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**Item No. 2**  
**Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee**  
**December 6, 2018**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee

***-Original Signed-***

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Brad Anguish – Director, Transportation & Public Works

***-Original Signed-***

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Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** November 12, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Emerald Ash Borer – Next Steps

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

In September of 2018, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a Federally regulated pest and threat to the Urban Forest of the Halifax Regional Municipality, was positively identified in Bedford.

Recognizing the significant threat this pest poses to the Municipality's urban forest, HRM staff have identified a need for a management plan to address the impacts of Emerald Ash Borer. This staff generated report is intended to inform the committee on the potential impacts and implications relating to this management plan.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 77(1) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter:

*The Municipality may*

- (a) remove dead, dying or diseased trees on public and private property;*
- (b) recommend and encourage*
  - (i) the proper pruning, protection and repair of privately owned trees in the Municipality,*
  - (ii) the planting of trees of suitable species at desirable sites within the Municipality.*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Emerald Ash Borer is a highly destructive invasive beetle that has been present in Canada since 2002. It has killed a large number of ash trees in North America and poses a major economic and environmental threat to urban and forested areas across Canada.

Historically, across Canada, Emerald Ash Borer has resulted in complete mortality of Urban Ash populations, with significant costs to municipalities in respect to removal, replacement and lost value. Eradication efforts have not been successful and very few tools for mitigation exist.

While HRM does not have as large a population of Ash as many other central Canadian municipalities, it does have significant exposure in many newer neighbourhoods. With an estimated 5% of the street tree inventory in HRM being Ash, removal and replacement costs could easily be in the millions.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) had been installing traps across HRM for Emerald Ash Borer monitoring purposes over the past 10 years, however, Emerald Ash Borer was officially identified in several green ash trees, clustered in the Bedford area near DeWolf park.

HRM is currently working with the Canadian Forestry Service (CFS) and the CFIA to conduct a characterization of the infestation to determine its extent. Once this is complete, HRM will be participating as a stakeholder in discussions relating to determination of the future regulated area.

## **DISCUSSION**

With an estimated 5% of the street tree inventory, and an unknown percent of parks' tree inventory being Ash, the financial, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of Emerald Ash Borer will be significant. A loss of up to 5% of the street tree inventory over the course of the next 10 years would not go unnoticed, and in some neighbourhoods Ash can represent up to 30% of the total street trees. Many parks throughout the Municipality also have large Ash populations, and these trees would also be targeted by the management plan.

To ensure a proactive approach to managing this pest and its challenges, with an intent to minimize the aesthetic and financial impacts of Emerald Ash Borer, staff will develop a management plan to guide the actions around the following:

### **1. Development of an Urban Street and Park Tree Inventory**

Currently, HRM is the only major municipality in Canada without an Urban Forest Inventory. Without this data, it is difficult to estimate the costs associated with various management strategies, and would challenge a targeted approach to treatment and replanting.

Some inventory work of Halifax's street trees has been conducted through projects associated with the Urban Forest Master Plan. These inventories, however, represent a fraction of the street and park trees across the Municipality, and have focused primarily on recent plantings on streets and in parks. In order to determine a course of action for proactive monitoring, treatment, removal and replacement of Ash trees, an inventory of these trees would be necessary.

### **2. A Strategy for Treatment, Removal and Replanting**

The management plan will include a recommendation for a treatment strategy, as well as an action plan for removals and replanting based on an analysis of existing municipal Ash stocks, and using research and best management practices developed by municipal leaders in areas previously affected by Emerald Ash Borer.

By researching and applying lessons learned from other Canadian municipalities who have experience with Emerald Ash Borer, in conjunction with information gathered from the characterization survey conducted in

partnership with the CFIA, a treatment strategy will be developed with the intentions of mitigating the acute effects of an infestation, and providing greatest return on investment in respect to treatment and replanting.

Native White Ash on municipal parkland will also require consideration. For areas of parkland that have a high component of native White Ash, specific prescriptions to manage removal of dead trees to eliminate hazards around walking trails as well as replanting for site restoration may be required.

### **3. Wood Utilization and Disposal Strategy**

As Emerald Ash Borer is a Federally regulated pest, a regulated area will be identified. Ash material is not permitted to be moved outside of a regulated area once set by the Federal Government. This area may exclude local landfills, and as such, a strategy for managing both public and private disposal of Ash material will be required.

### **4. Community Outreach and Public Education**

The Municipality will develop a communications plan to educate and engage the public and key stakeholders about Emerald Ash Borer and its potential impact on trees within HRM. The main goal of such a plan will be to provide timely and accurate information about Emerald Ash Borer and actions the Municipality plans to take under the plan.

### **5. Costing**

Current estimates indicate the inventory of Ash on HRM streets to be between 7,000 and 9,000; this number does not include the Ash in parks and natural areas. The average cost to remove and replace a street tree is around \$1,500, which puts removal and replacement cost estimates between \$10.5 million and \$13.5 million for the street tree inventory alone. The Management Plan will address these costs and recommend a course of action to mitigate the financial and esthetic impact of tree removal and replacement.

The cost for treatment of Ash using available products approved by the Pest Management Regulatory Association are still unknown. As treatment can be expensive and not guaranteed, this information will inform a strategy of treatment, and guide decisions as to which trees may be selected for treatment, why and for how long.

Through the development of the plan, costing of preferred options for management will be conducted. At this time, the costs to support the Emerald Ash Borer Management plan have not been included in the 2019/20 proposed budget, but have been identified as a pressure going forward.

Within the first two years of implementation of a management plan, costs are anticipated to be lower as the infestation is in its initial stages. These costs would be centered around inventory work and a selective treatment, removal and replanting strategy. A funding request for the first two years of the management plan will be brought forward for consideration by Council, as part of the 2019/20/21 budget deliberations. The funding request could range upward to 1 million in total with potential increases in subsequent years to service removal and replacement programs.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with the development of a high level Emerald Ash Borer management plan. This work can be accommodated with existing staff resources. The implementation of the plan is expected to have cost implications which will be addressed when the plan is finalized

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement has been conducted for this report.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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