

December 16, 2021

Statement of Concern to: Stratford City Council , Ontario and
The City of Stratford Planning Staff
From: Stratford Perth Tree Trust

Stratford Perth Tree Trust is a local, not-for-profit environmental organization that was established in the City of Stratford in 2020. It is part of an organization of affiliated Tree Trust Groups that exist in six other Ontario municipalities.

The mandate of Tree Trust is to provide protection for mature trees in local communities, recognizing their value in the fight against climate change. Approximately 50% of the dry weight of a mature tree is sequestered carbon, so every year trees are able to remove incrementally more carbon from the environment. Mature trees and forest are our most effective means to capture carbon in our community.

Tree Trust uses the opportunity to protect significant trees in our community (i.e both in Stratford and across Perth County) as a means to educate the public about the value of trees and the need to protect trees on private and public lands.

Trees, aside from sequestering carbon, are critical in providing habitat for native pollinators, birds, insects, and mammals. They slow the speed of wind, lower ambient temperature around buildings and public spaces, reduce erosion, raise the water table, and increase property values.

Young saplings or immature trees are important and planting more trees is a valuable practice that will help to protect us in the future. The existing stock of middle aged and mature trees are our local climate warriors and also merit protection for the health of our local community and our planet.

The City of Stratford has established a Tree By-Law that prohibits the cutting of trees on private residential properties without due cause; (disease, or risk to life and property). The Stratford City Council has recently passed an important recognition of a Climate Emergency.

As Tree Trust, we have been recognized by the local community as a voice for the protection of trees. Many local citizens are now approaching us asking for help in the protection of trees on lands that are currently slated for development with the potential result of the loss of many mature and significant trees.

Our question to the Stratford City Council and to the current Planning Staff is simple.

Why and when will climate protection and by extension, tree protection be built into the goals for any on-going and future development in our city?

Development and housing are necessary for the city. There is no question that the city has a housing shortage and infill within current city boundaries is good planning.

But good planning should also consider the natural environment and building the goal of climate protection into any development should be the priority for now and into the future. All residents are deserving of green space and shade today, not 25 years into an uncertain future, regardless of income.

We know that many trees are currently on the chopping block for developments currently in the last stages of planning. There is no valid excuse for this. It is possible - and we say necessary - to protect the current tree stock in the city and use it to our advantage to create a more livable, healthy, and climate-wise community, for ourselves and our children in the future.

We ask the current Council and Planning Staff to commit to the health of the environment of this city.

We demand that the city apply the same stringent criterion laid out in the by-law limiting local citizens ability to cut trees on their properties to city-owned lands and developer-owned lands, so that mature and rare trees are not removed for the convenience of developers.

Where is the honesty that allows the city to recognize a climate emergency and yet fundamentally ignore the importance and value of protecting trees, that are our front line defence against climate change?

We challenge the city to review their current development projects to recognize the necessity to protect the existing tree canopy in the city.

Respectfully submitted: Stratford Perth Tree Trust

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