

## **Concept: How Might We Recover the cost of aerial spraying of private properties as a result of severe Gypsy Moth infestation**

### **Background:**

In response to a Gypsy Moth infestation in 2009 staff reported to Council through Committee Report CAO 04-09 that “The severity of the infestation of the moth will dictate the policy and procedure that the Town would implement in any given year to control the Gypsy Moth”. Because the level of infestation cannot be determined in a typical year until after the Operating Budget for that year is approved, staff are not able to prepare a budget to respond to an infestation of Gypsy Moths or other potential pests.

In 2009 the Gypsy Moth Infestation, similar to 2019, warranted the spraying of both Public and Private trees. The total cost in 2009 was projected to be approximately \$100,000.00. Staff recommended that the 2009 aerial spray program be funded 50% through the 2008 surplus, and 50% from the 2009 Working Fund Reserve. This was because the time required by the Town’s treasury department to prepare and collect a charge from the privately owned properties would not be cost effective and the Town had adequate resources to fund the program.

With the surveying of trees complete, 117.9 acres of Public and Private land within the Urban Area was identified as critical for Aerial Spraying. Of the 117.9 acres, 15.6 acres are publically owned including Hillcrest Park and the Steve Bauer Trail and 102.3 acres are private owned properties. The approximate cost for the aerial spraying of 117.9 acres is \$73,716.98+hst. The cost attributed to spraying 102.3 acres of private properties within the identified urban spray areas is \$63,937.50+hst.

Council approved an Operating Budget of \$25,000.00 for the coordination and spraying of Public Trees on Municipally owned property and coordination of rural spraying by private owners based on estimates provided by Trees Unlimited in October of 2018. Utilizing the approved budget the Town of Pelham will also spray 30 acres in rural areas including Marlene Stewart Streit Park, North Pelham Park, Timmsdale Park (woodlot), 71 Cherry Ridge (woodlot), and Hillside Cemetery. The cost to aerial spray municipally owned property in both Urban and Rural areas, as well as the coordination of the spray program is approximately \$19,910.00. Mapping of spray areas are attached to this report. At the time of writing some areas required additional refinement.

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2019 Gypsy Moth Control Program Cost Recovery  
Monday, May 06, 2019

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On April 23, 2019 Council endorsed the recommendation to implement a Gypsy Moth Spray program to include both Public and Private trees within the identified areas and that staff coordinate a process to recover a portion of the cost of the spray from affected property owners.

**The Challenge:**

The cost to spray 102.3 acres of urban area private property is approximately \$63,937.50+hst in response to the Gypsy Moth infestation. There is limited staff time and resources available to determine the cost for individual property owners based on the area of property being sprayed or number of trees. The costs of spraying trees outside of the identified spray areas or urban boundary would be the responsibility of the property owner. For rural properties suitable for aerial spraying, the costs are \$510.00 for the first 3 acres (3 acre minimum), and \$100.00/acre after that. Costs related to urban spraying are significantly higher than rural due to the regulations regarding flying at low altitude over populated areas and the requirement for the use of twin engine helicopters which are more expensive to operate. For individual urban properties outside of the spray areas it is not logistically possible or economically viable to be aerial sprayed, the cost to ground spray individual trees would be between \$100.00 and \$200.00 per tree.

The most efficient method to recover the cost for the aerial spray program is to require all the private properties within the identified spray areas to share the cost equally regardless of lot size or tree count. This would be accomplished by dividing the total cost of private property spraying (\$63,937.50) by the number of private properties to be sprayed (250-300). The cost to individual property owners is estimated to be between \$225 - \$275+hst. The finalized amount will be applied to the property taxes of affected property owners in the 2019 taxation year. Multi-unit Condo Complexes will be treated as one property.

**Our Recommended Solution:**

THAT Committee of the Whole receive the 2019 Gypsy Moth Infestation Cost Recovery Process Report; and

THAT Committee recommend to Council:

THAT staff be directed to recover the cost of aerial spraying of private properties within the identified urban spray areas in response to the Gypsy Moth infestation by evenly distributing the cost to spray private property to all affected property owners.

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2019 Gypsy Moth Control Program Cost Recovery  
Monday, May 06, 2019

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That staff be directed to apply the cost of aerial spraying to the 2019 property tax bill for all properties within the identified urban spray areas.

**Rationale:**

Both Public and Private Trees can be affected by infestation of Gypsy Moths or other potential pests. Infestations are not easily predicted and their potential impacts or costs cannot be planned for during Operating Budget preparation. As Rural and Urban property owners outside of the spray areas are responsible for their own properties, although they receive a social and environmental benefit from the urban forest, it would not be fair to fund this program through the tax levy. As it is not possible to determine the origin of the infestation, all property owners within the spray areas must be treated equally. The Town of Pelham has not provided assistance, financial or otherwise, to property owners affected by other pests including the Emerald Ash Borer, for the treatment, or the removal of dead or diseased Ash trees.

**Other pertinent Reports:**

- Control of Gypsy Moth Outbreak in the Town of Pelham (April 1, 2019)
- 2019 Town of Pelham Gypsy Moth Infestation (April 23, 2019)

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**Recommended by:**

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*This report was prepared in consultation with Ryan Cook, Manager of Public Works*

Appendix 1 – Gypsy Moth Spray Program Mapping