

City of Burlington Permitting Process

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION
landscapeontario.com



Briefing Note | June 19, 2023

Background

- Landscape Ontario is the province's premier landscape trades association and has 11 sector groups to address the specific needs of the industry, representing over 500 companies that operate or do business in the City of Burlington and employ approximately 14,000 people.
- The economic impact of landscape horticulture work in the City of Burlington is estimated to be \$450 million.
- With over 8,000 landscape horticulture businesses in Ontario, it is a sector that represents \$5.4 billion in economic impact and employs over 100,000 people.
- The landscape business community has expressed concern about the permitting process in the City of Burlington previously on an individual basis at the highest level of municipal government with no positive result.

The Issue

- The professional landscape trades community that operates or does business in the City of Burlington is under significant strain due to the current permitting process.
- The current permitting process in the City of Burlington is 3-5 times that of the City of Hamilton and the Town of Oakville including the exponential additional cost of going through this process.
- Extended delays with issued permits are resulting in lost and canceled projects, stressed landscape business owners and staff, and frustrated homeowners.
- Professional landscape businesses are experiencing the current permitting process to take an average of 16-18 weeks.
- There are landscape businesses that are skirting the permitting process altogether in the City of Burlington, completing projects before professional landscape companies can complete the permit process. - average pool project takes 3-4 weeks to complete.
- We have observed several overlaps of requirements between different City of Burlington departments.
- There is a general consensus among the professional landscape community that the online portal missed the mark on streamlining the process.
- Professional landscape business owners who traditionally operate or do business in the City of Burlington are developing strategies and business plans to serve other trade areas as a result of the significant delays in issued permits.
- We have observed an evolution of added regulation to the permitting process contributing to the acute issues the professional landscape business community is experiencing right now.
- We have experienced a significant gap in the one on one personal service through the permitting process. The City of Burlington was once well known for its ability to personally service and provide advice on deficiencies throughout the permitting process.
- The professional landscape business community has observed the City of Burlington navigate further away from the spirit and intention of the building code.
- We have regularly been instructed by our clients/homeowners to bypass the permitting process so the project is completed on their timeline despite our advice to follow the process. We continue to engage in the process.

Our Request

- The City of Burlington, and many neighboring municipalities utilize boards and committees to advise them on how to amend policy and implement change at the municipal level.
- We are formally requesting that the City of Burlington address this complicated issue by striking a subcommittee to review the issues we have presented.
 - *According to City of Burlington Procedure By-law 31-2021 Council may, at any time, establish a committee to advise Council on matters within their jurisdiction and Members of the Committees will be appointed by Council at the recommendation of the Clerk. (19.1, 19.2)*
- Through this subcommittee, the professional landscape business community would have the appropriate venue to create advisory documentation and recommendations for positive change.
- Taken from the City of Burlington's website, *"The City of Burlington has a variety of boards and committees that provide feedback and input on important matters and issues in the community. We are always looking for community members to play a key role in providing advice and feedback to Council and staff on a variety of issues."*
- The professional landscape business community would like to work in collaboration with the City of Burlington to play that key role in providing advice and feedback to Council.
- We believe It is our responsibility to work with the City of Burlington to create a permitting process where Burlington continues to grow, providing safe and healthy outdoor communities, benefiting from the economic impact of the landscape horticulture business that is vibrant in this city.

Conclusion

- The professional landscape business community is feeling tremendous strain as a result of the delays, and the added workload, in receiving issued permits in timelines 3-5 times of neighbouring municipalities.
- Through consultation with the professional landscape community we have compiled a list of practical changes that are able to be implemented right away.
- There is a massive, unquantifiable economic impact to the professional landscape business community that operates or does business in the City of Burlington
- The professional landscape business community would like to work in collaboration with the City of Burlington through a subcommittee to make the permitting process the envy of the province.

Supplemental: Jurisdictional scan of permitting processes with timelines

- **City of Hamilton**
 - Hamilton Building Permit Application Process - Cedar Springs Landscape.pdf
 - Hamilton Pool Permit Application Process - Cedar Springs Landscape.pdf
- **Town of Oakville**
 - Oakville Building Permit Application Process - Cedar Springs Landscape.pdf
 - Oakville Pool Permit Application Process - Cedar Springs Landscape.pdf
- **City of Burlington**
 - Burlington Building Permit Application Process - Cedar Springs Landscape.pdf
 - Burlington Pool Permit Application Process - Cedar Springs Landscape.pdf