



Infrastructure and Environment Committee

February 24, 2026

Re: IE27.8 Tree By-law Review Report

Dear Chair Councillor Paula Fletcher and Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

The first sentence in the Feb 11, 2026, Tree Bylaw Review Report really says it all. “Trees and urban forests are recognized globally as essential natural infrastructure, providing nature-based solutions for climate resilience and enhancing quality of life.”.

Trees are essential to urban living. City Council has acknowledged that in setting the goal of 40% Tree Canopy for Toronto. This report is the first step in stronger Tree Protection that is badly needed.

Because we do not have strong enough tree protection through our bylaws, too often lots that are redeveloped are virtually being clear cut (examples are shown below). We are protecting too few healthy private trees. The current fines and replanting requirements are insufficient to support tree retention. Therefore we support the following aspects of the report:

1. Increasing the number of Private Trees protected by reducing the diameter at breast height (DBH) from 30 cm to at least 20 cm.
2. Introducing a Distinctive Tree Category to strengthen protections for Toronto’s largest healthy trees through amendments to the Private Tree and Ravine Bylaws
3. Establishing a complementary Distinctive Tree Maintenance Incentive Program
4. Revising tree replacement planting ratios (more replacement trees) under the Street Tree Bylaw and the Private Tree Bylaw and increasing Contravention Fees so that tree removals are not merely a “cost of doing business” but there is an actual incentive to retain healthy trees.
5. Advancing work to refine operational practices informed by community and Indigenous engagement, including biodiversity and native species considerations
6. Enhancing public access to tree permit applications prior to tree removals and/or injuries and enhancing public access to contravention outcomes
7. Introducing stump diameter as a secondary measurement tool for enforcement purposes under the Private Tree Bylaw

- 1. Increasing the number of Private Trees protected by reducing the diameter at breast height (DBH) from 30cm to at least 20cm. Many other Municipalities have already done this and Toronto has fallen behind at a time when populations are increasing and there is an urgent need to grow our tree canopy.**

We request that this Committee take action on this ASAP and not wait until 2027 as this is long overdue already. City Council directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to review and report back in the second quarter of 2022 on the diameter required for a tree to be protected under the Private Tree By-law. (IE26.6 – Actions to Reaffirm Toronto’s Tree Canopy Target Dec 15, 2021)

Based on the City data released in January 2020, Long Branch is the hardest hit Neighbourhood for Tree Canopy loss in all of Etobicoke York. Long Branch has experienced the greatest Tree Canopy loss (-43.4%) in all of Ward 3 and all of Etobicoke according to the 2018 Tree Canopy Study conducted by the City of Toronto. It is the 8th hardest hit for Tree Canopy loss in all of the 140 Neighbourhoods studied at the time in Toronto.

2009 - 2018 Toronto Tree Canopy change by Etobicoke-York Ward*

Ward	Neighbourhood	Number	2018	2009	Change	% change
3	Long Branch	19	15.00	26.50	-11.50	-43.4
3	New Toronto	18	15.25	8.70	6.55	75.3
3	Mimico	17	16.49	13.40	3.09	23.1
3	Alderwood	20	26.83	24.70	2.13	8.6
3	Stonegate-Queensway	16	43.40	32.20	11.20	34.8
3	Islington-CityCenter West	14	15.73	15.40	0.33	2.1
3	Kingsway South	15	42.55	46.90	-4.35	-9.3
Total Ward 3			25.04	23.97	1.06	4.4

