

From:

Sent: Friday, September 20, 2019 10:41 AM

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Subject: Fwd: Update London's Tree By-law - please read

Re: Tree By-law Review

Dear Members of Council,

I am urging you to strengthen London's Tree By-law because currently it has no teeth and is failing to protect trees.

Please find attached three photographs of a recent development in my neighbourhood where the property owner removed entire backyards, felled several healthy trees to install parking. This was done legally under the current tree by-law.

The property owner declared the larger trees hazardous, a complaint was filed and staff simply investigated after the trees were cut. That is typical under the current by-law.

There is no definition of a 'hazardous' tree. The property owner can self-determine when a tree is 'hazardous' and there is no requirement for a property owner to replace trees that have been cut.

City staff claim that requiring a replacement tree on private property would discourage the removal of a hazardous tree. This is a non-sensical argument as theoretically the removal of a hazardous tree is a safety concern. This argument would only make sense if the so-called 'hazardous' tree was in the path of an expansion, giving credence to what many already suspect - a hazardous tree definition is one convenience and has no merit.

It is not sufficient to substitute a new tree in another area because this practice encourages the denuding of residential areas. Property owners should be required to replace a felled tree on the same property. This practice is common place in other jurisdictions.

A clear definition of what is a hazardous tree and a requirement for an arborist report (at the expense of the property owner) must to be included in the tree by-law. This practice is common place in other jurisdictions.

There must be a lower diameter requirement before trees can be cut without a permit and an arborist report.

Lowering the diameter size requiring a permit will protect a greater number of tree species – many of which do not reach the current 50 centimetres at maturity as well as protect younger trees.

It is imperative that young trees be protected as they are the future canopy.

Staff insist that lowering the diameter will increase their workload.

This statement simply cannot be substantiated.

Most people abide by the by-law and it is simply false to state that their work load will be strained. It is more likely that the opposite will be true as less people will likely request a permit to cut down a tree. Unless it is easy do to so, people will likely not cut down a tree.

Lowering the tree diameter that requires a permit will bring London's tree by-law in alignment with other jurisdictions.

Planting trees is the simplest action anyone can take to fight the impacts of climate change. This should be obvious to anyone that understands that the world is experiencing a climate crisis.

And I personally feel it is a test for Council in their resolve to take serious action to combat the impacts of climate change because if Council cannot endorse a strong tree by-law – which is the simplest of actions – then it will likely fail in other more complex policies.

The tree by-law should also include provision to protect wildlife habitat including snags and trees suitable as 'den' trees for den dwelling animals such as raccoons. The more trees that are protect, the more wildlife habitat that is also protected.

The world is dying.

Yesterday it was reported that 3 billion North American birds have been lost since 1970. Young people across the world are marching today frustrated at the lack of action on climate change. Today is reportedly the largest global march demanding climate action ever.

If council can't do this, people will stop listening.

Please note: the staff report referencing comments from the Tree and Forests Advisory Committee was not completely accurate. There was no agreement that lowering the tree diameter would result in a greater work load for staff.

Thank You

AnnaMaria Valastro

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Tree and Forestry Advisory Committee Member





