

**REPORT TO:** Mayor and Council

**RE:** “Wash Brook floodwater containment and intensity mitigation project” group consultation

**PREPARED BY:**

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**Introduction**

On Monday, August 16, I facilitated a group consultation to discuss the proposed “Wash Brook floodwater containment and intensity mitigation project”.

In attendance were:

- homeowners affected by the disastrous flood of October 2016
- members of the Baille Ard Recreation Association
- members of the Save The Baille Ard Forest group
- CBRM Engineering staff (Wayne MacDonald, Matt Viva)
- consulting engineers from CBCL Ltd (Darren McLean, and Alexander Wilson (via Teams))
- Councillor Glenn Paruch
- and Mayor Amanda McDougall.

In the two weeks leading up to the group consultation, I also met one-on-one with each individual participant (minus the CBCL consultants).

Some of the affected homeowners lost their homes in the 2016 flood. Some, and I think I can say this without exaggeration, nearly lost their lives. Others narrowly saved their homes but now live in a state of constant fear and anxiety as a result of that event which can only be described as traumatic for them. Some of the homeowners who lost their homes have relocated elsewhere in the area, or, in one case, rebuilt on the same property. Still others who lost their homes have since moved out of the flood plain.

I think it’s important to pause and dwell for a moment on the flood of 2016, to acknowledge the severity of the event, and the struggle that some homeowners experienced afterwards in trying to relocate, repair, or rebuild their homes. I empathize with those who lost so much. I struggle to imagine the experience of nearly drowning trying to save your neighbour, and the ongoing fear that, every time it rains, it’s going to happen again.

In our one-on-ones, and in the group meeting, I tried to be sensitive to the experience of flood victims, and I will try to do so here as well.

But having acknowledged the severity of the 2016 flood, and with respect to those still understandably traumatized by it, I will for the most part set it aside in the following discussion. The reasons being:

First, the 2016 flood was an outlier, the result of a 1-in-2000-year rainfall. (This, as we all know from previous presentations, doesn’t mean that it won’t happen for another 2000 years. It means that,

statistically speaking, every year there is only a 1 in 2000 chance of it happening again. Not impossible in any given year, only improbable.)

But secondly, and perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this project: the 2016 flood resulted from rainfall of a magnitude that this project does not seek to mitigate. In fact, 2016 saw rainfall of a magnitude that perhaps no reasonably affordable design project could effectively protect homes from. Of course, any mitigation project will provide benefits in the form of storm protection to some extent, by helping the Wash Brook react better to precipitation events. But the proposed project we are talking about seeks to effectively mitigate stormwater runoff from storms involving 1-in-20-year or 1-in-100-year rainfalls.

### **Scope of this report**

It is not within the scope of this report to suggest alternative solutions to the one proposed by CBCL and recommended in CBRM Engineering staff's issue paper. Nor is it within the scope of this report to debate the effectiveness of that proposed solution.

The main purpose of this report is to show that the consultative process used to arrive at the current solution was lacking, and to suggest – with 20/20 hindsight – how projects in the future might proceed differently.

In other words, this report is about policy and process, not about people.

This report is not meant as a criticism of CBRM staff, or its consultants, seeing as it wasn't really anyone's primary job to consult the public – the way it is my job now.

So I hope that, going forward, you will hold me to the high standard that I am about to describe, but not think that I am trying to hold anyone else to this standard retroactively.

This is simply to illustrate how we got to where we are, and to imagine how we might avoid arriving at a similar place with future projects.

So this report is primarily concerned with the processes used by CBRM Staff and Council when listening to, and communicating with, and working with, the public.

So while it takes the form of a critique of the community consultation process done specifically in relation to this project, it should be read as making general recommendations on how to develop policy around community consultation and community engagement in the future.

### **Where Are We?**

So, first, where are we? And how did we get here?

The bulk of the public consultation that was done around this project consisted of a "Town Hall" or "Open House" type event held at Centre 200 shortly after the disastrous flood of 2016.

At that meeting, a potential solution involving building floodwater containment infrastructure in the forest area of the Baille Ard trails was already in draft form. Members of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) were present to assure attendees that funding was forthcoming, and something would be done to protect their homes in the future from the kind of damage that they were, in most cases, still reeling from.

Conceptual drawings of the proposed solution were shared with the public.

Later, these or similar drawings were shared with Council. (I will return later in this report to the confusion that arose from sharing those “conceptual” drawings so early in the consultative process.)

