post decision after 45-day review period

To Stay Informed

Follow the project page or sign up to receive notifications EngageStJohns.ca



Notes/ comments/questions from virtual public meeting

Rennies River Flood Mitigation – Phase 2 – Portugal Cove Rd to Kings Bridge Rd

March 22, 2022

Director of Engineering reviewed the scope/previous engagement and ERP process, introduced CBCL, consultants working with the city on this project

Shared screen shots of scope including berms, flood control walls, the activities that need to take place, including the alternative to this project (presentation available at EngageStJohns.ca)

Concerns raised:

- Temporary ponding
- Concerns about implications of the "solution" and whether the situation will be made worse for properties on the Empire Side
- Stormwater management issues ongoing
- Upstream issues

Questions and answers below. (Note: These have been edited to keep the document focused on the main question/issue and response provided.)

Q. How are you going to drain the low point?

A: Run a sewer parallel to the river and discharge below the bridge across Kings Bridge Rd.

Q. Steel covers lifted off in areas due to heavy rain – will this be dealt with in project?

A. All of this would need to be looked at as part of project.

Q. Can you install stormwater retention features from the headwater all the way downstream?

A. Looked at more undeveloped areas – Kelsey Dr/Kenmount Terrace – that area was developed in a comprehensive manner and approximately 30% has been protected as wetland and open space. As part of stormwater management plan did look at options for regional retention – one could work in southwest development area but would not have significant impact because it's in the head waters; it's been proposed to construct storage on the river itself but that's prohibitive because you have to have a really big area like Long Pond. In an extreme flood situation, you would be adding about a foot of water over the whole pond. In order for this to work you need to be able to isolate a significant portion of the drainage basin and it has been looked at.

Q. What would be wrong with developing a retention pond between Kelsey Dr and Mews Place?

A. Did look at using space between exit ramps and working with Department of Transportation but could not get volume to have significant impact on the overall flows.

Q. There was infrastructure work on Portugal Cove Rd. bridge, and this has caused similar flooding. Now pouring water on Kings Bridge side, this will create further flooding. Not doing anything upstream. Problem is further up.

A. Scope was changed after last public engagement, may be looked at in future time.

Q. 42 Empire Ave. backs on to the river – juts out where river does a turn. The river comes down now and whatever has been done up to now has not helped. Berm is going to dam the water up but will push water back up to properties on Empire. This is a concern. Is there sewer infrastructure that needs to be addressed which deteriorates in this area? Where you are proposing to put the berms, there has not been water there. No buildup of water where the berms are proposed. Why putting the berms there?

A. Another significant recommendation is related to flow control structure at Long Pond – so if that is approved, that will help. The environmental reviews are in progress. That is #1 priority. Rather than wait until that one gets completely through the process, we are doing this one concurrently.

Q. 38 Empire – river comes through property and there is extensive ponding. 1). building the berms appears to be 7 feet higher than current path, haven't seen water going up that high. Water goes up higher on the Empire Side. 2). What's causing the push to accelerate the project before the information is available?

A. Appreciate that you don't see Winter Ave. properties flood, but we are designing for climate change and taking higher flows into account. That's what the purpose of the higher berms is. Empire Avenue side, homes don't flood, we can't protect back yards from flooding, but we are going to attempt to protect homes from flooding. Upstream development contributes to higher flow, but climate change is also a major issue that we need to come together on. Comment about rushing ahead – there is a still an option to do nothing. There are properties on Winter Avenue that have experienced basement flooding from the river.

Comments: Dealing with symptoms rather main issue.

Comment: Currently no flooding of homes on Empire – solving a problem that causes homes to flood is not solution. Problem in upstream.

Comment. Can see where the berms are going and can appreciate the sense of where they are going but fundamentally by damming up one side of the river you are driving more water to the other side of the river. You are creating a new channel. Rain-snow melt events are normal, and while can appreciate global warming, most flooding going on now is not related to that but rather upstream overdevelopment issues.

Q. 2014 City un-culverted Kelly's Brook – and it dispatches right on the other side of the bridge across from tennis courts while for years that discharged further downstream and

now, we get pooling, and the water stagnates since we have this dump of water coming in from Kelly's Brook. Part of this should be about re-culverting Kelly's Brook. It dumps a lot more water in, everything coming from above, impeding the water flow and then flooding properties on west side of the bridge.

A. I know the brook but don't recall that the brook overflows its bank.

Comments: Impedes the water coming down from the Portugal Cove Rd side which didn't happen before. One property owner notes she had 5 feet of water in basement in January 2022 for first time since Igor.

Comments – river was blocked up with logs and had that not been the case it might have been fine.

Q. What are the plans to hold back the debris and keep the debris out of the river? Berms should be built to height of Kings Bridge Rd. The back of the properties on lower level of Winter Ave there is a sanitary sewer and if the lids lift up a bit it is being mixed with stormwater and what are the plans to avoid that? Would it not be better to backfill the back yards there instead of having maintenance of sewers for years and years? What are the plans to keep this separate from stormwater?

