

December 16, 2019

Dear Mayor Meed-Ward, Members of Council, City Staff and residents of Burlington

I am here this evening on behalf of BurlingtonGreen to once again speak in support of an effective tree protection bylaw for Burlington, providing some new information.

We have 4 points to share followed by two suggestions to the motion amendments, beginning with two pieces of timely relevant research to share:

1. The TAF (The Atmospheric Fund) research released today that I sent to all of you reveals Halton to have the highest carbon emissions outside of industry in the GTHA. This emphasizes the need to take action on climate mitigation and adaptation in every way possible including through the protection of our tree canopy.

“...one large healthy tree can store approximately 65 times more carbon and remove 15 times more air pollution annually than one small tree.

2. Karen Brock (part-time resident of Burlington & President of Oakvillegreen) conducted some online research indicating Burlington to have one of the lowest tree canopy coverage amounts among Ontario municipalities – Hamilton – 21% Oakville – 27.8%, Toronto- 26-28%, Ottawa – 31% Kitchener – 23%, with just Vaughn at 15% and Brampton the lowest at 10%

Hearing at past Committee discussions that a bylaw is not necessary – ineffective and tree planting will solve the problem. This is Not an either /or situation, Burlington does not have the ‘luxury’ of taking half measures here. The canopy coverage is declining and even with ALL 4 key ingredients in place – protection, planting, education AND funding- the work is ambitious. Investing in green infrastructure must be a priority. Future generations will not be able to ‘catch up’. You need to invest and act NOW.

If there was a better way to protect the trees than a bylaw, what is it? Many other municipalities had these same debates, they chose to establish bylaws and have not since abandoned them for concern of lawsuits or ineffectiveness. In fact, some have gone on to make their bylaws stronger (such as Oakville and Toronto to name a few)

3. Hypocrisy and waste of investment – We hope you can all appreciate the hypocrisy and poor investment here for those that argue for tree planting only and not for protection through a bylaw. For taxpayers and particularly for those of thus who plant trees, the wasted effort of planting new life, knowing that at any time those same trees we planted can be cut down in the future at any time is unfathomable.

4. BG has planted more than 15,000 native trees to date with the community. We are pleased to apply for funding to help the city ramp up efforts significantly to educate about tree protection and tree benefits and to get more trees in the ground, with a strengthened (no red tape) partnership process to look forward to.

2 suggestions for the proposed amendments:

A/ Add “public property” to item 4 directing staff to include the development of a tree planting program on public lands, not only private.

B/ We liked the discussion at Committee looking at measures (moratorium?) to prevent rash tree cutting taking place before the bylaw comes into affect.

Arguably, this is one of the most challenging times to be a Mayor and member of Council given the climate crisis. However it also provides opportunity to make the most significant impact. We look forward to your support for an effective private property tree protection bylaw for Burlington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Schnurr".

Amy Schnurr
Executive Director
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association