Some homeowners who were affected by the flood – and who, at the time, still lived in the area – were, of course, in favour of any plan that would address the flooding.

Members of the Baille Ard Recreation Association, and some other affected homeowners in the area (including some who had also lost their homes), were shocked to see the plan involved turning the Baille Ard forest and trail system into a retention pond.

Based on the proposed solution, CBRM began to pursue funding, and apply for provincial and federal approvals and permits.

The Baille Ard Recreation Association began and continued to lobby for a reduction of the size of the proposed berms, and at the beginning of 2020, CBRM Engineering Staff met with the Baille Ard Recreation Association and came to a compromise that saw the construction scaled back by half.

This reduction simultaneously brought the project in line with the CBRM’s budget.

This is a highly abridged version of events, I concede.

It doesn’t do justice to the time and effort that Wayne MacDonald and Matt Viva have put into meeting with members of the Baille Ard Recreation Association, and later, the Save The Baille Ard Forest group.

But the consensus from those groups, especially the former who have been stewards of the Baille Ard trails for decades, is that they were always only able to react to more-or-less finished plans at every stage of the project, rather than being included as true stakeholders in the creative solution-making and democratic decision-making processes.

Again, I’ll emphasize here that this was primarily because CBRM **policy** dictated how and when community stakeholders should be consulted, and that the process left this stakeholder group feeling excluded. In fact, the “Save The Baille Ard Forest” group formed as a result of the Baille Ard Recreation Association, and other affected members of the community, as a result of this exclusion.

The Save The Baille Ard Forest group included and consulted with representatives of:

- ACAP
- and community members with backgrounds in:
  - ecology and natural resource management
  - as well as social sciences and education
  - and – yes – water resource engineering and hydrogeology.

The group included neighbours living in the flood zone, including some who also lost their homes in 2016.

Some members work for various levels of government or other consulting firms and wished to remain unnamed and in the background. Granted, that makes it hard to fully evaluate its legitimacy.

But, whatever the case may be, the group brought to the table community members with expertise that they felt was missing from the conversation.

The group took what they termed a “watershed-level”, holistic approach to the problem that combined the following:

- holding water in residential yards and businesses, as well as public spaces;
- no-build zones;
- protecting individual areas and moving vulnerable buildings;
- wetland restoration and large-scale tree planting;
- and updates to land-use policy and limits on forest activity and development that increases runoff.

(And in my written report it includes a reference to the Municipal Planning Strategy, from 2004, which states the Regional Municipality will:

“impose development constraints” and

“refrain from considering development proposals that would reduce the amount of permeable ground surface,” and,

“regulate the amount of land that can be impervious to stormwater absorption.”)

The Save The Baille Ard Forest group even felt compelled to hire, with the help of a crowdfunding campaign, their own consultant, an ecologist Dr Nicholas Hill.

Dr Hill worked with a local scientist (a Master's student at the Dalhousie School for Resource Management and Environmental Studies) to produce a report, which is included as an Appendix to this report. It is included not as an endorsement of an alternative solution to staff's recommendation, but as evidence that a legitimate stakeholder group felt their input wasn't being heard and sought outside assistance to more vigorously convey their message.

(It says in my written report that I wasn't sure if Dr Hill's report had ever made its way before Council. Wayne MacDonald did some digging and found that it did, in a roundabout way, when a separate group presented to Council on a proposed Wash Brook Greenway Link (trail system) on February of 2020.)

In any case, the CBRM Engineering staff says that all alternative solutions were in fact considered, and subsequently rejected, with sufficient reason; whereas the Baille Ard Recreation Association and Save The Baille Forest group disagree.

Here again I'd like to emphasize how it is the process that being critiqued here. Had the Council at the time instead recommended the creation of a multi-stakeholder multi-disciplinary working group from the beginning (and I'll say more about this later in my report), that group may have arrived at the same conclusion you currently have:

- that the Baille Ard area is the only place to physically contain a sufficient amount of rainwater to mitigate flood damage in the area
- and that this approach is the only physically possible and fiscally possible solution.

But if the solution had been arrived at via a more open, transparent, democratic process, it's less likely you would have the acrimony and frustration you currently have.

And not just bad feelings from the groups opposed to the construction. Because while negotiations were happening between CBRM Engineering Staff and the Baille Ard proponents, there were several other homeowners – who were in favour of the construction project, and who, at this point in the process thought, rightly so, that it was a done deal – they felt shut out from what they perceived to be negotiations exclusively between the CBRM and the Baille Ard Recreation Association.

