

March 22, 2016

Dear Chair Craven, Mayor Goldring, Members of Committee, City Staff and Burlington citizens,

Thank you for the opportunity to delegate today on behalf of BurlingtonGreen regarding the Proposed Pilot of a Roseland Community Tree By-law. We support the proposed pilot by-law and I would like to share with you why we do, within the context of our organization's long-standing advocacy efforts calling for greater tree protection in Burlington.

From producing clean air and adding beauty and property value, to protecting watersheds and mitigating flood damage, I'm sure we can all agree that **trees are an integral part of our community.**

When we look around our landscape, we may assume we have enough trees and that cutting more down doesn't really matter. **The truth is – we don't have enough.** Planting more trees is only part of the solution; we need to protect the older growth trees as well.

Burlington's tree canopy is well below the 30 to 50% minimum requirement to support a sustainable environment as identified by [Environment Canada](#). Add to that the projected loss of 10% of trees in our city as a result of Emerald Ash Borer and we argue that **we need more solution-focused mechanisms in place to protect and increase our tree canopy in Burlington.**

Establishing a tree protection by-law is **consistent with this City and Council's Blue Dot community commitment and your draft strategic plan.**

- We applaud that you made the decision to become a Blue Dot Community in July of 2015 which recognizes citizens' rights to a healthy environment – clean air and water, safe food, a stable climate and a say in decisions that affect their health and well-being. **Protecting, and increasing tree canopy directly supports the Blue Dot commitment.**
- Additionally, **a tree protection by-law would contribute to the City's strategic plan objective for a healthy and greener community, which specifically includes references to increasing our tree canopy.** The fact that the majority of Burlington's tree canopy is located on private property means that there needs to be a policy tool in place to safeguard these trees. You have a by-law in place now to protect trees on public property, but we suggest you are just part of the way there with your commitment.
- On a larger scale, a tree by-law would also help Canada to meet climate change commitments made last December in Paris: our trees act as a natural carbon sink to reduce net carbon emissions. Burlington can show leadership by joining 16 other Ontario municipalities that have already implemented private property tree protection by-laws.

Furthermore, advancing a pilot tree protection by-law for the Roseland Community or for the entire City does not have to be that daunting. Many of you may recall the comments made by David Miller ( CEO & President of the WWF and former Mayor of Toronto), who spoke in Burlington last November encouraging Burlington to get on board in establishing a bylaw, stating that despite controversy about

establishing a PP tree bylaw in Toronto they made the decision, it was the right decision and a necessary decision if they were to take their commitment to protect the environment and mitigate climate change seriously.

Through our *Greenprint for the Future* program, we reached approximately 10,000 people in Burlington seeking their input about a number of issues, including the establishment of a private property tree bylaw. 85% of those who completed an impact (*survey*) card (*350 people*), called for a PP tree protection bylaw. Many people asked for clarification about what a private property tree bylaw might entail. Quite often people who were not familiar with the issue and expressed reservations about the need for the bylaw were still interested in hearing more about why it is necessary. Significantly more people were under the impression that Burlington already had a private property tree bylaw and were very upset to discover this was not the case.

BurlingtonGreen believes that a city-wide practical, effective private property tree bylaw is warranted and needed now. (It's time to rip the bandaid off as Brent Toderian has said). Just as you have other by-laws in place for good reasons and to protect public interests, the same should hold true for tree protection where the benefits extend well beyond the private property on which they are located. However, we recognize that some members of this Committee may still have some reservations about putting this policy tool into place at this time. Thus, we suggest that the Mayor's motion to direct City staff to prepare a report on a pilot project for a tree by-law in the Roseland community can be a positive step forward and hopefully one that you will all embrace.

We support this initiative because **some trees saved are better than none**. Conducting a pilot could provide an opportunity for the by-law to be "tested", with community questions and concerns addressed so that potentially, a city-wide tree protection bylaw could then be established.

**In conclusion**, in preparation of my delegation today, I dedicated some time to review past presentations and webcasts about this issue and thoughtfully considered the various comments, questions and concerns conveyed by members of this Committee. I took them into account along with those expressed by the general public to BG through the Greenprint for the Future outreach program, and I reviewed research about tree benefits and protection etc. A key outcome that I've come away with is that **we all share common ground**. We all value the critical role Burlington's trees have in making our city one of the best in the world.

How many trees have come down or will come down and how many should be planted versus how many maintained can be endlessly debated.... or alternatively, we can move forward working collaboratively with a solution focus to respect our shared interests. BurlingtonGreen and our volunteers have and will continue to work with project partners such as the City to plant more trees in our community every year. That's part of the solution. Protecting our current tree canopy is the other part of the solution and this is dependent on each of you.

Please vote in support of a pilot tree protection by-law for Roseland Community.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Jane Jenner  
Advocacy Team Member  
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association