



June 1, 2023

Good morning, Mayor, Councillors, Staff, Developers, Builders and Fellow Residents.

Grading and drainage and the site control for these purposes! We have been watching for this opportunity to speak on such an important topic.

Millcroft Greenspace Alliance is a not-for-profit organization that was incorporated to protect the natural environment of the community. My name is Daintry Klein and I am a member of this group of volunteers. Financial professionals focussed on wealth would advise clients not only on their investments but also on risk mitigation to protect them. As severe weather events such as significant rainfall, heat and wind are more common, protecting our assets has become a much more significant concern. We are here today to speak to you about what should be a common goal. To highlight the impacts of grading and drainage and ultimately potential flooding on all of our assets as individuals, businesses and governments including the City of Burlington's. Hopefully each member of the audience today sees the importance.

Three top risks identified by the Intact Centre, a group of natural scientists, are flooding, wildfires and heat. In this morning's Globe and Mail, a headline is "Climate shocks are making parts of the US uninsurable." The insurance companies in Canada are actively advocating for increased natural infrastructure and new building standards yet governments have not yet embraced their recommendations. One can only imagine the comment "Insurance companies, tired of losing money, are raising rates, restricting coverages or pulling out of some areas altogether – making it more expensive for people to live in their homes" will be applicable here in Canada as well. 30% of Canadian homes were experiencing high or extremely high risk for flooding in 2016 so perhaps greater focus on incorporating grading and drainage considerations throughout the planning and building process could mitigate losses? We are in a climate emergency and we must consider the importance of the natural environment to absorb stormwater in a broader context.

Recent research, including the focus of Unflood Ontario, is recommending natural infrastructure to mitigate the effects of climate change. Our Federal government has committed to planting 2 billion trees and protecting 30% of the earth's surface not only in rural but also in urban spaces. But in order to achieve these goals, we must preserve some of the natural environment within our City, the soil in which to plant trees and vegetation. The Greenbelt, containing wetlands and farmland surrounding the Greater Golden Horseshoe acts as a sponge, slowing the flow of drainage from the headlands of our watersheds to the Great Lakes. It protects a significant amount of the Ontario population located from Durham to Niagara Falls. And within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, green infrastructure in the form of boulevards, setbacks, lot coverage restrictions, parks and open space and natural heritage, all serve as sponges which also support the further benefits of trees and vegetation. It is noteworthy that the vegetation also improves our air quality, for green house gas mitigation and cooling benefits. Necessities of life.

Densification; intensification; infill development; reduced setbacks that perhaps don't even consider the underground structures such as deep window wells; smaller lots and higher percentages for lot coverage result in site control and grading and drainage having less margin for error. Buildings, pavers or pavement, and other hard surfaces are covering a larger percentage of the earth, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe displacing water absorption and causing greater runoff. Engineered storm sewers and man-made structures are displacing the water to where? More frequently we are witnessing flooding which demonstrates that man-made structures are not completely capable of managing the unpredictable volumes of precipitation in our new climate reality. We have become aware of examples of new single building infill development where grading was altered to the detriment of existing neighbouring properties that have flooded. Grading and drainage cannot be an isolated decision on a singular lot, 10 lots, or a subdivision for that matter. Should we consider water tables and site plan control in every building proposal before it is approved? We must have a greater focus on flood prevention. It is affecting lives and livelihoods.

In our recent experience attending meetings regarding building and development, grading and drainage is considered as an afterthought – the buildings are approved and possibly built before grading and drainage are considered as a subsequent decision. This approach may have been sufficient in the past when lots were larger, setbacks greater and vegetation in our cities was more prevalent? And before climate change became real.

To highlight the impact, we can't help thinking of the practice of disconnecting sump pumps from the storm sewers and discharging the water onto our lots. Perhaps this assumes greenspace on our lots to absorb the water such that it doesn't become a further burden? Otherwise, pumping the water like a fountain to smaller amounts of greenspace, if any, (which seems to be our new reality) only to have it drain back to a basement where it came from? All that pumping, relying on electricity from expanded gas-powered plants? Another suggestion is to extend the downpipes away from our homes. Given the tighter spaces between our homes – could this mean we are draining our roof to our neighbour's property? Will a 2% grade be sufficient for an increased concentration of precipitation and runoff? Should we consider a gentler common-sense approach of reducing the impact on our natural environment?

At our recent Community Information Exchange, Millcroft Greenspace Alliance (MGA) provided greater detail on the impacts of drainage and flooding in our community. The video of the presentation can be viewed from our website.

MGA would like to thank the City staff and Council for their work on researching and understanding the importance of the Millcroft greenspace to decide on opposing the proposed development. This multi-benefit property, stormwater management, recreation facility, vegetation for cooling and green house gas mitigation is an incredibly valuable resource for our community. We look forward to continuing to support the City in their efforts to have the Province intervene and stop the proposed development and to protect this early example of stormwater green infrastructure.