Negotiations which appeared to them to result in compromise after compromise. And that those compromises did nothing but, forgive the pun, water down the efficacy of the project – even unreasonably changing the stated goal of the original plan, namely flood mitigation, to a new and less effective strategy that sought to balance maximizing flood protection with minimizing damage to the forest.

This felt like a slap in the face for the affected homeowners who were in favour of the construction: how could the demands of what effectively amounts to a lobby group for the forest and trail system trump the needs of homeowners whose lives continue to be affected on a regular basis by flooding?

It also wasn't effectively communicated to those homeowners, nor I suppose the public in general, that the timeline for this project – which the homeowners found frustratingly, even infuriatingly, slow – was not the result of the negotiations with the Baille Ard Recreation Association and the Save The Baille Ard Forest group, but rather had to do with the provincial and federal approval and permitting processes.

Nor was it effectively communicated to them or the public that the project may very well not go ahead, even as is, due to that same approval and permitting process.

So:

- the Baille Ard Recreation Association felt they were always on the defensive, trying to protect as much ground (literally) as possible while being forced to concede to what they felt was the best bad option;
- whereas the affected homeowners in favour of the construction only saw the Baille Ard Recreation Association receiving concession after concession, while their own needs were largely ignored.

This again is not a reflection of Staff's hard work, nor necessarily a reflection of this or previous Councils. It is mainly a communications issue that will conceivably be addressed in future projects, with the help of my position, and/or possibly in the form of increased communications capacity further down the line.

But for the time being, the result is, arguably, a plan that no one is happy with:

- according to one group, it still does too much in the way of damage to the forest area where the Baille Ard trails are located;
- and according to the other, it doesn't do enough in the way of preventing and mitigating potential floodwater damage to their homes and businesses.

It is a fine example of the saying that a good compromise is one where everyone is equally dissatisfied (which, like most quotes, is either from Winston Churchill or Larry David).

On top of all this is an as-yet unmentioned stakeholder group, namely business owners in the Townsend Street area, around and including the Steel City, who continue to be under the impression that the proposed project will significantly improve flood conditions. Whereas the Engineers estimate an average improvement somewhere around 8% for that area of town.

And, of course, in the middle of all this are Wayne MacDonald and Matt Viva, whom I simultaneously pity and commend for their perseverance and attempts to appease all sides, to the best of their ability, whether or not those attempts are fully appreciated.

### **Community Consultation**

Now imagine, not an alternative solution, but an alternative process for arriving at a solution.

Instead of directing Staff to proceed in the direction they did, what if Council had struck a multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary working group from the beginning.

The first order of business in striking such a group would be to identify who needs to be at the table.

- Obviously, you would include affected homeowners and business owners. (Note at this early, hypothetical stage, we wouldn't be categorizing affected homeowners into groups for or against the construction, since no solutions would have been considered at this early, hypothetical stage.)
- Obviously, since the Baille Ard forest and trail system is an integral part of the watershed, and it has been a valued community asset for decades, and there is exists a stewardship group that manages it, you would include the Baille Ard Recreation Association. (Note at this early, hypothetical stage we wouldn't be including the Save The Baille Ard Forest group since they wouldn't have existed at this early, hypothetical stage.)
- Obviously, you would include staff from CBRM Engineering & Public Works.
- Also, staff from Parks, Grounds & Buildings since there are CBRM facilities like Centennial Arena located in the centre of the flood zone.
- Also, staff from Recreation – since now might be a good time to look at how potential flood mitigation efforts like restoring wetlands and reducing impermeable surfaces might tie into your active transportation plan.
- Also, the Councillors for the areas within the watershed/flood plain.
- A representative from St Marguerite Bourgeoys church.
- A representative from Brookland Elementary.
- An educator from Brookland Elementary – who might occasionally bring students to observe, or even participate in, the group: such as science students who could learn about watershed management, or social science students who could witness firsthand how democratic, inclusive decision-making happens at the community level.
- In addition to the Engineering Sciences already mentioned, you would include expertise from other sciences such as ecology, habitat management, biodiversity – and related industrial fields. These experts would likely come from CBU and the Verschuren Centre, respectively.
- Representatives from ACAP and the Clean Foundation which are working at the intersection of many of these fields.

