



SOS Trees Coalition Position Statement on the erosion of the urban forest.

Stop the erosion of Saskatoon's urban forest by replacement plantings of an equal amount of diameter at breast height (DBH) to the DBH removed annually.

"Saskatoon's urban forest is a defining part of our community that provides immeasurable benefits – ecologically, socially, culturally, and economically. Trees connect us to nature, each other, and ourselves, as well as to other species that our urban forest supports. Trees also provide essential services such as improvements to air and water quality, cooling and shade, storm water management, and climate adaptation and mitigation benefits." - *Pathway to a sustainable urban forest*

Issue:

In recent years the City of Saskatoon has been removing 700+/- trees per year with an average DBH (diameter at breast height) of 18.6 inches and planting approximately 700 trees with a DBH of 1-3 inches. Basically, we are replacing only 10% of our City trees' DBH loss annually. This represents the erosion of a principal investment of our city's ancestors who had the foresight to plant trees on the prairie. No other City asset appears to have been allowed to degrade at this rate.

Multiple reports to Council document the need for and value of trees in Saskatoon; whether the 2017 report *Building Better Parks*, or the *City's Plan for Growth, Strategic Plan 2018-2021, Climate Action Plan*, or the *Green Infrastructure Strategy*, all identify green spaces and specifically the urban forest as important assets in supporting sustainable growth, environmental leadership, and quality of life. In addition, the *Low Emissions Community Plan of the Climate Action Plan* identifies "planting trees as a mitigation opportunity; specifically, afforestation contributes significantly to carbon sequestration." *The Urban Forestry Management Plan* is a great first step toward protecting and expanding Saskatoon's urban forest; however, much of it is dependent on unidentified funding sources.

Each City plan/report demonstrates that City trees are not just aesthetic, but a critical part of the city infrastructure and pivotal to the city's livability in the future. Yet, the City of Saskatoon Urban Forestry has not seen a significant budgetary increase in the past 5 years. While we applaud the City Tree Protection By-Law currently in development as a much-needed step, without adequate funding its effectiveness to protect our urban forest is in question.

Position: The City of Saskatoon needs to fund Urban Forestry at a level sufficient to replace and maintain trees at a rate equal to the DBH removed annually.

SOS Trees Coalition Position Statement on protecting trees on private property.

Protecting significant trees on private property through a tax incentive process.

Issue:

It is estimated that roughly 50% of the trees in Saskatoon are located on private property. Trees are not just a benefit to the landowner, increasing the value of their property as well as offering shade, shelter, and protection from the elements; but trees also benefit the community as a whole. The value of trees is well documented in multiple reports to Council. The trees' community value increases with age and size. Saskatoon has the opportunity to incentivize homeowners of significant trees to maintain those existing trees with a simple tax credit.

Position: The City of Saskatoon needs to institute a tax credit for trees of significant size located on private property.

SOS Trees Coalition Position Statement on the limited planting opportunities for boulevard trees.

Increasing the number of trees on boulevards and front yards

Issue:

In older neighborhoods, replacement of boulevard trees that have been removed is dependent on the homeowner to take the initiative to request a tree, i.e. they need to opt in. Saskatoon continues to lose tree planting opportunities due to absentee landlords, homeowner procrastination or lack of knowledge or opportunity. Very few homeowners are even aware that they can request a tree for their boulevard.

In new neighborhoods, the opportunity for boulevard trees is frequently planned out of possibility by city planners and/or developers. Boulevards, when proposed, become utility corridors leaving no room for trees. Placing trees in front yards on private property becomes the only possibility. As a result, new neighborhoods are noticeably absent of trees that would, in the coming years, expand the urban canopy.

Position:

Saskatoon needs to shift to a proactive approach to tree planting:

- Replace the current opt-in boulevard tree replacement process with an opt-out process.
- When developing new neighborhoods, require the developer or builder to plant one tree in each front yard where boulevard planting is not possible.

SOS Trees Coalition Position Statement on the benefits of public tree education.

Increasing public understanding of the values and care of trees within a prairie environment

Issue

Public knowledge of the value of trees and our city's canopy cover is often lacking. This absence contributes to low community initiative or participation in sustaining the urban canopy. With more public education from trusted sources about the ecological, social, cultural, and economical benefits of trees, we will very likely see more trees being planted, maintained, and protected by the public.

Position: The City needs to fund public tree education to include the value and care of trees, Dutch Elm Disease risks and disposal procedures, opportunities to plant trees on boulevards, and other essential content that will prepare the public to help sustain the urban canopy.

SOS Trees Coalition Position Statement on reducing barriers to disease prevention due to climate change in Saskatoon's urban forest.

Reducing the impact of insect and disease on Saskatoon's trees due to climate change

Issue:

Dutch Elm Disease (DED) and the Emerald Ash Borer are significant threats to our urban forest, especially our largest city trees. The current City practice leaves room for improvement. Elms in alleyways, shelterbelts, afforestation areas and unused areas are not pruned or monitored. Some homeowners are reluctant to properly dispose of elm wood at the land fill due to cost or inability to transport.

Position: The City of Saskatoon needs to better support the protection of trees from insects and disease by:

- Increasing the City DED surveillance program budget to include all Elms within the city
- Removing all fees for the disposal of elm wood
- Establishing multiple locations where homeowners may drop elm wood for the City to chip and dispose of
- Increasing funding to expand the DED monitoring to all trees within Saskatoon.