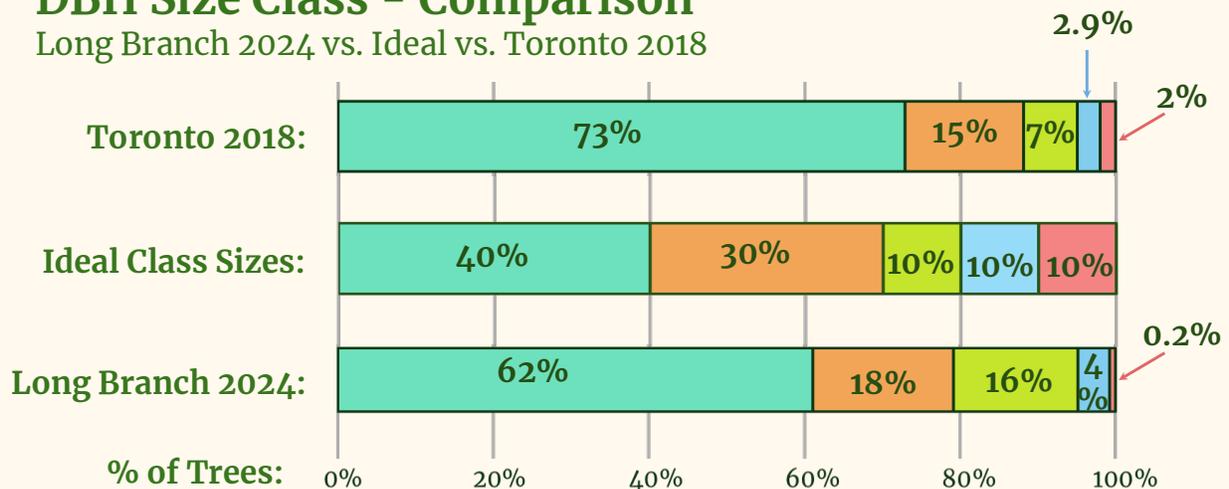
Even when one takes into account the standard deviation associated with the above numbers for Long Branch, it is undeniable that our neighbourhood is losing Tree Canopy which is contrary to the objectives that the City has set to grow the tree canopy cover to 40%.

2. Introduce a Distinctive Tree Category to strengthen protections for Toronto's largest health trees.
3. Establish a complementary Distinctive Tree Maintenance Incentive Program

Although this would impact very few trees in the City of Toronto (as seen by the data from the 2018 Tree Canopy study below and our own Long Branch Tree Inventory), our largest trees provide the greatest benefits to the community and deserve greater protection.

DBH Size Class - Comparison

Long Branch 2024 vs. Ideal vs. Toronto 2018



DBH Ranges: ■ <15cm ■ 15-30cm ■ 30-70cm ■ 70-130cm ■ >130cm

4. Revising tree replacement planting ratios (more replacement trees) under the Street Tree Bylaw and the Private Tree Bylaw and increasing Contravention Fees so that tree removals are not merely a “cost of doing business” but there is an actual incentive to retain healthy trees.
5. Advancing work to refine operational practices informed by community and Indigenous engagement, including biodiversity and native species considerations
6. Enhancing public access to tree permit applications prior to tree removals and/or injuries and enhancing public access to contravention outcomes
7. Introducing stump diameter as a secondary measurement tool for enforcement purposes under the Private Tree Bylaw

Two recent examples of re-developed lots are shown below. No replacement trees are yet in sight and the 2 city trees (one on each lot) have been removed and still have not been replaced. This is not sustainable.

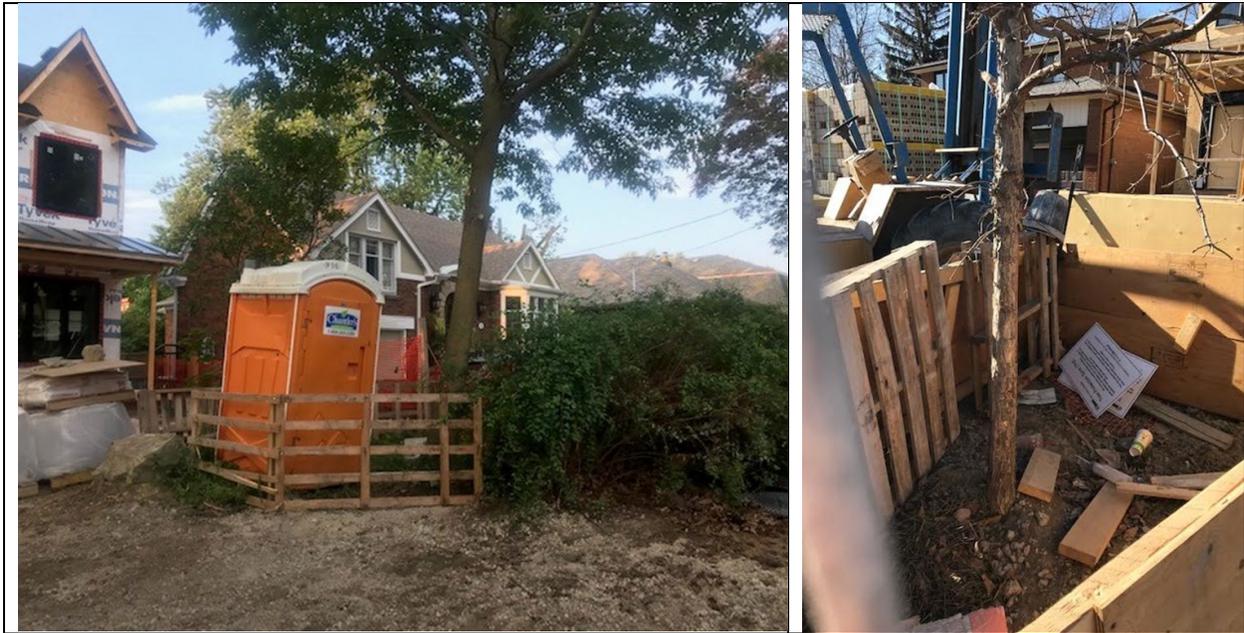
Figure 1: Before, during and after construction in Long Branch. The one protected City Tree has since been removed from the site.



