

**For Immediate Release**

## **Ottawa's Stealth Tree Removal Program Raises Alarms**

**Ottawa, April 18, 2012:** The City's approach in cutting down hundreds of trees to manage the emerald ash borer (EAB) insect is raising many alarms among those who are just becoming aware of this project.

First, it is well-established that EAB will not be eliminated through widespread tree removal. It hasn't worked elsewhere in Ontario or the U.S. and it is clearly not working in Ottawa either. So, what is behind the City's determination to cut down thousands of ash trees? Tender documents just released by the City, showing it is seeking bidders to buy the wood for commercial purposes, should raise an alarm in the community.

Referred to as the 'chainsaw massacre', people are asking why mature trees are being cut down on their streets and in their parks when there is an alternative," says Donna DuBreuil of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre. Emerald ash borer (EAB) was first observed in Ottawa in 2008, so there was certainly time to consider alternatives before the massive tree removal campaign got underway this winter.

Oakville Ontario, for example, launched an aggressive program in 2010 to save its ash trees by treating them with Treeazin rather than cut them down. The treatment which costs \$160 to \$190 per tree and is good for two years. This is far less costly than the City of Ottawa is paying to remove and dispose of a tree, estimated to be anywhere from \$1,200 to \$1,800. **The best practices approach taken by Oakville is outlined in several short videos that are a must see for Ottawa residents concerned about this issue** <http://www.bioforest.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=content&menuid=33&pageid=1063>

Oakville's plan is not only much more cost effective but it supports the view by forestry researchers that eliminating ash trees could be a greater threat to ash than EAB itself. It is believed that survival of these species ultimately depends on retaining genes that help ash tolerate EAB, and seedlings or a fresh seedbank to populate a new generation.

"But, it is when you consider the significant impact the loss of these trees will have on individual homeowners, neighbourhoods, and the community at large, that it is simply unacceptable that the City of Ottawa did not consult with residents in advance," said Sol Shuster of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital.

"Trees, particularly those in an urban setting, are a critical asset vital to the whole community," said Shuster. Trees beautify our streets, shade our parks and enhance our property. Mature trees increase the resale value of our property as well as the desirability of our neighbourhood, they reduce our energy costs, improve air quality and health, they decrease the quantity of stormwater run-off and improve the quality of the run-off that eventually reaches our lakes, streams and reservoirs. Trees not only add to the enjoyment of our home but they help define our city as a desirable place to visit, work, do business, and live.

In a presentation to the City's Environment Committee on October 18, 2011, city staff outlined a Communications Plan that included Workshops, Educational Materials, Community Outreach and Stakeholder Awareness. **None of this has taken place.** Instead, the City scheduled only two public information sessions for the entire city and this only after hundreds of trees have already been destroyed.

“Information sessions are not consultations. They don’t provide a forum for open dialogue or for questions and answers to be heard by all. They limit an open discussion about the program or alternatives, so it is not surprising that few people bothered to attend the first session”, said DuBreuil.

Councillors are being urged to hold consultations in their Ward so that residents can learn about the specific tree removal plans for streets and parks in that Ward, hear about the cost of the current tree removal program, including the cost of planting new trees and, most important, discuss cost-effective alternatives for saving existing ash trees.

“We have to remember that it takes up to 40 years for a tree to mature, that it has been conclusively shown that EAB will not be eliminated through widespread ash tree removal, that global trading will continue to mean risks to different species of our trees, so we must become more proactive and smarter in saving trees, as Oakville has done, rather than simply cutting them down,” said Shuster.

**For More Information:**

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