

Council must get serious about tree protection: reader

Aurora's present tree bylaw is severely inadequate. Property owners can cut down 4 trees per year greater than 20 centimeters in diameter each. With this bylaw, four 60 year old trees 70 centimeters in diameter would be allowed to be destroyed annually by a property owner, with no reason required.

Toronto on the other hand believes in preserving their urban forest where any tree greater than 30 cm in diameter on private property is protected by their tree bylaws with stringent criteria before a permit to cut down is granted and valid consequences for ignoring the bylaw. Like Toronto, we should be looking at the size of the trees not the size of the lot.

One study, in Massachusetts's Harvard Forest, found that at 50 years of age, their trees, both oak and maple, were absorbing 0.8 tons of carbon per acre every year. 15 years later, that rate of carbon uptake had doubled. Trees not only remove a significant amount of carbon dioxide from our atmosphere but they also replace it with oxygen. Each time we lose these old growth trees we lose part of the critical natural air filtration system that each tree provides and that each person benefits from.

Deforestation is a major contributor to the buildup of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere and municipalities such as Aurora need to follow Toronto's lead in drafting valid tree protection laws as well as effective consequences to discourage wanton destruction of this precious natural resource. Council should also consider a reduction in property taxes for homeowners who protect older trees on their property to encourage them to spend money on proper tree care to extend their life.

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