
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Memorandum FPC-M01-2025 The Value of Haldimand County's Urban Trees For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 25, 2025



To: Mayor Bentley and Members of Council
From: Dan McKinnon, General Manager, Public Works

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Memorandum FPC-M01-2025 The Value of Haldimand County's Urban Trees be received.

Our urban forest comprises the County-owned trees in our cemeteries and parks; trees that line our roads and trails and the privately owned trees throughout our communities. Urban trees do more than beautify the scenery they are functional green infrastructure assets that provide economic, environmental and social benefits for our communities.

1. Economic Benefits

- Conserve energy by reducing heating and cooling costs;
- Increase property values; and
- Intercept stormwater run-off, preventing flooding and water pollution.

2. Environmental Benefits

- Improve air quality by filtering out small particulate matter;
- Sequester carbon dioxide;
- Prevent soil erosion; and
- Provide food and habitat for wildlife.

3. Social Benefits

- Reduce traffic speeds by making streets appear narrower;
- Beautify our communities; and
- Improve psychological well-being.

The County's Asset Management Plan values the replacement cost for the 23,000 County-owned trees documented in our incomplete tree inventory at \$90.4 million. This represents 49% of the entire Land Improvements asset category including parks, waste management, recreation, public works, cemeteries, administration, fire/ambulance and community services.

The return on investment in the urban forestry program will increase as we implement new policies to protect our oldest and largest trees, increase our street tree planting program and continue investing in our seven-year tree inspection and maintenance program. Staff are implementing the following projects to continue effectively and responsibly managing the County's investment in our urban and rural forests.

1. Identify efficiencies and improve customer service in delivering our forestry and urban forestry programs.

- Resident requests for maintenance of County-owned trees;
 - Subdivision, infill, commemorative, downtown and resident request tree planting programs;
 - Trees for All program for afforestation on private lands;
 - County Tree By-law to protect County-owned trees;
 - Forest Conservation By-law to protect forests on private property;
 - Property Standards By-law to mitigate hazardous trees on private property;
 - Assisting with development applications and protection of our natural heritage; and
 - Divisional support to implement projects and protect County-owned trees.
2. Working to achieve a sustainable, seven-year proactive tree inspection, maintenance and planting cycle across the County.
 3. Update the 2016 – 2026 Urban Forest Management Plan for the next ten-year term.
 - Collaborate with colleges and universities to analyze, evaluate and recommend improvements;
 - Add trees along County highways and concession roads to the tree inventory; and
 - Develop policies to protect our oldest and largest trees.
 4. Develop a Forest Management Plan
 - Develop an inventory of County-owned natural area assets;
 - Plan for sustainable timber harvesting and identify recreational opportunities in County-owned forests such as LaFortune Park, Pyle Woodlot and Marshall Woodlot; and
 - Assess all County-owned properties to identify potential sites for afforestation, wetland and tall grass prairie projects to increase biodiversity.

An emerging trend is the increasing number of resident requests for more information and the control of invasive species and noxious weeds across the County. Over 250 different invasive species have been identified by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Province of Ontario, as a threat to our environmental health and biodiversity. The Ontario Weed Control Act lists 25 regulated plants that present a risk to human and environmental health.

The spread of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) across the County demonstrates the significant costs required to manage an invasive species and the economic, environmental and social benefits lost due to the removal of infested trees.

- Approximately 60% of the County's annual tree removal and stump grinding budgets since 2017 have been allocated to controlling Emerald Ash Borer.
- If the Emerald Ash Borer had not occurred, the operational savings and added benefits from healthy Ash trees would have resulted in \$3 in community benefits for every \$1 spent.

Only Emerald Ash Borer was considered in the 2016 Forest Strategy and Management Plan. The growth rate and introduction of new invasive species are expected to increase due to climate change. Staff have responded to these increases on a reactionary basis to meet increasing resident requests. In 2025 staff are:

- Consolidating invasive species and noxious weed control by various divisions into a single contract to control invasive species and noxious weeds at 31 sites across the County;
- Collaborating with The Friends of LaFortune Park to manage European Buckthorn in LaFortune Park; and

- Applying for a grant in partnership with the Haldimand Stewardship Council to create an inventory of invasive Phragmites locations on County property.

The cost of controlling invasive species and noxious weeds increases with their spread and any delay in treatment. Due to the threat these species present to environmental and human health, the County will have to continue to control them for public safety. Allocating resources to developing a comprehensive, proactive plan is a critical first step in ensuring these species can be controlled efficiently and cost-effectively.

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. The Value of Haldimand County's Urban Trees Presentation