



November 21, 2025

From:

West End Home Builders' Association

1112 Rymal Road East

Hamilton, Ontario L8W 3N7

To:

Arvin Prasad, General Manager of Planning and

Economic Development

**Ashraf Hanna, Director, Growth Management & Chief
Development Engineer**

City of Hamilton, 71 Main Street West

WE HBA Letter: Fully Waterproof Below Grade Membrane System or Bathtubbing

The West End Home Builders' Association (WE HBA) is the collective voice of the land development, new housing, and professional renovation industries in Hamilton, Burlington, and Grimsby. Our 300 member companies represent every discipline involved in the creation of complete communities from planners and engineers to builders and suppliers.

We are writing to raise concerns regarding the City of Hamilton's emerging requirement to install fully waterproof membrane systems, commonly known as "bathtubbing," for all below-grade foundation construction where basements are located within close proximity to ground water.

When the City first introduced this approach for select high and mid-rise projects in the Downtown, we understood the intent to mitigate inflow and infiltration into the combined sewer system. However, over time, the application of this requirement has expanded well beyond its original context to include townhomes, single-detached homes, and other low-rise developments in areas where there are dedicated storm sewers and existing storm water management controls. WE HBA strongly believes the risk profile does not justify such a costly and complex solution.

Our members' experience has shown that extending the bathtubbing requirement to these forms of housing can be both overly prudent and financially prohibitive, particularly given the absence of data demonstrating improved performance compared to traditional drainage methods of damp-proofing such as weeping tile and sump pump systems.

From a practical standpoint, the risks and costs associated with these systems are significant. For example, when a waterproof membrane fails, which is to be expected given the evolving nature of these products, repairs are invasive and expensive. Unlike parking structures where leaks can be accessed and addressed relatively easily, leaks in living spaces require removing finished materials such as drywall, flooring, and



insulation. Homeowners could and will revert to the traditional systems like sump pump and weeping tile that have served reliably for decades.

The upfront cost of installing a membrane in 2025 is approximately \$10.00 per square foot. For a 1,500 square foot townhouse the cost is estimated at \$15,000. This is an extraordinary investment in a relatively new technology with limited long-term performance data. There are also liability implications, as repairs are intrusive and TARION warranty coverage for water penetration issues is limited to the first two to seven years after occupancy.

Equally concerning, this requirement does not appear to reduce the number or size of storm sewer systems required in site design — effectively layering new costs without commensurate benefit or risk reduction. The cumulative result is a significant increase in construction costs, risk exposure, and housing prices, without clear evidence of improved outcomes for residents or the environment.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, City stormwater management staff, and our member representatives to review the rationale and data behind this requirement. Our shared goal is to ensure that development standards remain both environmentally responsible and economically sustainable while supporting the City's housing and infrastructure objectives.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to a constructive discussion.

Mike Collins-Williams, MCIP, RPP
Chief Executive Officer
West End Home Builders' Association