- Indigenous representation, because even though the Municipality doesn't have a legal obligation to consult First Nations in the same way that federal governments and provincial departments must, we have an ethical obligation if we are going to effectively put any action behind the words of land statements and the like.
- A representative from the insurance industry. Arguably, no industry has a better grasp on what's in store for us all as a result of unfolding climate chaos.
- And lastly a communications person like myself whose job it would be to communicate back to Council and to the public.

Beyond this core working group, you would have representatives from the other levels of government, and representatives from the provincial and federal departments that are responsible for approvals, permits, First Nations consultation, etc. Lastly, you might include fire and rescue officials, since first-responders were the ones floating people out of their homes in 2016. And this group would bring in consultants, for example CBCL Engineers, wherever additional expertise was needed.

Many of these stakeholders were in fact present at the 2017 Town Hall mentioned earlier. And many of them have been consulted in one form or another through CBRM Engineering's ongoing work.

But without a formal process for effectively including all members in the solution-making and decision-making process, it is unclear how much of a contribution these stakeholder groups were expected or allowed to make.

Now that you've identified who needs to be at the table – and after this group has done the self-reflection necessary to see if anyone is still missing – you can imagine going around the table and the conversation going a little like this:

"Part of the plan involves storing excess rainwater by constructing large containers. Where could we put such containers?"

The representative from the church then says, "Well, you can't very well bulldoze the church and build the container there, so the church is off the table."

The representative from the school says, "Well, you can't move the school, so that's off the table."

The representative from the Baille Ard Recreation Association says, "The Baille Ard is a beloved social asset that we've stewarded for three decades, so that's off the table."

And so on.

Once everything that needs to be is "off the table", what's left is a set of constraints within which the group must work toward a creative solution.

This is obviously an extreme, if not absurd, oversimplification. And indeed, anything might be put back on the table. But only through deliberation by and consultation with the directly affected stakeholders.

It is a fact of community engagement practices that when people feel heard and valued and part of the process, as opposed to apart from it, they are more likely to make unselfish sacrifices for the common good.

In fact, and I mentioned this earlier:

This hypothetical multi-stakeholder multi-disciplinary working group may have arrived at the same conclusion you currently have — that the Baille Ard area is the only place to physically contain a sufficient amount of rainwater to effectively mitigate flood damage in the area, and that this approach is the only physically possible and fiscally possible solution. But if the solution had been arrived at via an open, transparent, democratic process, it's less likely you would also have the acrimony and frustration you currently have on all sides of the issue.

As the communications person in this hypothetical group, I might start by developing a survey to determine whether the affected homeowners we've identified, or who have self-identified as stakeholders, are representative of the broader affected community, and to what extent. For example, before trying to gauge the general level of community support for any proposed project, it might be useful to start with this question: How many homes are we talking about, that were (a) affected by the 2016 flood, (b) are still standing, and (c) continue to experience flooding? And (d) what extent or severity of flooding do those homes continue to experience, and how often? And (e) what property-level non-structural flood risk mitigation measures have those homeowners taken, such as those included in the appendices to the CBCL report and mentioned on page 26, section 4.2, item 2) which recommends a "Public Education Campaign to provide residents in potentially flooded areas with information they can use to flood-proof their properties and prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding conditions."

This is not to diminish the pain and suffering of any of the affected homeowners: but presumably if it were only one homeowner, the conversation might never have moved beyond how best to relocate that individual? Of course, we know we're talking about homeowners plural, but how many? And where is the threshold at which we stop considering the option that CBCL Engineers called "retreat"?

A community consultation process might start with this survey or one like it. It would further develop into a plan for communicating with Council, and a strategy for communicating with the public. I, or another facilitator, might also be engaged to help the group shape its terms of reference. For example, in addition to understanding its goal, how does the group build consensus? What does it do if it can't reach consensus? In addition to the question of how it reports to Council and the public, how does it communicate internally? and so on. And what are the principles the group and its members aspire to? For example, one such principle might be 'civility', which I mention here solely as an excuse to share this brilliant definition of civility which comes from the Institute for Civility in Government: it says, "Civility is claiming and caring for one's identity, one's needs, and one's beliefs, without degrading someone else's in the process."

All of this would happen before a draft proposal was shared with the public.

I realize, at the time, in 2017 shortly after the flood, Council was dealing with distraught and even traumatized individuals who were desperate for a solution, anything, asap.