Figure 2: Before, during and after construction on another site in Long Branch. The beautiful magnolia city owned tree was supposed to be protected and was illegally removed to allow space for a porta potty. No replacement tree exists.



Figure 3: Two of multiple examples of unsatisfactory tree protection during construction. On the left the Tree Protection Zone was used to place the Porta Potty. On the right the Tree Protection Zone was used to place construction rubble.



Other times the Tree Protection hording is removed when it is “in the way” and put up again after large equipment is moved over the area.

We absolutely recognize that Toronto needs to grow its housing stock and homeowners have a right to renovate their properties but we strongly believe that it should not be at the expense of removing healthy trees.

In South Etobicoke we have many large building sites, already approved for housing but that are still vacant with no activity. Looking at just 3 of these sites along the Lake Shore Boulevard Avenue there are over 25 hectares (62 acres) of vacant land that was cleared years ago of buildings and are already approved for over 10,000 housing units. None of the recommendations in this report are a barrier to building new housing in South Etobicoke on those sites. Increasing the number of protected private trees by lowering the diameter of protected private trees are not standing in the way of any of that housing.

Our trees need our help. Every one of our trees make up our green urban forest and provide so many benefits to our current and future residents. Below are what we consider the Top 10 Benefits that our trees provide.



TOP 10 BENEFITS TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

40% TREE CANOPY
IS OUR GOAL

1. TREES KEEP US COOLER

A big shade tree can reduce the surrounding temperature by 10 to 15 degrees. Trees can reduce the "heat island effect" caused by heat stored in paving and masonry buildings.

2. TREES HELP HANDLE STORM WATER

Trees collect rain on their leaves and channel heavy rainfall to the soil. Together, a community's trees reduce the water that flows into storm sewers.

3. TREES INCREASE PROPERTY VALUES

Property values are increased by 7% - 21% plus in neighbourhoods with mature trees and well landscaped yards.

4. TREES MAKE COMMUNITIES HEALTHIER

Trees improves physical health, mental health and well-being of urban residents. Equitable, frequent, nearby access is especially important for children.

5. TREES MITIGATE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The total amount of carbon currently stored in Toronto's urban forest is estimated at 1.1 million tonnes. This is equivalent to the amount of carbon emitted by 700,000 cars each year.

6. TREES SHELTER AND FEED WILDLIFE

Birds and other wildlife live and find food in trees. Trees' flowers provide pollen and nectar to feed bees and other insects we depend upon to pollinate

7. TREES PAY US BACK

The 11.5 million trees in Toronto's urban forest is valued at over \$7 billion. Each year, these trees provide at least \$55 million worth of services to our environment and our communities.

TREES NEED OUR CARE

Every one of our trees make up a vast, green urban forest. Collectively, they multiply the value of each tree. The urban forest is as important a part of our communities' infrastructure as streets and sewers.

8. TREES CLEAN THE AIR WE BREATHE

Toronto's trees remove about 972 tonnes of pollution from our air each year. This includes small particulate matter which has serious implications to human health. Areas with fewer trees and/or only small trees may receive less pollution mitigation benefits than areas with larger trees and more urban forest cover.

9. TREES REDUCE NOISE POLLUTION

A properly designed buffer of trees and shrubs can reduce noise by 50%.

10. BIG TREES ARE WORTH MORE

Large, mature trees provide the greatest benefits. It takes many years for a newly planted tree to provide as many services as a big tree. Policies and planning that preserve large trees are a long-term investment in community well-being and prosperity.

www.longbranchtreefest.ca

Ref: 2018 Toronto Tree Canopy Study
Green City: Why Nature Matters to Health
TD Economics Urban Forests: The Value of Trees in the City of Toronto

We ask this Committee to support the recommendations for stronger tree protection in this report and accelerate the actions wherever possible.

Sincerely,

Judy Gibson

Chair, Tree Canopy Preservation and Enhancement Committee
Long Branch Neighbourhood Association

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