

November 4, 2025

To: The Mayor and Members of Council, Town of the Blue Mountains  
Adam Smith, CAO,  
Alan Pacheco, Director of Operations

From: Betty Muise, Founder and Volunteer Manager, Tree Trust TBM

Re: Request for accountability regarding preventable tree removals in TWR project

Mature trees in Thornbury West have been removed unnecessarily due to a failure to implement tree protection measures, as directed by Council, during the Thornbury West Reconstruction (TWR) project. Tree Trust TBM is requesting an explanation for this failure, so that future unnecessary tree removals can be prevented, and best-practice tree protection measures can be applied consistently and reliably in our Town.

During a four-year period from late 2021 to the present, Tree Trust TBM communicated directly with Town Staff and/or Council on more than 20 occasions to advocate for best-practice tree protection as part of the TWR project. Communication included deputations, letters, email, site visits, discussions with TWR managers and contractors, and completion of an expert arborist's assessment, prepared by Arboreal Tree Care, that identified healthy mature trees and opportunities for protection through design alterations and construction practices. A complete timeline and record of communication can be provided upon request.

TBM Staff and Council responded positively to the efforts of Tree Trust, and to concerns expressed by local Thornbury West residents, which reflect the broad interest in tree protection expressed repeatedly in numerous Town-led public engagement processes. The Town's response included the following Council Motions and Staff recommendations:

Council Motion passed on December 13, 2021:

*"That Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains receives the deputation of Betty Muise, TBM Tree Trust, regarding the Thornbury West Reconstruction Project, and directs staff to include opportunities for tree preservation in the followup staff report"*

From Staff Report CSOPS.22.010:

*"Staff ask Council to confirm that they expect all efforts to retain trees should be employed on this project. Because of unknown issues that might arise, Staff recommended increasing the construction budget by \$250,000 for additional efforts to retain trees."*

Council Motion passed on March 14, 2022:

*“That Council direct staff to include additional construction techniques when working around trees and direct that \$250,000 will be segregated from the Construction Contingency Budget, for working around trees.”*

Despite Council direction and ample information regarding tree protection opportunities, several mature, healthy trees along Elma Street South had to be removed this fall due to *insufficient care during construction*. Most of the tree care practices recommended by Tree Trust and cited in Staff Report 22.010 were *not* implemented.

None of the recommended tree preservation practices were novel or unusual. Examples include installation of Tree Protection Zones (TPZs), excavation around root zones with a hydro-vac to determine root location, use of sharp, sterilized tools when cutting roots, jogs in sidewalks, structural and engineered soils to ramp sidewalks over root plates, etc. Preemptive options applied one season before construction such as nutrient supplementation and proactive canopy reduction were also not implemented.

The trees on Elma Street were evaluated as the easiest and most straightforward to protect. Additional tree preservation options on Louisa and Elma Street, although possible and requested repeatedly by Tree Trust, were NOT pursued because of the need to alter major service locations or Council decisions about the number and design of sidewalks. In other words, even a practical, modest initiative to preserve mature trees with no significant impact on project design didn't happen.

Of course, concerned community members as well as Tree Trust volunteers and supporters, are deeply disappointed. We did everything we could, including extensive multi-year efforts to work collaboratively with Staff and Council, to protect trees. Council provided clear direction, including a budget allocation, to make tree protection part of the TWR project. And yet even the most straightforward practices that are being implemented routinely in municipalities across Ontario were not applied.

The only option at this point is to understand exactly why this failure occurred and ensure that this does not happen again in our Town. An understanding of what went wrong is necessary to fix the problem going forward. More infrastructure upgrading projects are already underway and can be anticipated in the future. Anything less than consistent and reliable implementation of best-practice tree protection measures is unacceptable.

Tree Trust TBM is therefore requesting a full accounting of the failure to protect trees as part of the TWR project and the immediate preparation of a detailed and robust set of procedures and practices for tree preservation associated with Town infrastructure projects.

