

Taking Action Against Invasive Species

Whereas:

Invasive species are a significant risk to the health and biodiversity of natural areas and their enjoyment by the community.

Policy 3.2.2 of the Markham Official Plan 2014 provides direction to develop, in cooperation with York Region, an Urban Forest Management Plan to address local tree canopy targets, tree species diversity, *invasive species management (emphasis added)*, soil conservation strategies, and the long-term maintenance of Markham's urban forest including tracking and measuring the health benefits of the urban forest.

On May 29, 2024 Council endorsed the Natural Heritage Management Study, including an Invasive Plant Species Management Plan and Natural Areas Management Guidebook.

The Natural Areas Management Guidebook provides direction to address invasive species as a best practice.

The Invasive Species Management Plan provides information on key invasive plants in Markham, past and ongoing management efforts, and direction for the prioritization and implementation of invasive species management projects in City-owned natural areas.

On May 29, 2024 council also endorsed the Natural Assets Study.

The Natural Assets Study includes invasive species management as a current life cycle activity undertaken to manage city-owned natural assets.

The Natural Assets Study Climate Guide identifies undertaking targeted management of invasive species in sensitive ecosystems and developing an invasive species management plan as opportunities to increase resiliency of City's natural areas to climate change.

The Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan (2012-2022 under review) provides provincial direction and commitments on addressing the risk of invasive species.

The Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan is guided by overarching goals to prevent, detect, respond, manage and adapt to invasive species.

The Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan Identifies the role of partners and key stakeholders including federal government, *municipalities (emphasis added)*, NGOs, private sector and property owners.

The York Region Invasive Species Technical Working Group was created to foster collaboration with local municipalities, provincial and federal governments, NGOs and academia to manage invasive species.

The Rouge National Urban Park (Environment Canada) (RNUP) is guided by a multi-species Action Plan.

The RNUP multi-species action plan provides a comprehensive plan for endangered and threatened species conservation and recovery in the RNUP.

The RNUP multi-species action plan lists current targeted actions to control invasive species in the park.

The RNUP multi-species action plan Identifies an initiative to develop an Invasive Species Management Plan.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is guided by an Invasive Species Management Strategy 2020-2025.

The TRCA Invasive Species Management Strategy includes a goal to protect and, where possible, enhance terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem function and services on TRCA-owned lands and *other public lands (emphasis added)* to ensure ecosystem health and community well-being.

The TRCA Invasive Species Management Strategy actions include collaboration and coordination among partners.

Invasive species management undertaken by the City of Markham would complement and support strategies and initiatives led by the Province of Ontario, York Region, and other agencies and stakeholders active in Markham.

Markham's current actions to manage invasive species are typically targeted and secondary activities related to other work (e.g. removing invasive species and noxious weeds harmful to human health along trails and high use park sites, storm pond cleaning, targeted community- led stewardship projects, preparing sites for tree planting areas).

Whereas Markham lacks a funded strategy to manage invasive species as a stand-alone goal.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

That Markham Council directs city staff to prepare a 2026 capital budget submission to develop a long-term invasive species management strategy with appropriate action steps; and,

That Development of a long-term invasive species management strategy be funded in the 2026 budget year, for implementation of the strategy beginning in the 2027 budget year; and,

That the long-term invasive species management strategy include cooperation with other levels of government, other public agencies, non-governmental organizations, the 407ETR and private property owners; and,

That the long-term invasive species management strategy include quantitative goals and benchmarks, such as, for illustration only, metres of shoreline or acres of green space cleared of invasive species and the recommended budget, staffing and resources needed to implement the strategy; and further,

That work to control invasive plant species move at a pace faster than the spread of the targeted invasive species.

Appendices

Invasive phragmites taking over Civic Centre pond
<photo>

Markham Environmental Advisory Committee May 29, 2025, Minutes/Endorsement (abbreviated)

Markham Natural Heritage Management Study:
<https://pub-markham.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=52a65762-43fb-4494-9a9f-bce572f71a6e&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=25&Tab=attachments>

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Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/invasive-species-strategic-plan-2012#section-0>

RNUP Multi-species Action Plan
<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/action-plans/multi-species-rouge-national-urban-park-2021.html>

TRCA Invasive Species Strategy 2020-2025
<https://pub-trca.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=6533>

