

May 7, 2012

Dear Mayor Watson,

The Emerald Ash Borer infestation will have an impact on Ottawa like none other this City has faced before.

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital has put together a Working Group that is finalizing a Position Paper to further a productive discussion with City staff and others and to help enlist public support to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

I wrote today to David Barkley, Manager of Forestry Services, asking him to provide us with additional information prior to meeting with him and Councillor McRae in the near future so that we may discuss our Position Paper with them. We would then like a follow-up meeting with you at the earliest opportunity to present to you our approach based on our economic analysis and the latest scientific evidence we have collated and to answer any questions you may have.

Residents, once they become aware of the full impact, will be extremely concerned about the loss of one-quarter of Ottawa's municipal tree canopy as well as the huge cost that will fall to ratepayers to remove, dispose of and replace these trees over the next number of years. This does not include the significant cost to homeowners where the loss of mature trees will result in increased air conditioning costs, and reduced property values. Furthermore, it does not include health costs from poorer air quality, or costs of reduced water retention on the landscape.

With so much at stake, we feel that an adaptive management approach needs to be implemented that is in line with the most current science, as well as to learn from the experience of other communities. Cities such as Burlington and Hamilton are significantly revising their approach based on current science, and the severe potential consequences of doing little or nothing to save their Ash trees. Ottawa too must address this emergency. Ottawa's situation is indeed more dire, in that Ash trees represent only 10% of these cities' urban tree cover while in Ottawa, Ashes represent 25%.

As you may by now be aware, the City's Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee recently passed a set of resolutions that included requesting Council to immediately shift its priority policy response to EAB, to a proactive approach of treating trees with TreeAzin. Should council agree, and we very much hope they will, this could have serious implications regarding the City's tender on Ash Wood Sorting and Processing which has a May 7th closing date. We see as highly problematic any contractual obligations to supply large quantities of ash wood in ever increasing volume over a four year period; particularly live trees, the most economically valuable. We are therefore asking the City to defer making any formal decision or commitment on a contract until we have had an opportunity to meet.

We hope to hear from you in the very near future as there is considerable urgency in meeting with you since the window of opportunity to significantly increase the number of trees treated is soon closing. We can assure you that we very much want to work with the City on this critical issue.

Sol Shuster

Chair, Greenspace Alliance EAB Working Group