



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Application to Remove a Private Tree - 18 Fitzgibbon Avenue

<b>Date:</b>	August 15, 2016
<b>To:</b>	Scarborough Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Jason Doyle, Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
<b>Ward:</b>	Ward 37 – Scarborough Centre
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2016\Cluster A\PFR\SC16-090716-AFS#23387

#### SUMMARY

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This report requests that City Council deny the application for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned tree located at 18 Fitzgibbon Avenue. The owner is requesting a permit to remove the tree due to its close proximity to an existing home, allowing squirrels to access the roof, and due to the number of insects entering the home.

The subject tree is a Norway spruce tree (*Picea abies*), measuring 34 cm in diameter. Urban Forestry does not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one (1) privately-owned tree located at 18 Fitzgibbon Avenue.

#### Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

#### COMMENTS

Urban Forestry received an application to remove one (1) privately-owned tree, situated in the backyard of 18 Fitzgibbon Avenue. The subject tree is a Norway spruce measuring

34 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address several concerns. The application indicated that the property owners are concerned with tree limbs coming into contact with an existing house, enabling squirrels to access the roof. The applicant also indicated that an adjacent window cannot be opened due to the number of insects entering the house such as; wasps, mosquitos, and flying ants.

In corresponding with Urban Forestry staff, the applicant also identified the following additional reasons: several mature trees exist on the property limiting the ability to grow other things; the tree is leaning towards the house; utility wires have been damaged in the past due to the subject tree's proximity to overhead wires; there has been a flying ant infestation in the room where the branches touch the house; sap hinders the use of a clothesline; roots may affect the foundation of the house in the future; and the tree may be a safety hazard for the homeowners and neighbours in the future.

The property owners have also indicated that they may wish to renovate in future to create an exit with a ramp at the back of the house to address their concern about possible future mobility issues and would like to remove the tree now in order to avoid a more costly construction-related tree removal application fee.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and determined that it is healthy and structurally sound. No branches were observed to be in contact with the house. A small and self-corrected lean was observed. No evidence was observed at the time of inspection, that the tree is the cause of any insect-related problem. The use of window screens should limit the number of insects entering the home. The property owners reported animals accessing the roof of their home but no issues associated with damage being caused by these animals was identified or observed by staff. Further, pruning in accordance with good arboricultural practices should alleviate any issues with tree branches impacting the overhead utility wires.

*City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813, Article III*, more commonly referred to as the Private Tree By-law, does not include provisions that would enable Urban Forestry staff to issue a permit authorizing removal of the subject tree based on the reasons noted above.

As required under *Section 813-19, of City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, a Notice of application sign was posted on the subject property for the minimum 14-day period in order to provide an opportunity for comment by the community. No comments were received in response to the posting.

A permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The owner is appealing this decision.

Should City Council approve this request for tree removal, in accordance with *Section 813-20 of City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, permit approval must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. As a condition of permit issuance, the property owner is proposing to plant one (1) large

growing shade tree. However, in this instance, it would be appropriate for the owner to provide five (5) replacement trees, which can be achieved in a combination of planting on site and cash-in-lieu of planting.

Trees improve the quality of urban life and contribute greatly to our sense of community. They are aesthetically pleasing and soften the hard lines of built form and surfaces in an urban setting. Trees contribute to the overall character and quality of neighbourhoods. Studies suggest that social benefits such as crime reduction and neighbourhood cohesion can be attributed to the presence of trees.

The environmental benefits of trees include cleansing of air, noise and wind reduction, and protection from ultraviolet radiation. Trees reduce rainwater runoff thereby reducing soil erosion and lowering storm water management costs. They also contribute to moderation of temperature extremes and reduction of the urban heat island effect by providing shade during the summer.

Trees provide many economic benefits including the enhancement of property values. Homes with mature trees have higher value when compared to similar types of homes in similar locations without trees. Mature trees are associated with reduced home energy consumption. Air conditioning costs are lower in a home shaded by trees and heating costs are reduced when trees mitigate the cooling effects of wind in winter. Trees are a community resource, which can make the city more attractive to investors, tourists and prospective residents, thus contributing to growth and prosperity.

It is the goal of the City of Toronto to increase the City's tree canopy to 40 percent. The loss of the tree canopy in the City due to the ice storm experienced in late December 2013, compounded with additional tree loss due to the presence of the Asian longhorned beetle and the emerald ash borer make the preservation of all healthy trees more necessary now than ever.

The Norway spruce tree at 18 Fitzgibbon Avenue is a valuable part of the urban forest. With proper care and maintenance this tree has the potential to provide the property owner and the surrounding community with benefits for many more years. Urban Forestry; therefore, does not support removal of this tree.

## **CONTACT**

Mark Ventresca, Supervisor Tree Protection and Plan Review, Urban Forestry  
Tel: 416-396-5131, Fax: 416-396-4170, Email: [mventre@toronto.ca](mailto:mventre@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Jason Doyle  
Director, Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Photograph of the Norway spruce tree, measuring 34 cm in diameter.  
Attachment 2 – Photograph of the Norway spruce tree in relation to existing home.