A. City tries to keep ahead of debris issues and it's an operations and maintenance thing. Sewer is there and it will be dealt with as part of project. As for backfilling yards – we try to stay away from private property as much as possible but will work with people in design phase to address look of berms such as slope, etc.

q. Drainage pipes, why can't they be added upstream to other areas?

A. Throughout the city there is an extensive network of storm sewers and catch basis and they discharge at various locations along river courses. The specific problem here around ponding of water is that water won't be able to drain off the properties where the berm is located which is why drainage is needed.

Q. Does this mean they will never have water on their properties again? If you are going to put a drain in, can you say that there won't be water again, then go ahead but not sure that is the case?

A. Insurance provider does not allow us to make guarantees. I can never say that it won't pond on property. We make assumptions around what the design storm is. Comments around the wall being 7 feet high, we have done quite a bit of work around it, made assumptions and we think it is sound. There could be other opinions, it is a very difficult situation, and a lot of people have different ideas because we are in a developed areas and we are trying to live around it. We are trying to drain the water at the low point.

Q. River runs in to Quidi Vidi (QV) Lake. We are maintaining QV lower than normal with stop logs in. Water is flowing faster past my house. We have made problems for ourselves. Residents in the area know what the water situation is.

A. There is 15 feet difference in elevation from QV Lake to the trail adjacent to Pringle Place – stop logs on QV Lake have no impact on upstream flooding near Pringle Place.

Q. Water hadn't gone above the path across the street but comes quite strong through the back yard. Water could start to go up higher based on what you have said. If the water is going to be worse on Empire side in combination with global warmings issues, then what is impact to those homes?

A. CBCL has established the water elevation along the river for a flooding event, and with the modeling done, elevation of water, even though with stronger flow, is in the yards and not flooding basements. Attempting to protect buildings and not yards.

Q. Why does the berm have to be 7 feet high then? Will impact be the same on the other side?

A. Visualize water backing up in the river, it is ground elevation we are talking about. The water can build up on Empire side, but it won't hit the elevation to reach a property. Back yards drop off at a steep elevation and the buildings are higher, and the water does not reach the properties.

Q. Can in-person meetings be scheduled with people impacted by berms?

A. We are open to it. We are moving through EPR process. If the project is released then it is back to city to move ahead, and then if CBCL is involved, then that would need to happen in a preliminary design stage. City confirmed they would discuss with the property owners at that stage.

Q. Looking at where the berm is proposed, it seems to me that people on Empire Avenue, and other locations have had issues but not the people on Winter Avenue. Why is the berm proposed on the Winter Avenue Side? Would want to see what drainage proposals look like before putting up a berm.

A. Floodplain mapping details flooding in the area of Winter Ave having impact on dwellings.

Comment: Agree with XX's comments. We live in a spot that goes down to the river – we get water on the trails; our property does not get flooded. To put a berm on the edge of a ridge would add volume to the south side of the river. Leave it as a flood plain.

Q. Question about the process – how it will work?

A. As part of EPR, one of the items identified is to hear the feedback from the community and how will the concern be addressed. The engagement is a key part of the process. There is still a lot of design refinement at this stage, and it appears the city is open to those conversations.

Comment. Answer is upstream. If you slow the water upstream you won't have a problem downstream. There are options. If you raise the Sq Km of wetland 10 cm during a rainstorm you will hold back 100K cubic meters of water. Let that run down

slowly. Half a dozen small watersheds running in above this area – Long Pond, Thorburn Rd, there are a number of places to back up water collectively to work – now you are channelizing the river- it's being done before, and it wrecks it. Every time you put a drain in a tube you make the water run faster. Be concerned about the welfare of the fish and anything else that lives in the water. Enable nature to do what it should do. This is artificial and you will need to build berms higher and higher instead of solving the issue upriver.

Comments: Fish in the river – significant spanning area. There is a review required from DFO but there appears to be no consideration of the impact on the fish. Been walking this river for 30 years and the city has done significant work – some openings were reduced substantially, i.e., bridge on Portugal Cove rd. If you're putting in berms all you are doing is creating an impoundment, once you reach maximum flow, you are delaying flooding for 15 minutes – dealing with this from the wrong end altogether – flood mitigation needs to start at the top.

Q. 2003 moved in – across the bridge from #1 Portugal Cove Rd. Was told the bridge needed to be raised. Then bridge replaced. Kelly's Brook used to flood both sides – it still flows through the old city dump – bringing residue not fully broken down. Where it is open behind the ballpark and flowing into the river, it stinks. That also floods over and into the ballpark. Bridge is too small and is an issue. Area flooding for years and upstream is a major factor.

Q. Assume the trail will be on top of the berm?

A. Yes, the trail would remain on top of the berm.

Q. Status of Long Pond Weir Process?

A. Still going though EAP. Made submissions, waiting to hear back on whether it has been released or moving up to EPR assessment.

Closing comments: Consultants noted upstream has been looked at. Wetlands can be used, and we can avail of them, but it can't solve it all and berms would still be required.