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TO: City Councillors
Planning and Housing Committee Members
Infrastructure and Environment Committee Members

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REGULATIONS MUST MAKE SENSE
DO WE WANT CLIMATE WARMING OR TREES TO PROTECT US?

In our rush to create new homes and satisfy business, we are proving that Toronto cannot make miracles. In order to get where we are going, we have to follow the big decisions we have already made.

At its worst, the decision to remove mature trees on Dwight Avenue will create a wasteland for our children, consisting of little more than twigs to replace them. This decision will be an aesthetic, cultural, educational and climate disaster right in front of their classrooms.

We don't want our children to learn to protest at such an early age or to find out that our civic representatives are incompetent when they make rules which contradict each other. The image of a ten-year-old lying down in front of a bulldozer is distinctly unappealing.

At its best, the decision shows shallow decision making which is not in the true spirit of slowing Climate Change. It is just plain hypocrisy.

And, the trees on Dwight are just a start. The Queensway Complete Streets now at its beginning with early consultation, has decided it must cut down another hundred or more trees to create bike lanes. Once again, the plan casually mentions that it will replace all trees.

What's worse is that the designers cannot say that they have yet dealt sufficiently with water runoff, but are considering a more accessible path through protected land by Mimico Creek. Or, why they have not considered the difference in results between paved medians and planted medians where climate is concerned.

They do know that medians are safer but that is not enough any more.

Wait a minute.

Let's not fool ourselves. No one can buy back the years it took for those existing trees to grow to maturity. We wish to note that a street which cuts down trees will not be "complete" for another generation or more.

These rushes to plan and likewise to react to what various segments of society want will not do. I will say, as I have said several times before, we have to slow down. If we keep rushing, we will make even more mistakes we will have to live with and so will our children and grandchildren to come.

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If the offending trees have been in place for decades, what is the rush to kill them in a few months? Go back to the drawing board. And, when you are there, look at the non-existent regulations which offer no protection at all for old growth trees on private land which can be felled without asking anyone's permission.

If you are serious, City Councillors, about enacting the regulations which can slow Climate Change along the way, keep track of the net improvement in numbers of trees, after so many have fallen to development.

You have asked for, and been given, community participation from groups, such as The Long Branch Neighbourhood Association, who have planted thousands of new trees while losing as much as 30% of its tree canopy through the felling of so many unprotected trees.

The least you can do is honour their work and your own vision by finding another way -- by cutting out the contradictions in our legislation and regulations.

We are supposed to be a world-class city. Let's prove it with a world-class plan for Climate Change along side excellence in development.

We are not there yet.

And while you are at it, let's add some timelines to all the new homes we are supposed to be building for our growing populations and those who are under-housed at the moment.

I have been working on affordable housing for six years or more and on the projects I have been involved with have yet to see a shovel break ground.

We hear complaints about red tape and delays from government, but what I have seen is applicants who want to change the rules and build more and bigger, ignoring Secondary Plans carefully assembled after years of planning and consultations at a cost of \$millions to taxpayers. The better part I'm not so sure.

I know it is hard for Council to cross departmental lines, but this is what must happen if we are to keep the promises we have made to save the planet for future generations.

Thank you in advance for your sombre consideration of these matters.

Respectfully,
Starr Smith
Chair

Patricia Austin
Co-Chair