Invasive phragmites taking over Civic Centre pond





**MARKHAM ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CANADA ROOM MARKHAM CIVIC CENTRE**

May 29, 2025

7:00 PM

Minutes

<u>Present</u> Stuart Cumner, Chair Paddy Wong, Vice-Chair Councillor Ritch Lau Sarena Karpouzis Karl Lyew Christina Wong Victoria Choy Cliff Chan Catherine Jeffrey Frank Vignando Jack Heath Kelly Lo	<u>Staff</u> Graham Seaman, Director, Sustainability and Asset Management. Jennifer Wong, Manager, Sustainability Mark Head, Manager, Natural Heritage Patrick Wong, Senior Planner, Natural Heritage Laura Gold, Committee Clerk <u>Regrets</u> Councillor Amanda Collucci Yash Kapur Brett Casorzo Mercy Jeyanathan
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1. Invasive Species Management Strategy

Councillor Reid McAlpine presented a motion on an Invasive Species Management Strategy that he will be bring forward to a June Standing Committee meeting to seek Council's endorsement. Councillor McAlpine asked the Committee to endorse the motion. The motion is needed as invasive species, such as cattails and bulrushes (correction: phragmites, not cattails and bulrushes), are significantly affecting the City's greenspaces and displacing native plants. The desired outcome of the motion would be to have funds allocated in the 2026 Budget to develop a strategic approach and a formal policy for addressing invasive species in Markham's greenspaces similar to other Ontario municipalities.

Fred Peters, Friends of Swan Lake Park, advised that he will be providing a presentation later in the meeting that recommends a policy framework that engages local citizens to help address the issue of invasive species as it is very costly to manage. Mr. Peters noted that the City of Ottawa has a similar program to what he is recommending. Mr. Peters invited the Committee to an attend an Invasive Species Management Forum on June 18th, 9-11 AM.

Councillor McAlpine noted that engaging volunteers may be part of the solution but that professionals with expertise would also be required to address the issue. The Committee suggested seeking grant opportunities to help fund an invasive species program.

Graham Seaman, Director of Sustainability and Asset Management, noted that staff resources should be contemplated when recommending funds for an invasive species program.

Moved by Jack Heath

Seconded by Vicky Choy

Having read and discussed the following motion, Markham Environmental Advisory Committee endorses the following motion:

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The long-term invasive species management strategy include cooperation with other levels of government, other public agencies, non-governmental organizations, the 407ETR and private property owners.

The long-term invasive species management strategy include quantitative goals and benchmarks, such as, for illustration only, metres of shoreline or acres of green space cleared of invasive species and the recommended budget, staffing and resources needed to implement the strategy.

And be it further resolved that work to control invasive plant species move at a pace faster than the spread of the targeted invasive species.

Carried

2. Swan Lake Citizen Lab

Fred Peters, Friends of Swan Lake Park, provided a presentation titled Strengthening the Local Citizen's Role in Environmental Stewardship.

The Committee discussed the following in relation to invasive species management:

- Collaborating with Nature Stewards and mapping and documenting problem areas.
- Using drones to detect infestations and problem areas.
- Toronto Stewards unwillingness to go north of Steeles.
- Swan Lakes plans to address invasive species, which focus on biodiversity and human integration.

The Committee agreed to endorse in principle the Friends of the Swan Lake Park's recommendations to address invasive species at Swan Lake. The Committee also suggested that Councillor McAlpine's motion be integrated with the Friends of Swan Lake Park's recommendations.

Moved by Stuart Cumner

Seconded by Vicky Choy

- 1) That the Markham Environmental Advisory Committee endorse in principle and request that Markham Council look into the following motion of the Friends of Swan Lake Park:
- A. Encourage Markham to adopt an integrated Natural Asset Strategy that reflects the interconnected terrestrial water and human elements; and,
 - B. Investigate the Toronto Natural Stewards (TNS) approach as potential stewardship model for managing invasive species plants in Markham's parks.
 - C. Endorse Friends of Swan Lake Park's efforts for two pilot projects for managing invasive species in Markham:
 - I. Swan Lake Citizen Science lab as monitoring model for other environmentally sensitive areas in Markham.
 - II. Using the TNS approach as a Stewardship management model for invasive species.
- 2) And That the Markham Environmental Advisory Committee request that the City investigate other municipalities practices for addressing invasive species, such as Brampton's practices.

Carried