

Application to Remove a City Tree – 14 Atherton Crescent

Date: December 14, 2022

To: Etobicoke York Community Council

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

Wards: 3 – Etobicoke-Lakeshore

SUMMARY

This report requests that Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 14 Atherton Crescent. The applicant is seeking permission to remove the tree to address concerns that the tree is messy and causing a nuisance by dropping fruits, staining the walkway, sidewalk and roadway, and releasing a pungent smell. There are concerns that the fleshy part of the ginkgo fruit contains chemicals that can cause a burning sensation on the skin and blistering. In addition, the tree's roots clogged clay piping which caused a flood in the basement in 2019.

The subject tree is a ginkgo tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), measuring 45 cm in diameter. The Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends that:

1. Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 14 Atherton Crescent.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

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

COMMENTS

Urban Forestry received an application for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located on the City-owned right-of-way fronting 14 Atherton Crescent. The subject tree is a ginkgo tree measuring 45 cm in diameter. The request to remove this tree has been made to address concerns that the tree is messy and causing a nuisance by dropping fruits, staining the walkway, sidewalk and roadway, and releasing a pungent smell. There are concerns that the fleshy part of the ginkgo fruit contains chemicals that can cause a burning sensation on the skin and blistering. In addition, the tree's roots clogged clay piping which caused a flood in the basement in 2019.

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

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

Allergic contact dermatitis of the skin is a potential reaction to dermal contact with the outer pulpy layer of the ginkgo seed. These reactions may depend on an individual's sensitivity and past exposure to plants that contain urushiol, like poison ivy. Toronto Public Health has commented that the overall health risk to the public from ginkgo trees is very low, especially if mitigating measures are taken. Mitigation measures may include:

- Avoidance of fallen seeds and regular removal of fallen seeds while wearing personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, long-sleeved shirt and pants) will reduce the risk of allergic contact dermatitis
- Immediate cleaning of the skin with soap and removal of clothes that came into contact with the outer fruit can prevent or mitigate a potential allergic dermatitis reaction for sensitive individuals
- Regular removal of fallen seeds may lessen the attraction of wildlife and minimize its odour
- Avoidance of ingestion of the inner seed will prevent acute food poisoning

All trees drop leaves, needles, nuts, fruit or other debris. Removal of debris, such as fallen fruit, is considered part of performing regular property maintenance and is a responsibility of all property owners in Toronto. The City's Tree By-laws do not support tree removal to address the perceived nuisance resulting from a tree's natural functions.

Tree roots grow almost exclusively in the upper 60 cm of soil and are not physically capable of exerting enough force to crack pipes. Water and sewer pipes are usually 1.5 - 2 meters below ground level, and old pipes may crack as a result of freezing and thawing. When damaged pipes leak, they provide oxygen and nutrient rich water deep

in the soil, which attracts tree roots to enter the already cracked drain pipe. Replacing old clay pipes with continuous PVC piping between the house and sewer can eliminate future blockages by tree roots.

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.

The ginkgo tree at 14 Atherton Crescent 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 resilience, 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 by 2050, it is imperative that the City protect healthy trees from unnecessary 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 Tree By-laws, the ginkgo tree at 14 Atherton Crescent, as a valuable part of the urban forest, should not be removed.

The Acting Director of Urban Forestry recommends Etobicoke York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove a City owned tree located at 14 Atherton Crescent. Should Etobicoke York Community Council grant this request for tree removal, the following recommendation may be adopted, in accordance with the City's Tree By-law permit requirements:

- 1) Etobicoke York Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one City-owned tree located at 14 Atherton Crescent, conditional upon the applicant:
 - providing payment of the appraised value of the tree to be removed;
 - agreeing to have the tree removed at their expense;

- providing five replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash in-lieu of planting to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and;
- providing a tree planting security deposit to cover the cost of planting and warranty for a period of two years for all trees to be planted on City property.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Kim Statham
Director, Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing gingko tree at 14 Atherton Crescent;
June 14, 2022

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph showing ginkgo tree at 14 Atherton Crescent;
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