TORONTO

# STAFF REPORT
# ACTION REQUIRED

# Strategy for Increasing Community Engagement in the Management of the Emerald Ash Borer – Supplementary Report

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| **Date:** | April 8, 2011 |
| **To:** | City Council |
| **From:** | Brenda Patterson, General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division |
| **Wards:** | All |
| **Reference Number:** | P:\2011\Cluster A\PFR\CC07-041211-AFS#13790 |

## SUMMARY

This report responds to a request from the Parks and Environment Committee, to consider the use of high school volunteers, summer student labour and community public education to support awareness of the impact of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation on the City of Toronto's Urban Forest.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**The General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:**

1. City Council authorize the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to focus its community engagement programs in 2011 to provide increased public education and awareness of EAB in areas of the City with the highest EAB infestation; and

2. City Council authorize the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to work with the school boards to develop volunteer experiences to assist in public education on Emerald Ash Borer.

### Financial Impact

Existing staff resources will be redirected from existing community engagement programs to plan and deliver community workshops, as well as the training and direction of high school volunteers. The estimated cost for 2011 is $23,000.00, which will be funded within the 2011 Council Approved Operating Budget. It is anticipated that the reallocation of existing staff

resources to provide this service will result in a reduced number of stewardship planting events scheduled for the fall of 2011.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of March 28, 2011, the Parks and Environment Committee amended and adopted PE2.1, titled "Strategy for the Management of the Emerald Ash Borer".

Parks and Environment Committee Decision Document:
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewPublishedReport.do?function=getDecisionDocumentReport&meetingId=4451

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

The EAB Management Plan recommends that communication to residents will be delivered through printed documents, the City website, and 311 Toronto services. The communication plan is aimed at improving public understanding of how to respond to the EAB threat, potential costs and the importance of replacement tree planting.

The Parks and Environment Committee met on March 28, 2011 to review the EAB Management Plan and directed the Division to report to Council on the potential of expanding the Communication Plan and increase community public education. Specifically, the Division was requested to review where additional resources including high school students as volunteers and summer students could be used to enhance the plan.

## COMMENTS

### Existing Activity-Based Community Engagement Programs

Urban Forestry currently engages community volunteers through tree planting, stewardship programs in parks and neighbourhood improvement projects. Community groups occasionally ask Urban Forestry to collaborate on neighbourhood tree assessment or enhancement projects. In the past, Urban Forestry has also collaborated with community partner groups to support specific programs designed to engage high school students as volunteers. Volunteer opportunities requires staff to provide training, operational support and oversight. The Division has limited resources available to support these initiatives.

### Work with School Boards to get High School Students as Volunteers

The Division will work with the school boards in 2011 to outline volunteer experiences for students, including identifying possible tree planting sites and delivering information to encourage new additional planting requests. The responsibilities assigned to a student would be

limited to their abilities and training, and could not include pesticide treatments due to license requirements and extensive training requirements.

## Hiring Summer Students

Urban Forestry did not include a plan to hire summer students as part of the funding allocated to the EAB management plan. Currently no additional sources of funding to hire summer students have been identified. The Division will continue to review funding opportunities for future years. Seasonal positions have been included in the EAB Management Plan and will focus on survey and enhanced planting programs that are needed to mitigate the impacts of ash tree mortality.

### Community Public Education

The Division will increase public education and awareness of the EAB infestation, specifically in areas where the EAB infestation is the greatest. Neighbourhood meetings and/ or workshops will be held where residents will be trained on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of emerald ash borer, as well as the benefits of early removal of dead trees.

The City would also provide information to residents regarding removal of infested trees located on private property within the tree bylaw and encourage residents to replace trees removed.

Residents would also have the opportunity to ask for advice from forestry experts about tree removal practices and pesticide treatment options for both private and city trees.

### Conclusion

Urban Forestry staff recognizes the benefits of an enhanced communication plan to include public meetings or workshops, as well as engaging volunteers to promote tree planting on public and private lands. Urban Forestry will work within the planned EAB Management program to include these services.

## CONTACTS

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## SIGNATURE

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