Executive Policy Committee Special Meeting December 11, 2020 - 9:30 am

Re: Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks – Preliminary 2021 Operating and Capital Budget

Presentation for Urban Forest Enhancement Budget

Pam Lucenkiw, Co-chair, OURS-Winnipeg (Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces)

Good Morning,

I will begin by acknowledging the welcome news of $3M ($1M per year) from the Federal Disaster Financial Assistance Program given to the Forestry Budget.

I also acknowledge the increase to the 2020 Urban Forest Enhancement budget from $4.1M to $6.1M.

Winnipeg's urban canopy is a source of pride and comfort. It makes our city a better place to live on multiple levels for both people and wildlife. Our urban canopy is a valuable capital asset that is being depleted along with the benefits it provides. Benefits not captured or recognized in the budget include cleaner air, noise reduction, protection from the elements, stormwater damage reduction, physical and mental health benefits and our image as a city. Overall, Winnipeg makes a choice year after year to underfund and under service the urban canopy.

The declining condition of the urban canopy is evident from the growing gaps in the thinning canopy on streets, river corridors, parks and yards. The situation is not improving and in fact is getting worse.

Numerous studies show that health and ecosystem benefits can be quantified. The Prairie Climate Centre tells us "Investing in urban

ecosystems and green infrastructure can provide lower-cost solutions to multiple challenges when compared to traditional infrastructure solutions". [i] Mature trees have the ability to absorb and store run off and take pressure off the city storm sewer system.

We know from Forestry department reports the demise of trees will escalate and the City is not keeping up with its responsibly to expand and maintain the urban forest. The effect of the Emerald Ash Borer will soon be upon us as 350,000 ash trees are to be lost over the next 15 to 20 years. The loss of Elm trees relentlessly marches on. Along with the loss of trees from invasive species, pests and development are the loss of the benefits the trees provide.

Gaps remain in the Urban Forest Enhancement Program funding

1. Tree Replacement - one tree is planted on public land for every three removed.

2. Tree Pruning occurs in a 1/30 year cycle which is beyond being considered a cycle. The industry standard is for trees to be pruned once every seven years.

3. There is still no funding for the EAB program where 350,000 ash trees have begun dying or are forecast to die and will require removal and replacement over the next 15 to 20 years.

In 2018, Parks and Open Space Division prepared a report identifying $11.7 M as required to manage the Urban Forest Enhancement Program. The budget of $4.1 M left a shortfall of $7.6 M[ii] for 2019. (slide at end of document).

The projected 2020 forestry budget of $4.1 million fell far short of the department's requested $11.6 million. After a coordinated effort by OURS-Winnipeg and many community groups about $2 M (of the $7.6M required) was added to the capital budget for 2020 bringing it to $6.1M.

In 2021 the preliminary budget amount became $5.8 M per year and the same for 2022. There remains an urgency to protect and enhance the urban forest that is being overlooked.

It is evident there is a large gap in funding to Urban Forest Enhancement Program. Years of underfunding and below standard service levels indicate the budget is far below what is required. There are increasing budgetary pressures due to the higher number of trees being removed due to DED and ash pests and lack of pruning which impacts tree health particularly during storms such as the one in October 2019. A new Urban Forest Enhancement Budget report is needed to identify the updated funding required to cover the cost of tree planting, tree removal and EAB measures to halt the damage to the forest and ensure its future health.

Parks & Open Space Division – 2019 Preliminary Operating Budget

Challenge #1 – Parks and Urban Forestry

- The Urban Forest Enhancement Project ($4.1 million) will only fund DED removal in 2019
- Additional resources still required for:

Dutch Elm Disease =	0.50
Emerald Ash Borer =	3.94
Cottony Ash Psyllid =	0.87
Tree Pruning Cycle =	2.30
Total (in millions)	**$7.61**



[i] Building a Climate-Resilient City: Urban ecosystems, Prairie Climate Centre 2017 http://prairieclimatecentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/pcc-brief-climate-resilient-city-urban-ecosystems.pdf

[ii] Parks and Open Space Division 2019 Preliminary Operating Budget https://wfpquantum.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/2019/29893_CoW%202019%20budget%20review%20parks%20and%20open%20space%20march%208%202019.pdf