

45 Addison Crescent - Application to Remove a Private Tree

Date: June 7, 2019

To: North York Community Council

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: 16 - Don Valley East

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to Community Council's deferred decision to permit or deny the removal of a privately-owned tree located at 45 Addison Crescent. Community Council requested information from the Medical Officer of Health on the issue of allergic reactions specific to the black walnut tree located at that residence.

The subject tree is black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) measuring 71 cm in diameter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Director, Healthy Environments, Toronto Public Health recommends that:

1. North York Community Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial implications associated with this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of February 27, 2017, the Parks and Environment Committee (PFR) adopted a report from the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, which included information from Toronto Public Health (TPH) on the likelihood of exposure and allergic response to tree nuts from the black walnut tree. The report also explained the effects of exempting black walnut trees from protection under the City's tree by-laws for reasons, including fear of being struck and injured by falling walnuts, having an

allergic reaction to walnuts and not being able to grow other plants in close proximity to black walnut trees.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PE17.2>

COMMENTS

Allergic reactions due to the ingestion of tree nuts range from itching or swelling of the mouth to an anaphylactic allergic response, which if left untreated, can lead to death. Some people with a tree-nut allergy might experience some skin irritation from repeated handling of the nut and/or husk. It is known that allergic reactions are due to exposure to nut proteins.

The risk of a severe allergic reaction to a tree nut is based on the following three risk factors:

1. The potential for exposure to the tree nut;
2. The severity of an individual's response to the exposure; and,
3. The options available to mitigate the risks.

Very little is known about allergic reactions to black walnuts. They are not widely available for purchase, therefore, there is little information on adverse allergic reactions. In addition, the shell of the black walnut is extremely hard, and almost impossible to crack without a hammer. It is assumed that people do not eat the nuts that fall from black walnut trees.

There is no evidence to suggest that black walnut-bearing trees pose a significant risk to those with allergies.

At this time, there is no new evidence that has emerged since the 2017 PFR report which would cause TPH to change our opinion. We would like to re-affirm the following:

1. There is no evidence to support the removal of a nut-bearing tree to mitigate risk from an allergic response.
2. Anaphylaxis is highly unlikely to occur except through ingestion of nuts.
3. The allergen is in the nut itself and accidental exposure is not likely since the nut is covered by the shell.
4. Other measures (which are simpler and less expensive than tree removal) can mitigate the risk such as cleaning up tree nuts in play areas or teaching children to avoid tree-nuts.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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