I also realize that what I have just described represents a different opinion of how projects might go forward, and that in addition to it being purely theoretical as it applies to this particular issue at this late stage of the process, it is also simply a philosophically different approach, one with which staff may disagree, one with which Councillors may disagree. Depending on how you look at it, it represents either a new way of doing things, or a very old way, but either way, it is a different way compared to the way things were done in this instance. This doesn't make it the right way, or even necessarily a better way.

But I suspect that if we disagree it will be on this philosophical point, namely how much, or how little, to involve the community in the solution-making and decision-making process.

But however you feel about this hypothetical scenario, it matters who is at the table.

### **“Purely Topographical”**

I mentioned earlier that sharing the conceptual drawings at an early stage of this process led to confusion in the community. It led to the Baille Ard Recreation Association feeling like they were only being communicated to, not consulted with; and later, when they were more effectively consulted, the homeowners in favour of the construction saw those consultations as merely a series of unreasonable compromises, diminishing the original more effective plan.

What, in fact, was the value of sharing conceptual drawings which the consultants themselves described, at the time, as “all essentially a sketch on a piece of paper” and “of course there hasn’t been any involvement of the community yet” and therefore “has no value other than how much it can reduce those flood lines” from a purely technical standpoint.

The Engineers took what they themselves described as a “purely topographical” analysis, meaning they looked at the land and its physical features. Based on elevation, slope, and similar factors, they found an area – where the Baille Ard forest and trails just happen be – that they judged to be the ideal location to store excess rainwater.

Of course it makes perfect sense for the science to lead the way on this project. Of course. Of course of course of course.

But a multi-stakeholder multi-disciplinary working group may have had some of those negotiations with the Baille Ard stewards and with the homeowners at a much earlier stage, and in way that valued the other expertise around the table. And, I’ll say it again, it may have arrived at the same conclusion you currently have — that the Baille Ard area is the only place to physically contain a sufficient amount of rainwater to effectively mitigate flood damage in the area, and that this approach is the only physically possible and fiscally possible solution. But if the solution had been arrived at via a more open, transparent, democratic process, it’s less likely you would also have the acrimony and frustration you currently have on all sides of the issue.

### **Purely topographical**

Again, I’ll ask you to imagine a counter-factual scenario, where instead of the Baille Ard forest and trail system there was instead a housing development, or an apartment complex, or a shopping mall. It’s unlikely (though I supposed not impossible?) that the engineers would have said something to the effect of: ‘We’ve found the perfect place to store rainwater, right under these buildings, we just need to move them out of the way.’

You could argue that this would be more due to the cost of moving buildings than the notion that the built environment is valued more than the natural environment. But it seems the point at which we find ourselves, where the various stakeholders have reached an incommensurable difference, is not around a technical question, but a question of value, by which I mean, what the stakeholders value.

I don't think it would surprise anyone to learn that engineers don't necessarily see the forest as having implicit value – as being valuable in and of itself. And I'm not arguing that they'd be right or wrong in their assessment. This is not a judgement so much as an observation: that when they repeatedly call the Baille Ard “undeveloped”, it implies the forest is a housing-subdivision-in-waiting, an apartment-complex-in-waiting, or a shopping-mall-in-waiting. Granted, they might simply argue that ‘developed’ vs ‘undeveloped’ are technical terms meaning ‘there are buildings here, and none there’.

But for those speaking on behalf of the forest and trail system, the Engineering evaluation of the area as “undeveloped” appears to extend beyond mere semantics.

To extend this point, very little has been made of the Baille Ard forest and trail system's explicit value, namely the natural services the forest provides such as air filtration and air temperature cooling, water filtration, habitat for fish and birds and other animals, and of course the recreational benefits, physical-health benefits, and mental- health benefits that the forest and trail system provide together.

And virtually nothing has been said about the economic value a forest may provide in the future in the form of carbon offsetting and carbon credits, considerations which are sure to become increasingly prominent and important with each passing report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

When one stakeholder lists these assets of the forest and trail system, other stakeholders call it “bias”. Another word for it is perspective. You might also call it a lens. Or you might simply call these facts.

Regardless of what you call it, for the engineers and certainly for those seeking to protect their homes at any cost, the Baille Ard forest and trail system has less comparative value (i.e., when measured against their homes).

Again, this is not a judgement, simply an observation – and one that I for one find very easy to understand! Even if you disagree, simply imagine if it were your home, and most people will see where they're coming from! I personally would hate to be in their position.

