

## **New tree bylaw proposes stiffer fees, penalties**

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Paul Johanis, chair of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, says he wants a moratorium on tree cutting before the 'teeth' of the bylaw comes into effect. (Krystalle Ramlakhan/CBC)

Ottawa's proposed tree protection bylaw strengthens rules protecting urban trees and halting deforestation by imposing harsh penalties for breaking them.

The new bylaw — which will go before the environment committee for approval next Tuesday, Dec. 17 — would blend two bylaws that currently deal with trees on municipal land and private property.

"This can't come soon enough. We've already lost so many trees in Ottawa, particularly in the urban areas," said Coun. Shawn Menard, vice-chair of the committee.

He said he believes Ottawa's current fines for removing trees without the proper permits are weak.

The proposed bylaw both increases the application fee for removing distinctive trees and ups the fines for developers and homeowners who break municipal law.

### **2 phases**

The bylaw is laid out in two phases.

Phase one maps out protection for certain trees and how much it would cost people to both apply to remove those trees, as well as what they would have to pay if they don't plant other trees in its place.

The application fee would depend on whether the tree is being removed because of an infill — \$500/tree — or smaller-scale projects, like a pool or deck — \$150/tree.

An application fee wouldn't be charged if the tree is dead, poses an immediate danger, or is [an ash tree](#).

Phase two would decrease the diameter of a "distinctive tree" (requiring a permit to cut in some situations) from 50 centimetres to 30, but wouldn't come into effect until the summer of 2020.



The phased implementation already has Paul Johanis worried about pre-emptive chopping of larger trees.

"Trees of that size are very difficult to replace," said the chair of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital.

"It takes decades to replace them. You need to plan the replacement over a long period of time and so, if they're lost right now, there's no prospect of having them replaced for quite a long time."

He wants to see a three-month moratorium on tree cutting before phase two comes into effect.

### **Too much focus on single trees**

Meanwhile, at least one developer believes the bylaw contradicts the city's own official plan, which [focuses on intensification](#).

"There really seems to be a choice of 'We're going to choose a tree over densifying on a particular spot' when we could do so many other things to enhance the overall canopy as opposed to one individual tree," said Jason Burggraaf.





The application fee to remove a tree will depend on whether it's being cut down to make way for an infill property or a smaller construction project. (Matthew Kupfer/CBC)

The executive director of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association said the bylaw prioritizes older trees — even as city staff point out some may be nearing the end of their lives and that it may impede the ability to build bigger, multi-unit buildings.

He believes the city should be prioritizing the overall urban forest, with younger trees planted nearby or in other areas of the city that can provide more of a canopy in the future.

Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-tree-bylaw-protect-1.5388685>