

## Janzen, Heather

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**From:** City Council  
**Subject:** FW: Email - Communication - Stewart Coles - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update - CK 6003-1  
**Attachments:** CPAWS-SK - City Council Agenda – Regular Business Meeting and the agenda item is 10.1.1. - Saskatoon Freeway Project phase 2 - May 25 2024.pdf

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**From:** Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 25, 2024 7:45 PM  
**To:** City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>  
**Subject:** Email - Communication - Stewart Coles - Saskatoon Freeway Planning Study – Phase 2 Endorsement Request – May 2024 Update - CK 6003-1

--- Replies to this email will go to [scoles@cpaws.org](mailto:scoles@cpaws.org) ---

Submitted on Saturday, May 25, 2024 - 19:37

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

**I have read and understand the above statements.:** Yes

**I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.:** No

**I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.:** No

**Date:** Saturday, May 25, 2024

**To:** His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

**Pronouns:** He/him/his

**First Name:** Stewart

**Last Name:** Coles

**Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name:** [REDACTED]

**Phone Number :** [REDACTED]

**Email:** [scoles@cpaws.org](mailto:scoles@cpaws.org)

**I live outside of Saskatoon:** No

**Saskatoon Address and Ward:**

**Address:** [REDACTED] Avenue N South, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

**Ward:** Ward 2

**Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable):** Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - SK Chapter

**What do you wish to do ?:** Submit Comments

**What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known)::** Regular Business Meeting of City Council - 09:30 AM May 29th 2024

**What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?:** Agenda item 10.1.1.

**Comments:**

See attached

**Attachments:**

- [CPAWS-SK - City Council Agenda – Regular Business Meeting and the agenda item is 10.1.1. - Saskatoon Freeway Project phase 2 - May 25 2024.pdf](#)341.09 KB

**Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?:** No

25 May 2024

His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council,

**RE: City Council Agenda – Regular Business Meeting and the agenda item is 10.1.1.**

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Saskatchewan Chapter (CPAWS-SK) has written to both council and related committees concerning this agenda item on numerous occasions over the last few years. While the Government of Saskatchewan has responded to the request by council for further information, it has not adequately addressed or removed the likelihood of negative impacts that this phase 2 alignment will have on the ecosystems and species of the NE and Small Swale complexes.

In specific reference to the correspondence from Minister Carr, we have the following comments.

- Moving the freeway and interchange alignment to avoid “*riparian*” and “*significant wetland*” areas does not mean the new alignment frees itself from likely significant impact (direct and indirect) to important habitat features of the NE and Small Swales. For example, the Northern Leopard Frog will move between its wintering and breeding habitats, which include water bodies for over-wintering and the use of native prairie during the summer months. Some of the key reasons for its species-at-risk status include habitat conversion and fragmentation, wetland drainage, and eutrophication.
- Direct avoidance of “*known Leks*” for grouse mating rituals, again, does not remove the likely negative indirect or direct impact to grouse presence and behaviour because of this phase 2 alignment. New Leks are anticipated to be identified as ongoing resource management is continued by Meewasin Valley Authority in this region.

Take the information from the Saskatoon Freeway Phase 2 Biological Assessment report, shared by the province at the last Standing Policy Committee on Transportation on this matter, which made it clear and evident that all current concepts for this Phase 2 proposal “***will impact wildlife through direct mortality, reduce habitat connectivity, habitat fragmentation, and behavioural changes or habitat avoidance. Species that are area sensitive, road avoidant, or at a high risk of mortality from roadkill are likely to be impacted by the proposed project. This includes federally listed Species at Risk.***” It was also noted that “***all concepts will impact plant species diversity and community composition through ground disturbance, habitat fragmentation, edge effects, and landscape alterations.***”

This is in direct contradiction to the points stated in the letter from Minister Carr.

- The province has suggested that a more detailed impact assessment may be required far closer to construction. It is also conceivable and potentially likely, given the length of the entire proposed freeway, that the development could fall outside – or be presented as such – of the requirements for an EIA.

As has been previously stated by Council and provincial representatives, a lack of endorsement will not stop the project from moving forward. While the city and province would like to continue to agree with each other and maintain good relations, a fair and equal partnership, and ongoing collaboration should not require Council’s endorsement of phase 2. This is an opportunity for the city to show environmental

leadership and ensure that the province is meeting the highest environmental standards and commitments throughout the process, given the importance of this ecosystem.

Endorsement now, without any environmental commitments, is a signal to the residents and voters of Saskatoon – that the mayor in his letter to Minister Carr stated represented the most important feedback on the issue – that this council is not listening to its constituents and lacking the necessary leadership to ensure the protection of important habitats like the NE and Small Swale complexes are a priority.

Overall, the provincial government has provided no detail, assurances or commitments to the effective conservation of these Swale Complexes. Therefore, any endorsement will be placing the functioning of these important ecosystems at significant risk.

Given the scale of intrusion by phase 2 (8 lanes through the NE Swale and 10 lanes through the Small Swale), the current and available data on important and at-risk flora and fauna, and the lack of commitment to effective mitigation measures, **we ask Council how this phase 2 development can be endorsed.**

## **CONCLUSION**

We reiterate the need for this council and administration to consider the magnitude of effect this phase 2 proposal will have on these critically important ecosystems. There has already been significant fragmentation of this natural area through road construction and plans continue to move forward for additional and large-scale development throughout the area. We have seen no consideration of the cumulative effects all these planned developments will likely have on this critical habitat and home to many at-risk species.

The environmental impacts facing these ecosystems makes for stark reading at a time when we are witnessing such significant biodiversity loss across the globe and none more so than where we find our grasslands - the most at-risk ecosystem in the world.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to share our comments with city council. Should you have any questions regarding these comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

### **Stewart Coles**

Interim Executive Director

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Saskatchewan Chapter

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