Whereas for those seeking to protect the Baille Ard forest and trail system, its value is immeasurable. I can also easily understand their position. If you disagree that the forest has economic value and explicit value, let alone implicit value, just think of whichever place in the world you call sacred or mystical, and swap that place for Baille Ard in your mind, and you'll perhaps get a sense of where the proponents of the Baille Ard are coming from.

But so if some of the stakeholders have come to an incommensurable disagreement, it's because we simply can't put the homes of affected homeowners on one side of a scale, and the forest and trail system on the other. And even if we could I'm not suggesting they would balance each other out. The point is that the two can't usefully be compared at all precisely because the results of our measurement are contingent on what we value.

So, it matters greatly who is at the solution-making and decision-making table, not just for the expertise they bring, but for the ‘lens’ through which they see the world.

### **Community Engagement Principles**

This is where, finally, the principles of community engagement are useful, and I will briefly summarize them:

We start from the position that everyone involved cares deeply about their communities and wants to make them better.

We recognize that this is an extremely complex problem and requires multiple solutions.

Therefore, we need people from all backgrounds to contribute.

Not just because it's the ethical thing to do, but because we will need multiple perspectives, multiple lenses.

When everyone is included, at the appropriate stage of the process, and their relevant expertise is valued, everyone benefits.

Otherwise, people who are shut out of the process try to find their way in somehow anyway, and everything then tends toward confusion, both for those already at the table and those excluded from it.

By coming to the table together, a multi-stakeholder multi-disciplinary working group would develop relationships from which would develop trust, and when working relationships and working trust combine, new ideas emerge that otherwise wouldn't have.

Different – and differing – points of view can lead to a new common ground that would otherwise have been missed, leading to better solutions that would never have otherwise even been considered.

By giving more voice to more of the affected stakeholders, you create a sense of community ownership and autonomy, which might lead to more and bigger actions down the road, changing our community for the better at scale.

### **Purpose Going Forward**

To conclude.

In the one-on-one meetings, and in the group consultation, I heard anecdotal testimony from affected homeowners who were in favour of the construction that there were many others like them (and I will point out here that the two members of this group in attendance at Monday's meeting do not feel my report represents their views fairly);

I likewise heard anecdotal testimony from affected homeowners who were against the construction that there were many others like them.

And I heard anecdotal testimony from the Baille Ard Recreation Association members that there are countless users of the trails who are against the construction.

But it should be asked: how many of those trail users would be willing to measure their enjoyment of the trails versus the health and safety of the homeowners affected by frequent flooding?

Who knows.

Without having performed the kind of surveying described earlier, it is impossible to know to what extent the community members interviewed were actually representative of the wider stakeholder

groups and the wider community. They think there were. I assume the Mayor and the Councillor present think they were. But without data we're all sort of guessing.

What I also heard from stakeholders on all sides of the issue was that they have been in constant contact with their Councillor, or in some cases, that they have been in frequent contact with all of the Councillors, so as for the opinions of the individuals at this consultation meeting you probably already know where they stand. My job isn't, as I see it, to report to you the individual desires and preferences of your constituents, which would simply be to replicate the job you are already doing. My job, going forward, is, in part, to help develop processes wherein Staff, Councillors, and community members can better and more effectively work together to develop solutions to the difficult problems that affect our community, in a way that doesn't result in Councillors receiving phone calls from upset constituents on every side of the issue.

Does that mean the consultations performed over the last two weeks and as a group last Monday were a waste of time? Honestly, quite possibly. I know some of the participants, on all sides of the issue, were disappointed. (Including the objection to this report I mentioned a moment ago.)

Was it too late in the process? Definitely.

If anything was accomplished, it was, first, some stakeholders were finally able to get answers to questions they had for the CBCL Engineers, CBRM Engineering staff, Councillor Paruch, and Mayor McDougall.

And, second, I think it made clear to all in attendance, in one way or another, that the community wasn't sufficiently, or at the very least effectively, involved along the way. And I'll repeat myself one last time, by emphasizing that this wasn't a failure of staff but of policy and process. And that a different process, such as the hypothetical multi-stakeholder multi-disciplinary working group scenario I described, may have arrived at the same conclusion you currently have — namely that the Baille Ard area is the only place to physically contain a sufficient amount of rainwater to effectively mitigate flood damage in the area, and that this approach is the only physically possible and fiscally possible solution. But if the solution had been arrived at via a more open, transparent, democratic process, it's less likely you would also have the acrimony and frustration you currently have on all sides of the issue.

Thank you.