Betty Muise

Tree Trust TBM Founder and Volunteer Manager



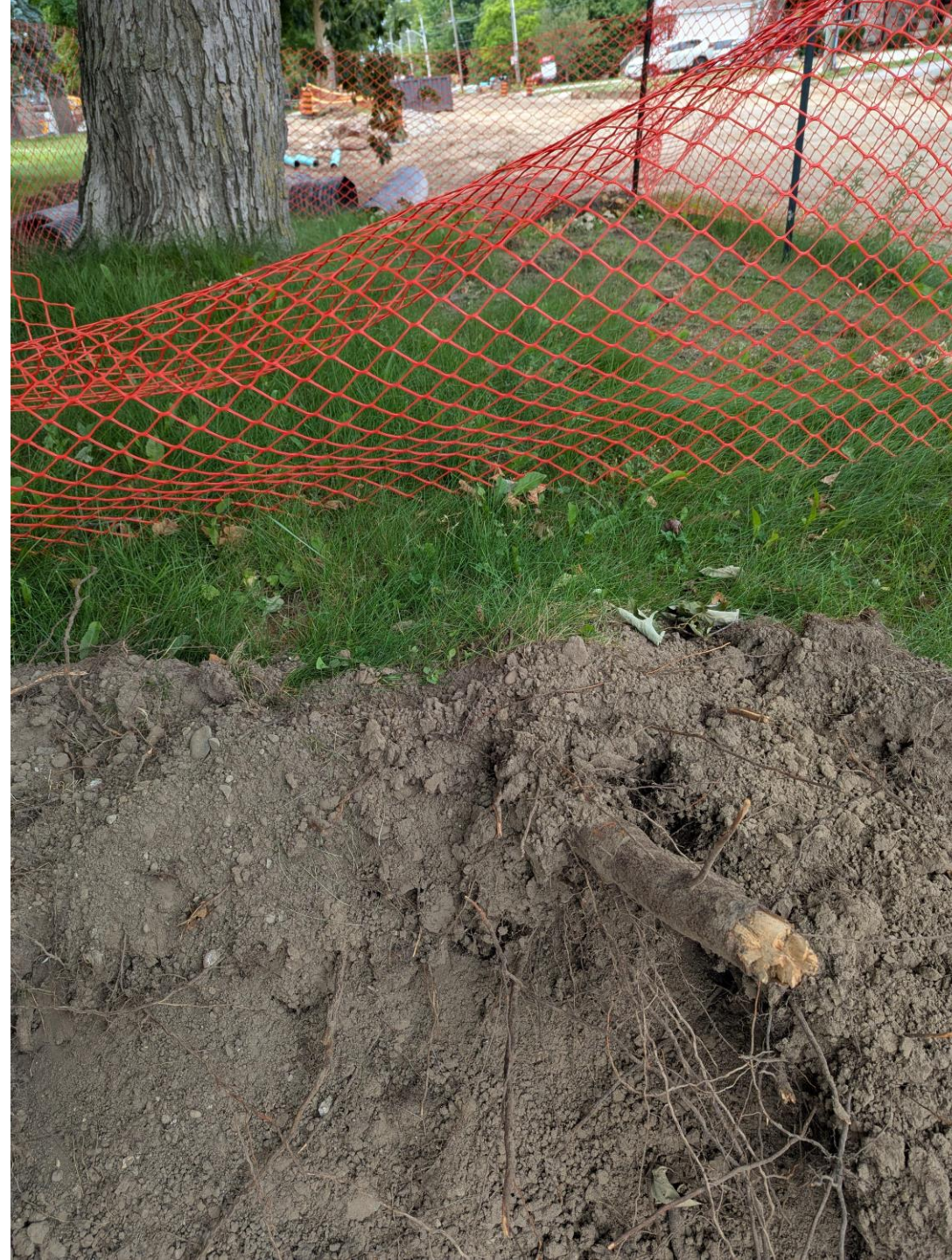
Recommended tree preservation practices associated with the TWR Project were not implemented and preventable, unnecessary tree removals have occurred.



- ✓ Council Motion passed December 13, 2021: *“That Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains receives the deputation of Betty Muise, TBM Tree Trust, regarding the Thornbury West Reconstruction Project, and directs staff to include opportunities for tree preservation in the followup staff report”*
- ✓ Staff Report CSOPS. 22.010, March 1, 2022: *“Staff ask Council to confirm that they expect staff to set a priority for tree preservation and to employ all reasonable efforts to retain trees within the project study area.. Due to unknown issues that might arise, Staff recommend increasing the construction budget by \$250,000 for additional efforts to retain trees.”*
- ✓ Council Motion passed March 14, 2022: *“That Council direct staff to include additional construction techniques when working around trees and that \$250,000 be segregated from the Construction Contingency Budget, for working around trees.”*



- Despite Council direction and ample information regarding tree protection opportunities, several mature, healthy trees along Elma Street South were removed this fall due to *insufficient care during construction*. Tree care practices recommended by Tree Trust and cited in a Staff Report 22.010 were *not* implemented.
- None of the recommended tree preservation practices were novel or unusual. Examples include installation of Tree Protection Zones (TPZs), excavation around root zones with an Air Spade to determine root location, use of sharp, sterilized tools when cutting roots, etc.
- Further, the trees on Elma Street were evaluated as the easiest and most straightforward to protect. Additional tree preservation options on Louisa Street and Elma Street were not pursued because of the need to alter major service locations or Council decisions about the number and design of sidewalks and parking spaces.
- In other words, even a practical, modest initiative to preserve mature trees with no significant impact on project design didn't happen.











- The only option at this point is to understand exactly why this failure occurred and ensure that this does not happen again in our Town. An understanding of what went wrong is necessary to fix the problem going forward. More infrastructure upgrading projects are already underway and can be anticipated in the future.
- Anything less than consistent and reliable implementation of best-practice tree protection measures is unacceptable.
- Tree Trust TBM is therefore requesting a full accounting of the failure to protect trees as part of the TWR project and the immediate preparation of a detailed and robust set of procedures and practices for tree preservation associated with Town infrastructure projects.