

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Planning and Housing](#)
Subject: [External Sender] My comments for 2024.PH11.4 on April 5, 2024 Planning and Housing Committee
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To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the April 5, 2024 Planning and Housing Committee meeting on item 2024.PH11.4, Zoning for Residential Basements - Preliminary Report

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Members of the Planning and Housing Committee,

We write today in response to the preliminary report on iceberg basements. Councillor Robinson brought this matter forward in October 2021 and we are glad it is now being considered.

We started **Hoggs Hollow Tree Watch** in June of 2021. Our goal was to educate our neighbourhood on our urban tree canopy and its importance, inform our neighbours of the bylaws concerning tree preservation and help them navigate the bylaws and City departments that oversee tree protection. In May of 2021, we became aware of the planned destruction of a healthy 250-year-old sugar maple in our neighbourhood. Then we hoped to protect a single tree, but little did we know that we had uncovered something that was far more destructive, not only to that tree but to numerous other trees. An Iceberg House.

We have sadly become very aware of the devastating nature of Iceberg Houses. Hoggs Hollow lies in a flood plain, the Don River runs through the middle of our community, we are in a valley surrounded by steep slopes and we are a City designated Natural Heritage System subject to City/TRCA ravine regulations. Hoggs Hollow is subject to a 1-hour evacuation in the event of a dam release on the Don River. Iceberg houses present a clear and present danger to all those who live in our community.

The building of an Iceberg house follows the same pattern:

- **Environmental Degradation** The lot is clear-cut and trees are NOT replanted. Trees cannot grow on a property where there is an immense cement structure under the ground that extends beyond the footprint of the house above. We depend on mature trees in our community for water absorption to mitigate flooding and erosion.

- **Committee of Adjustment** These builds are approved without hesitation, although they always require numerous and substantial variances. We have found that the Committee of Adjustment makes no effort to ensure the character of a community is maintained, they approve these oversized builds 97% of the time. Iceberg houses set negative precedents.
- **Residents bear the financial cost** Underground rivers and springs that run throughout our community are displaced and disrupted. Most in our community suffer from some sort of water problem and when a massive bylaw-busting iceberg house is approved, water is displaced. It is hard to rationalize this destruction to accommodate multi-car garages and basketball courts. In our neighbourhood, which was formerly a swamp, there will be pumping during the build and often continuous pumping for the life of the house. Noise from these pumps is a constant throughout the community.
- **Destabilizing of neighbours' foundations** With soil instability and permeability disrupted, neighbours' foundations will be compromised. It is not uncommon to have severe structural damage. Flood insurance becomes difficult or impossible to purchase. Hillsides have collapsed, mudslides have occurred and a neighbourhood is on edge to accommodate these dangerous builds.
- **Lack of accountability** The RNFP believes flood mapping is an exact science, they stand alone in the scientific world and the insurance world. Flood maps do not start and stop at lot lines, they are constantly changing and the outdated flood plain maps that the RNFP uses are obsolete. The fact that the RNFP does not require soil sampling when they green-light Iceberg houses, endangers our community. People have asked if City departments and the Committee of Adjustment can be sued for physically endangering their citizens.
- **Infrastructure damage and wasting taxpayer money** The City has recently spent millions to upgrade our three local bridges so that they are floodproof. In addition substantial time, money and effort have been exerted to upgrade our stormwater system and to dredge the Don River. It seems counterintuitive and wasteful that the City Planning allows these destructive builds while bolstering our infrastructure.
- **Safety concerns** How do you exit a multi-story windowless underground bunker? Flood, fire, and noxious air are real concerns with these types of builds. Is it fair to ask Fire Services, EMS, Police Services or Paramedics to enter these potential death traps and have they been trained to do so?

Hoggs Hollow Tree Watch is concerned with the ease with which these destructive builds are

approved and the lack of oversight on the part of the Provincial government, the Mayor, City Planning and the Committee of Adjustment. It is also very concerning that Urban Forestry and the RNFP are thwarted from executing their responsibilities. Other municipalities around the world have outlawed these types of builds, we hope Toronto will do the same.

Hoggs Hollow Tree Watch

Shannon Rancourt and Laura Lamarche

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Help Us Save Our Tree Canopy
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