



Councillor



Jaye
ROBINSON
WARD 25 • DON VALLEY WEST

February 13, 2014

Parks and Environment Committee
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Strengthening Toronto's Tree Canopy

Dear Chair and Colleagues,

Toronto has approximately 10.2 million trees, equivalent to approximately 28% tree canopy cover.

Toronto's tree protection bylaw (Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Articles II and III) plays an integral role in protecting and expanding city owned and privately owned trees, which combined number approximately 4.1 million.

Fine tuning our tree protection bylaw could make a significant contribution to achieving the goals set out in Urban Forestry's recently approved Strategic Forestry Management Plan, which includes boosting canopy cover to 40% by 2022.

Through discussions with residents and Urban Forestry staff, the application of the tree protection bylaw could be greatly improved by defining key terms, such as "healthy condition" and "poor condition" and by ensuring that tree protection is considered as early as possible in the context of development and planning applications.

Similarly, my residents have made clear that the notice required by subsection 813-19 is inadequate insofar as it does not provide an adequate reason for collecting public comments and, more broadly, that there is no easy to access and understand source of information on the extent and workings of the tree protection bylaw.

The recommendation below requests a report on these issues as well as suggested improvements to fine tune and strengthen our tree protection bylaw going forward.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaye Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jaye" being more prominent than the last name "Robinson".

Jaye Robinson
City Councillor
Ward 25 – Don Valley West

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Parks and Environment Committee request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to submit a report in the first quarter of 2015 on improvements to the transparency and application of Toronto's tree protection bylaws, Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Articles II and III (the "Bylaw"), including, among other things:
 - a. Recommendations to better integrate Bylaw-related considerations into the planning and development process, including minor variance, consent and site plan applications as well as zoning by-law and Official Plan amendments;
 - b. Improvements to the manner and form of notice required by Bylaw subsection 813-19 in order to clarify why public comments are collected as well as the grounds upon which applications to injure or destroy trees can be granted or refused;
 - c. Uniform and consistent criteria with which to apply and understand the terms "healthy condition" and "poor condition" as used in the Bylaw;
 - d. Information on the number of applications to injure and remove trees as well as the numbers of those applications that were refused and issued;
 - e. Information on the number of offences committed and penalties issued;
 - f. Information on the impacts of soil volume on the health and longevity of replacement trees as well as recommendations to improve soil volume conditions; and,
 - g. A communications strategy to ensure that the public is aware of the criteria upon which permits to injure or destroy trees may be issued or refused as well as the public consultation process set out in subsection 813-19.