

Current standard 'very general,' says Lasowski

"I prefer we don't trim," said Pereira. "So we want to get an understanding amongst everybody that this is the way we're going to proceed."

The proposed changes to date have involved consultations with arborists and a review of local tree species. Currently Milton Hydro keeps a minimum of 3 m clearance from the power lines.

Milton Hydro President and CEO Frank Lasowski told the *Champion* the current tree trimming spec is "very general" and needs improvement. "Now what we've tried to do is specify. If it is just the trunk which doesn't have the same sway as a branch, then we will shorten that 3 m distance depending on the type of tree."

Among the species scrutinized at the meeting was the Manitoba Maple, which can mature up to 24 inches annually and is considered to be one of the fastest growing trees in Ontario. Milton Hydro is considering cutting back those faster growing trees to up to 6 m above the lines.

The changes, if approved by town council, will be costly at first, Lasowski said. "In that first cycle of us going through under these new specifications we know the cost is going to go up and it will be significantly higher than what we're spending today. The goal is that the second time around it will be very similar to what we're doing today."

Councillor Cindy Lunau asked that Milton Hydro also include the costs of burying the lines in rural areas as an alternative to tree trimming. Pereira said it was an option but cost was an issue. "My experience has been that it's significantly more expensive."

The utility is continuing to seek the public's opinion before putting any revisions into place.

"If people are really going to say we can live with the outages, we'd rather save the trees, then we'll take that into consideration before we do our final version," Lasowski said. "We're trying to gauge what the public really is going to be able to support."

Milton Hydro hopes to table the amendment before town council's summer break.

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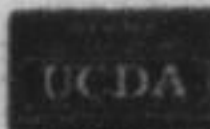
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