

Halton Hills tree population still long way from full recovery

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The Town of Halton Hills has included \$200,000 in its proposed 2018 budget to replace trees lost a few years ago during the emerald ash borer infestation that decimated the province's ash tree population.

Despite such a significant investment, according to Halton Hills superintendent of public works Richard Spear, town staff still has a long way to go before being able to fully replenish the town's canopy.

"Currently we have in excess of 1,500 trees that we need to replace. So, with the funding we had available in 2017, we were able to plant I think 257 trees, I think it was. With this extra money, I anticipate we should be able to do in excess of 400 trees (in 2018)," Spear told the Halton Hills budget com-

mittee at its Nov. 15 meeting.

"Doing the math, we're still quite a bit behind. And while we're that far behind, we're still cutting down trees as they die," added Spear.

According to Spear, staff is planting a number of native species of trees to replace ash tree losses. The type of tree depends on location, and factors like road proximity to road salt and power lines.

"We have the list of locations already, and once we find out how much money we have available to us, we know roughly how many trees we can plant," he said.

"We try to mix up the variety because we had certain streets that were all ash trees.

So, when you see a whole street obliterated by the ash trees being killed, we like to mix up the species in case something like this comes



Ryan Pfeiffer / Metroland

Despite a proposed investment of \$200,000 in 2018 for tree planting, a lot more time and money will be required before the town's canopy is fully replaced.

along again," added Spear.

According to the numbers presented, if the

town can plant 400 trees for \$200,000, and there are more than 1,500 trees left to replace, assuming cur-

rent funding levels moving forward it could take up to three more years and somewhere around

\$800,000 to undo the damage caused by the emerald ash borer infestation.

Councillor Moya Johnson raised the possibility of seeking additional funding through provincial and federal programs, while Coun. Clark Somerville suggested looking into possible contributions from the private sector to possibly speed the process up and reduce costs to the taxpayer.

While the town has accessed such funding in the past for the purpose of replacing its tree canopy, according to town staff, no such funding has yet been yet sought for 2018.

The \$200,000 included in next year's budget for tree planting has been approved by the budget committee, but must still be given final approval by council when it considers the proposed budget next month.

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Lucas, age 9, Toronto, ON celebrating his dash.

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