

Call Before You Cut! The Importance of Tree protection

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Though Winnipeg is a city located in the Canadian Prairies, it is surprisingly home of 8 millions of trees. Arriving by plane you clearly can see that Winnipeg is a city under a huge canopy! Winnipeg's urban forest is famous due to the largest urban population of elm trees in North America and this dates back to the early 1900's. It has become public knowledge that Winnipeg's canopy is threatened by Dutch Elm Disease. The City's Urban Forestry does everything to fight against it, namely surveying, pruning, and removing diseased trees and with some success replanting them. But there is further need to call action. A large part of Winnipeg's trees is privately owned, but there is no regulation to avoid the destruction or injury of significant and healthy trees on private properties. The Urban Forestry Department pushed the protection of privately owned trees many years ago, but stopped by council there is still nothing that controls the legal sound of a chainsaw.

Winnipeg is in need to enact a Private Tree Protection Bylaw otherwise this city will end up like it started: Covered by grass. We do not want to imagine Winnipeg without those magnificent trees, but the reality and the condition of trees forces us to deal with this dramatic change and to act. World wide there are cities with cutting-edge models how to protect trees and it could be so easy to learn from them if the will exists. This presentation will refer to relevant precedents and discuss possible actions as well as their assets and drawbacks. The topic is politically very delicate since votes can't be won with it, but at the end of the day the general welfare should prevail over private gain. Let's tackle it before it is too late.