

February 21, 2018

Report To: Mayor and Council

From: Travis Rob, Manager of Operations and Facilities and Patrick Briere, By-Law Enforcement Officer

**RE: Referral from Economic Development Advisory Committee – Urban Trees**

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At the November 6, 2017 meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee a matter regarding urban trees was referred to Operations and Facilities Executive Committee with input from the Planning & Development Executive Committee.

Over the last number of years, the issue of trees placed within the Town boulevards has been dealt with through the Operations and Facilities Division as required to maintain the infrastructure within the boulevard as well as to maintain public health and safety. Through 2017 the topic of boulevard trees came to the forefront as the Town undertook works to reconstruct the sidewalks along the 200 block of Scott Street as well as the full road reconstruction along Second Street between Portage Avenue and Mowat Avenue.

The issues with the trees in both of these instances were that the roots were causing heavy damage to the Town's infrastructure. The primary reason for replacing the sidewalk on the 200 block of Scott Street was due to the tree roots heaving the sidewalk. There were property owners with damage being caused to their building foundations as well as roots propagating into building sewers causing blockages. On Second Street, the trees had in places grown so large that the bases were encroaching on the services and excavation could not be completed without the removal of the tree, in addition and much the same as Scott Street, the tree growth was causing damage to the sidewalk and curb as well a sewer services. When trees get to be the size that was seen on Second Street, it would be stressful to the tree to excavate to the depth required for a road reconstruction in such proximity and due to the need to align the road with both intersections the new infrastructure would have to be installed again, directly adjacent to the tree, resulting in failure within a remarkably short duration.

The Town of Fort Frances roadways are typically 10m wide within a right of way that is 20m wide. This means that, provided the roadway is centred within the right of way, the boulevard area is 5m wide on each side. Typically, the Town endeavours to install sidewalks on all roadways and in many areas sidewalks are on both sides of the street. Sidewalks are 1.5m in width leaving 3.5m of useable space remaining for the installation of utility infrastructure such as natural gas, power, street lighting, communications and in some instances storm sewer. In the winter time we rely on this space in the boulevard to push snow off of the roadway and place snow from sidewalks and lanes.

The information provided from EDAC included the guide put out by the City of Toronto for the installation of trees within boulevards. The first thing that is very apparent and a key difference in this guide compared to the Town of Fort Frances is that they only dedicate a 0.46m buffer zone between the roadway and the start of the planting zone for snow. Given the snow accumulations that are received in Fort Frances and taking into consideration the potential impacts road salt has on tree health, a 1m buffer would be a minimum to ensure sufficient snow storage and buffer to promote tree health. When looking at the recommended minimum boulevard width, and a larger buffer space for Fort Frances, the boulevards in the Town of Fort Frances are simply not large enough.

There are new technology manners that can be utilized for the installation of trees within boulevards where an engineered and premanufactured structure is placed prior to the planting of the tree, or an engineered selection of specialized soils are used to control and limit the growth of roots to help protect infrastructure these methods drive the cost of tree installation up substantially and make planting a new tree along an existing roadway difficult if not impossible. This makes a large-scale replacement project cost prohibitive based on our municipal budget.

The benefits of trees are well researched and well documented, however a walk down the Town's sidewalks will show that the damages that can be caused by Trees is extensive as well. Because of the ongoing damages seen in the Town's infrastructure, the installation of Trees within the Town of Fort Frances has been focused within parks and greenspaces away from underground and overhead infrastructure, not in boulevards.

Respectfully Submitted

Original Signed By Both

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Manager of Operations and Facilities

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By-Law Enforcement Officer

**Council approval of this report will ensure that the documents provided by Mr. Cumming are received by Council and that no further action be taken.**