

ADDRESSING MUNICIPAL TREE ISSUES, TOOLS TO HELP RETAIN AND ENHANCE THESE COMMUNITY ASSETS

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Is your municipality having difficulty addressing tree issues effectively?

- Residents contacting Municipal Councillors on your parks/tree issues
- Residents frustrated by developers removing many trees with what appears to be little consequence
- Response times to service requests/development commenting becomes more challenging in peak spring and summer months
- New and re-elected Councillors seem lukewarm too or do not understand trees in the community

Challenges for Staff

Staff have limited time to understand the numerous processes involved in addressing tree issues in:

- ▶ New legislation/bylaws/policies or lack thereof
- ▶ Planning process, C. of A, OPA, Zoning, Site Plan, Subdivision
- ▶ Infrastructure projects, Road Reconstruction, Water/Sewer upgrades
- ▶ Sidewalk/Trails projects
- ▶ In-house projects, Parks/Streets Landscape Renovation/Additions
- ▶ Developer driven projects, new Parks, street trees
- ▶ Staff turnover



Some Background

Municipal Act, Section 135, allows municipalities to pass bylaws related to all trees in the municipality. City of Toronto have their own Act with similar protocols.



- Forestry Act, defines Good Forestry Practices, shared ownership
- Planning Act, allows for recognition of trees as part of the planning process.
- Heritage Act, allows for designation of defined areas. Some protection of treed properties in a graduated process
- Geographic based Acts, Oak Ridges Moraine, Niagara Escarpment, etc.
- Green Infrastructure Assessment, Assessment and plan development

Urban Forest Management Plans

- These can be used to highlight the benefits of trees in your community
- May be able to influence the Official Plan for canopy cover targets
- Starts or continues the conversation on trees in a positive light
- Can lead to potential bylaws or policies respecting trees
- Usually has a 20 year plan with 5 year measurable increments tailored for community and staffing resources available, or planned for.

Relationship of Municipal Act to Planning Act

- **Realistically they are separate entities**
- Municipal Act Bylaws sets a tone for applications under the Planning Act
- Planning applications are usually policy driven and can be backstopped by Bylaws
- The development of Planning policy generally meets the “Spirit of the Bylaw”
- Exception, Newmarket Tree Retention Policy addresses any Planning Act applications. Implemented generally based on resources and expertise available at the time.

Other Acts

➤ **Heritage Act**

- Allows for designation of specific area/property in the municipality that provides a higher level of attention to trees and other community priorities.

➤ **Forestry Act**

- Does provide definition of “Good Forestry Practice” identified in many Bylaws.

➤ **Geographic Based Acts**

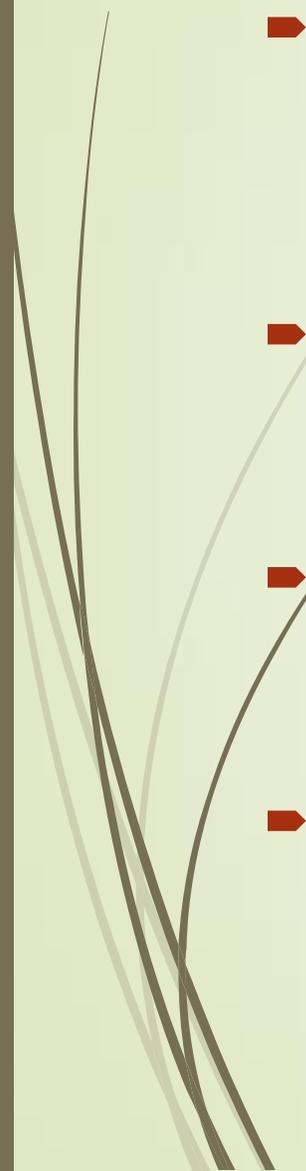
- Provide another layer of attention to tree and environmental issues

➤ **Green Infrastructure Plan**

- Intent is to quantify green municipal assets, including trees



City of Toronto

- ▶ Generally, pre –amalgamation City of Toronto set the tone of tree protection on private property due to a planning issue related to tree removal on a lot for development in the High Park area in 1990's.
 - ▶ Initially the Bylaw was passed more as a “knee jerk”, response which took sometime to put into operation.
 - ▶ Post amalgamation it also took many years to harmonize the various Cities/Boroughs tree bylaws in the much larger City of Toronto.
 - ▶ Currently for a large complex municipality, it does offer many suggestions on addressing tree issues for smaller communities.
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Your Municipality and trees options?

- Key components to help in addressing tree issues on public land.
- **1) Tree Inventory**
- This helps in developing a sense of tree species present and their distribution as well as tree size.
- Planting and Maintenance decisions can be derived and planned for, with hopefully Council support.
- **2) Review of existing Municipal Bylaws/Polices that have an influence on tree decisions.**
- Street, Parks, Private Tree Bylaws, how old are they?
- Departmental policies or Municipal direction on trees. When last reviewed?
- This can help determine where gaps may exist or lack of interdepartmental coordination

Your Municipality and trees options?

➤ **3) Internal and Public input analysis on tree issues**

- Compile/track types of calls/service requests received to identify potential areas of focus or needed resources
- Internal requests from other Departments can be tracked as well to see where relationship building can occur

➤ **4) Understand what other departments or external clients positions are in relation to greater municipal/development goals set**

- Where trees are affected by other areas decisions, say road reconstruction, parks trail installation and development driven matters
- Ask questions to better understand their expectations to help guide future tree conversations

Your Municipality and trees options?

➤ **5) Consider an Urban Forest Management Plan**

- This helps to provide an opportunity for a conversation with stakeholders/public on historical perspective of community trees, current status and future directions.
- If no existing bylaws/policies present this can “test the waters”, to see where trees fit in the community
- Can be tailored with goals to the ability of the current municipal resources
- Can provide measurable aspects for reporting to Council on progress/challenges

➤ **6) Tree Bylaws? Street/Public lands/Parks/Private Tree**

- Have your own municipal house in order on tree issues before you venture on private lands.
- Single tree or minimum # of trees removed per year?
- Single tree bylaw generally has a stronger voice on tree issues and the planning process

Other Option?

- **The Ontario Urban Forest Council can Help!**
- If you find there is a need for some guidance/conversation starters for your Municipality respecting tree issues based on current resources available.
- The Ontario Urban Forest Council is offering help in the form of a tailored review of current policies/bylaws associated with your community trees
- The compiled information can then be presented to invited staff/stakeholder(s) in a 2 to 3 hour meeting in your offices.
- Some of the points covered in this presentation may be presented as well as other suggestions to be reviewed by staff for possible future development.
- This is a nominal fee based program for research, presentation development
- The premise is to provide a tree conversation starter and/or an opportunity to engage other departments in a discussion on trees as a start to a process of engagement.

Questions?

Thank you

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