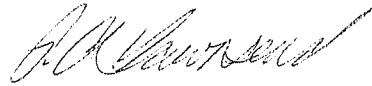


Chebucto Community Council
October 3, 2011

TO: Chair and Members of Chebucto Community Council



SUBMITTED BY:

Phillip Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: September 6, 2011

SUBJECT: Beech Tree Pest/Invasive Species

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

August 8, 2011, 0.2.1 - Beech Tree Infestation on HRM Owned Trees - Fairmount Subdivision

BACKGROUND

On August 8, 2011, Chebucto Community Council requested a staff report to address the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) owned beech tree infestation in the Fairmount Subdivision. The analysis was directed to include the following:

- The involvement of the Canadian Forest Service in Fredericton, New Brunswick;
- Development of a plan to address the existing risks to the trees;
- Potential costs and a plan to address the infestation; and
- Consideration of the related environmental and sustainability issues.

Additionally, HRM has continued to experience service delivery pressure from Invasive Species. This summer, the Japanese Knotweed has been an increasing concern for residents and municipal staff. The cost of managing the Knotweeds is posing a budget challenge.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this report is to update Community Council on the request and advise of some related work happening at HRM on Invasive Species.

As directed, staff has been in communication with the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) staff. A subject matter expert has attended the stand and taken samples of the pest. Initial observation indicates that the pest may have been miss-identified originally (may be a SawFly). Staff will seek confirmation of the species from CFS and advise on potential management solutions.

However, staff continues to receive a number of calls from residents inquiring how to manage infestations on their personal property. There appears to be a consistent solution to the Beech Tree pest, regardless of the specific identifications:

1. Usage of Insecticidal Soap in early Spring (when leaves come out) and a repeat application several weeks after;
2. Usage of Pyrethin (a pesticide approved on the Provincial and Municipal allowable lists);
and
3. Promptly removing any fallen leaves.

Also, general sound landscaping practices such as fertilizing, offers the tree a healthier growing environment and will help its health as it deals with the pest or other pressures on it.

It is staff's expectation that as the solutions to the identified pests are confirmed, a table of solutions will be provided to the Chebucto Community Council for consideration, including budget implications. It is currently anticipated that a spray program in the Fairmount area would be in the range of \$10,000 to \$50,000 (staff will better estimate this project prior to submitting a report). It is expected that a trial could consist of multiple applications of insecticidal soap by a tree sprayer for two or three years. Other alternatives will also be provided.

On a related matter, due to the increasing budget pressures related to invasive species, and most recently the Japanese Knotweed, a report is being prepared for the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee. This report will be:

1. Looking for some policy direction on when and how far staff will service community expectations around invasive species;
2. Looking for Committee and Council support of seeking leadership from the Province of Nova Scotia on an Invasive Species Management Strategy; and
3. Looking for some Direction from Committee and Council on expected service delivery.

It will also articulate some budget implications.

In early 2011, Regional Council provided staff with an expected Service Delivery around invasives (as recommended) that limited the cost and service delivery performed. The community expectation continues to pressure that outwards.

This report is to provide Community Council with some current information. The referenced Motion should remain on the Status Sheet.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

This report does not offer any Budget or Environmental Impacts at this point. Should Community Council provide direction to staff on methodologies to manage the Beech Tree pest, or other Invasive Species in general, a more specific Budget Implications would be articulated.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There are two communications requirements related to this file:

1. When HRM identifies a proposed management solution to the Beech Tree infestation on HRM property for trial, the community will need to be advised of the project;
2. Residents expect advice on how to deal with infestations on private property. HRM will continue to provide best information on www.halifax.ca.

ALTERNATIVES

Related to the Beech Tree Stand: This report is premature to consider alternatives. A more comprehensive report is expected within the next month or two to seek direction on how to handle the pest in this stand of Beech Trees.

Related to general Invasive Species: It is anticipated that policy on Invasives will be deliberated by the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee with recommendations to come forward to Regional Council. The current path is to continue to guard against increased service delivery expectations around Invasive Species while seeking solutions and information from other levels of government.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Richard MacLellan, Manager, Sustainable Environment Management Office, 490-6056
 John Simmons, Urban Forester, Real Property Planning, 476-9517
 Brian Phelan, Superintendent, Municipal Operations, 490-4867
