



February 28, 2022

Dear Mayor Meed Ward, Members of Council, Steve and Melissa,

I'm unavailable to delegate to provide comment on the trees here in Burlington as per item 4.3 private property tree bylaw report, and thus am providing my input via this email correspondence.

Given today's dire [IPCC report](#), immediate actions to protect local green infrastructure have never been more paramount: "The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future,"

I read the latest Private Tree By-Law update report in full, listened closely to the November 22 Council workshop and I attended the October 28 PIC as well. I've also included all of you on the 3 questions I emailed to Steve in regards to this issue.

A response to a key question that I suggest should be forefront in driving, assessing and ultimately deciding on this issue remains outstanding. Namely, ***will the proposed changes to the bylaw increase the likelihood of protecting more trees, versus pre-amendments, thereby strengthening Burlington's tree canopy necessary to achieve the 35% canopy coverage target?***

Given tree protection is the primary objective of the tree bylaw, I suggest it to be appropriate and helpful to include this assessment for each of the options presented in the staff report as part of the "advantage" and "disadvantage" comments.

Some additional questions and input I would like to provide for your consideration are as follows:

- It's frightening to see the # of trees anticipated to be removed. Is there an estimate of the loss of DBH (to the already shrinking forest canopy)?
- The tree replacement ratios appear to be below industry standards essential to meet the ambitious tree canopy coverage target. Reducing cash-in-lieu amounts makes it easier for people to throw money at the issue versus addressing it by replacing the valued trees in their neighbourhood.

Will "simpler" and "cheaper" increase the likelihood of greater tree protection?

- The Town of Oakville has had a [private property tree bylaw](#) in place for many years now and has since strengthened it by reducing the tree DBH from 20 cm to 15 cm. Is the 'made in Burlington' approach considered to be equally effective in regards to tree protection industry best practice methodology and standards?
- The report indicates that the majority of replacement trees are cedars which do not contribute to a diverse urban canopy providing the range of benefits and it states this will be addressed by the proposed amendments but I did not see this in the amendments - is it included there and I overlooked it? How will Forestry staff ensure the appropriate trees are planted that will minimize future tree removals, unnecessary maintenance or stress to the tree for a healthy, diverse and resilient urban canopy?

And as previously shared, it is hoped that the following input is considered helpful:

- Halton has the highest carbon emissions outside of industry in the GTHA. One large healthy tree can store approximately 65 times more carbon and remove 15 times more air pollution annually than one small tree.
- Burlington has one of the lowest tree canopy coverage amounts among Ontario municipalities and does not have the 'luxury' of compromising tree protection for added convenience/simplification or by suggesting that tree planting will be **the** solution to address the challenge. The canopy coverage is declining and even with ALL 4 key ingredients in place – **protection, planting, education AND funding**- the work is ambitious. Good policy driven by urban forest health science should be the priority.
- "A tree is a very modest investment in the community. As it grows, it is the only asset in the entire city infrastructure that increases in value as it grows" [Benefits of urban forests video.](#)

Thank you again for previously unanimously supporting the establishment of a tree protection bylaw for Burlington. I appreciate you considering my input and I look forward to receiving responses to my inquiries.

Respectfully,

Amy Schnurr