

To Mayor and City Councillors-Care of Kelvin Galbraith

Tree Feedback Regarding RPF 03-22-Pages 214-241

February 28th, 2022

### **Introduction**

I have read the current update to the tree bylaw- Report RPF-03-22. *For me a simple summation is that the Forestry Group has simply repackaged and rewrapped in different colours and bows the previous program and for the most part ignored June 2021 council deliberations and directions.*

The only slight positive I see is that on page 228 where we now have the Tree Declaration Form. However Forestry is quick to note in the same paragraph they will engage in auditing Burlington citizens for compliance to this program. The June council direction was that any compliance would be via the existing City Bylaw Department.

Noted significant adds in both process and bureaucracy in the RPF are requirements for a permit per tree vs single application, front yard signs and tree deposits.

### **Discussion-Point 1- Canopy Goals In Conflict with Reality of GTA Growth And New City Projects**

I live in the Aldershot area close to the La Salle and the Plains intersections. I look at the city web site regularly and see that everything along Plains and North of Plains is being designed for multi-story and high density. Hundreds of acres, holding 1000's of Burlington residents will soon become but concrete and pavement. I have walked through the latest Masonry Court development of Townhomes and Condo's and note there is no place to plant trees. They have the storm pond which I interpret meets the city goal –Page 217 of report-“every person should be able to access greenspace- 1 hectare or greater, within 300 metres of their home”.

The reality is developers are simply knocking down the existing trees, maximizing structure, pay the tree fees and roll the one time cost into the selling price which for the 25 story tall buildings is a small amount per unit. Replacement trees and green space will be minimal. Any tree that can be planted has a low chance of survivability because of dogs, bikes and snow piling in these developments.

The key point to be made is that future city growth has no credible consideration for trees and growth yet the city feels they must micro manage and burden established neighbourhoods of single family homes who have been very responsible for the past 100 years and who have maintained a fairly good existing canopy without help over those years. I have no reason to believe this would not continue.

### **Discussion Point 2-There actually is no Problem**

In my view the Forestry department has created for itself a pretense and under that framework built a much larger department and added significant bureaucracy and cost placing themselves disproportionately onto a small slice of Burlington citizens-primarily private single family homes with appreciative lots. Let me make the following points with respect to some of the recommendations and discussion in the report:

#### **A. Combining Swimming Pool Permit and Tree Permit.**

An argument could be made that home swimming pools leave a significant environmental footprint in various and many ways. They require fuel to heat, use water, chemicals to treat, and small animals drown in them. And lastly when you go to build a backyard pool trees are knocked down.

Trees are also knocked down for home additions and also where owners demolish an existing home and rebuild a larger home on their lot. These activities are all allowed to occur as they comply with exiting bylaws.

Most other owners who wish to remove a tree on their property have established in their minds a legitimate reason for doing so. And most owners replace the tree that is removed. Likewise most owners have no desire to damage trees on their property when low intensity projects are carried out. It appears the forestry department wishes to paint city property owners as irresponsible people whose activities need to be managed from start to finish. Quite the opposite is true as people care about their properties. Any abuse has been and would be a rare event.

**The city is adding cost and bureaucracy, injecting themselves onto private property and domain but trees are not being saved.**

### **B. Tree permit and Declaration**

I'm generally okay with a tree fee for a tree being removed and not replaced (and where tree is removed and replaced the cost of the replant up to the cost of the paid fee is reimbursed to owners). But all this diameter stuff, signs in front yard, tree deposit, inspections is simply unnecessary added bureaucracy and burden by municipal government on and in the lives of people living in the city of Burlington.

I also note the forestry group has discovered that owners when replacing extra trees, to avoid the diameter fee cost, install the simplest and lowest cost saplings. The extended thought is these trees are being installed to avoid the DBH fee and the crap trees will be stealthily removed later. **Most established property owners if they remove a tree from their property have room for only one new tree in that spot.** The punitive diameter issue is a significant irritation because people generally can only plant one replacement tree and they are being asked to pay for up to four. The simple rule should be a tree for a tree. By setting a simple tree fee and form of say \$600 dollars per tree, portion or all reimbursable for the cost of a replacement, the city would find that owners will replace quality, variety and substantive trees.

### **C. Other**

It is also noted in the RPF report that the private tree bylaw requires \$426,500 in increased tax levy to cover a \$612,750 operating budget. I find this unacceptable tax burden increase/adder when one recognizes that almost no private trees are actually being saved.

In my view a tree permit and/or declaration should be a very simple process. I have some thoughts on what that kind of program would look like but citizen input to the private tree bylaw does not seem to be much of a priority for Forestry. It was my expectation that citizens like Mike Morris who made written representation to the city last year would be tapped in the development of the upgraded bylaw that was directed to occur by council.

### **Summary**

I could go on and on but for me the overreaching tree program of 2020 and now again presented in RFP-03-22 is simply deck chairs rearranged and nothing else. I respectfully submit these discussions and views for committee use on March 3rd, 2022.

Regards Bert Donkers