

## **Application to Remove a Private Tree – 72 Southampton Drive**

**Date:** December 1, 2021

**To:** Scarborough Community Council

**From:** Acting Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

**Wards:** Ward 21 – Scarborough Centre

### **SUMMARY**

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This report requests that City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 72 Southampton Drive. The application indicates the reason for removal is due to concerns that the residents are allergic to the tree's pollen.

The subject tree is a white spruce tree (*Picea glauca*), measuring 46 cm in diameter. The Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends that:

1. City Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 72 Southampton Drive.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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

### **DECISION HISTORY**

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There is no decision history regarding this tree removal permit application.

### **COMMENTS**

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Urban Forestry received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 72 Southampton Drive. The subject tree is a white spruce measuring 46 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the residents are allergic to the tree's pollen.

The arborist report that accompanied the application described the tree to be in good condition with good structure.

Urban Forestry staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support tree injury or removal to address the perceived nuisance resulting from a tree's natural functions such as the production of pollen, nor does it have a mechanism that would allow the removal of a pollen-producing tree to mitigate the risk of an allergic response. In this case, wind dispersed pollen from trees and other plants and grasses may travel significant distances. It is not possible to implicate one particular tree as exclusively aggravating or causing allergy symptoms. The removal of this tree is not likely to address concerns about seasonal allergies. Trees are essential to improving urban air quality as they provide a constant source of oxygen and filter harmful pollutants from the air.

Through this inspection and review of the arborist report, staff have concluded that the removal of the subject tree is not permissible under the Tree By-law, *City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 813*. As a result of the above-noted findings and in support of protecting and growing the City's urban forest, a permit to remove the tree was denied by Urban Forestry. The applicant is appealing this decision.

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 in support or objection were received in response to the application to remove the tree in question.

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 issuance must be conditional upon the provision of satisfactory replacement planting. As a condition of permit issuance, the applicant is proposing to plant one replacement tree. However, in this instance it would be appropriate for the applicant to provide five replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting. Any cash-in-lieu collected will go towards the City's tree canopy reserve, a fund used for planting trees City wide.

The white spruce tree at 72 Southampton Drive is a valuable part of the urban forest that provides numerous aesthetic, social and economic benefits to the property owner and local community. Toronto's urban forest provides \$55 million in environmental benefits every year including improved air quality through pollution removal, lower storm water management costs by reducing runoff, and carbon sequestration that lessens the impacts of climate change. Through shade and transpiration, increasing urban tree cover can mitigate exposure to extreme heat events. A higher density of trees in a neighbourhood has been shown to significantly improve physical and mental health, such as reducing blood pressure and stress levels and promoting physical activity. Trees also make urban environments aesthetically more pleasing which raises property values.

Protecting the urban forest is a key strategy for building resiliency, as it continues to face increasing natural pressures such as storms and invasive pests. The 2013 ice storm resulted in the removal of over 3000 City-owned trees. The Emerald Ash Borer beetle has killed approximately 860,000 ash trees across the City. As a result, if the City aims to reach its canopy target of 40 per cent, it is imperative that the City protect healthy trees from injury and removal whenever possible. The improved condition and size of the urban forest will support the City of Toronto's goals to improve quality of life and well-being that enables a diverse, sustainable, innovative, growing and thriving city.

In accordance with the City Council-approved Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan, Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, and the Private Tree By-law, the white spruce tree at 72 Southampton Drive, as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Kim Statham  
Acting Director, Urban Forestry  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing white spruce tree in the rear yard of 72 Southampton Drive; June 30, 2021

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