

June 11, 2023

Edmonton City Council
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square,
Edmonton, AB T5J 0R2

Dear City Council,


**Re: Implement a private tree by-law to better protect and
grow Edmonton's canopy**

We are writing to you to urge you to support the development and implementation of a private tree bylaw in the City of Edmonton.

A private tree bylaw offers comprehensive protection of trees on private property, and is a suitable and necessary tool for a large municipality such as Edmonton to use. Through the inclusion of components such as tree replacement ratios, criteria for tree removal permits, and enforceable penalties for illicit tree removal, private tree bylaws can be sufficiently flexible to allow for reasonable tree removal when needed, while also being effective in ensuring overall tree protection and supporting canopy growth.

In Edmonton, private trees comprise a significant portion of the city's canopy cover. According to Edmonton's urban forest management plan, 45% of the city's total number of trees are on privately owned residential and commercial lands. It is therefore extremely concerning that there is no bylaw in place to ensure the long-term protection of the private trees that make up almost half of the city's canopy cover.

A private tree bylaw is needed not only to continue delivering valuable ecosystem services in the midst of a climate crisis, but also to help fulfill the city's promises in an efficient, cost-effective and sustainable manner. Edmonton has committed to increasing its total canopy cover from 13% to 20% through the planting of an additional two million trees on public land by 2050, but the absence of a private tree bylaw may hamper the progress of those promises. An increase in canopy cover accomplished through tree-planting would be diminished if private trees are not protected from being lost to development. It is more practical and cost-effective to protect existing private trees than to spend extensive funds on the planting and maintenance of younger saplings that essentially help offset the potential loss of trees on private property.



In fact, the effectiveness of private tree protection has been recognized in several cities across Canada. For example, Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and other municipalities that have already achieved at least 20% canopy cover have a private tree bylaw in place. These cities' bylaws support the notion of canopy growth through limiting canopy cover loss on private land. Additionally, they can be used as case studies to identify best practices and develop a private tree bylaw that can be adapted to suit Edmonton's context.

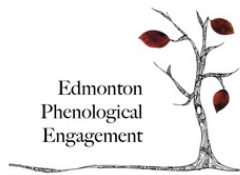
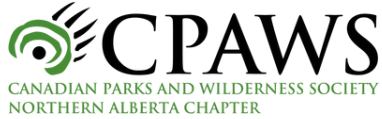
Furthermore, a private tree bylaw can also guide and make way for more sustainable densification. Better protection of existing privately owned trees from infill development would greatly increase the likelihood of trees being included in new urban designs. Consequently, in contrast to densification occurring with very little to no trees, development that accommodates and includes the urban forest would be much less vulnerable to climate change impacts. Development and private tree protection must not be regarded as opposing ideas, but rather as complementary components that are needed to create a more sustainable city.

A private tree bylaw can evidently benefit the city in several ways, and also has the backing of both the city's residents and urban forestry department. Results from a survey conducted by the urban forestry department suggest that the majority of Edmonton's residents would welcome a private tree bylaw, as almost 70% of survey respondents supported the notion. The department itself has also identified researching and developing guidelines for effective tree protection on private lands as a long-term objective. This interest, coupled with the support of the majority of residents, justify the need to develop and implement a private tree bylaw.

Edmonton seeks to be a healthy and climate-resilient city. Implementing a private tree bylaw would be an opportunity to step closer towards realizing this vision. We strongly urge you to support the development and implementation of a private tree bylaw.

Sincerely,

SIGNATORIES



SIGNATORIES

Alberta Plant Watch

Bellevue Community Sustainability
Committee

Canadian Association of Physicians
for the Environment - Alberta
Regional Chapter

Canadian Parks and Wilderness
Society - Northern Alberta

Carbon Busters

City Tree Service

David Suzuki Foundation

Earth's General Store

Edmonton Climate Hub

Edmonton Permaculture Guild

Edmonton Phenological
Engagement

Edmonton River Valley
Conservation Coalition

Fern's Flower Gardens

Food for Thought

Friends of the River Recreation
Association

Green Light Awareness Society

Healthy YEG

Lady Flower Gardens

Nature Canada

North Saskatchewan River Valley
Conservation Society

PACE Alberta Co-op Ltd.

Pesticide Free Edmonton

Resource Energy

Shrubscriber

Solar Power Investment
Cooperative of Edmonton

Spruce Avenue Community League

The Crooked Tree Arborist Services
Inc.

Tree Link Arboriculture Ltd.

Under the Linden Bakehouse

Waste Free Edmonton

Wild Birds Unlimited Edmonton