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## Ash tree cull stops — for now

**EMERALD ASH BORER: Injections may combat killer bugs**

By CHIP MARTIN THE LONDON FREE PRESS

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(QMI Agency file photo)

A stay of execution is coming for over 1,000 London ash trees city hall was going to fell this year.

It may be a brief one, however, as a city hall committee seeks a report on its tree cull response to the emerald ash borer and tries to understand why Oakville injects 40% of its trees with pesticide to save them but London only injects 4%.

The bid for a moratorium was made Monday by a group of Westmount neighbours who warned killing 96% of ash trees will devalue private properties by \$20 million across the city, while costing the city hundreds of thousands of unnecessary dollars.

"We think there should be a reassessment of which trees should be injected," argued Tobin Court resident Guy Holburn.

His residential court saw 20 trees felled in the last month that Holburn insisted were healthy.

The loss of trees has led to a \$300,000 loss of property value on Tobin Court, based on a conservative estimate of about \$5,500 as the amount a tree adds to the value of a property, he said.

"And that's a conservative estimate," Holburn said, noting the City of London places the value of trees at about 20% of a property's value.

An independent arbourist felt the 20 trees removed were actually healthy, he said.

And Holburn wondered how the 384 trees targeted for chemical treatment were chosen. He noted a similar neighbourhood to Tobin Court was seeing injections instead of felling.

Holburn estimated the city could save \$200,000 to \$250,000 annually by injecting ash trees to save them.

Ivan Listar, the city's urban forester, said one in every 10 trees in London is an ash tree and now underway is "the most aggressive tree planting program in history," to plant 3,000 trees this year.

Listar said London has a longer history of dealing with the emerald ash borer than Oakville.

"We are a pioneer in the use of TreeAzin" to treat trees, he said. TreeAzin is a pesticide injected into the trunks of healthy trees.

Listar and city planner John Fleming denied any healthy trees have been removed. City staff identify those to be removed and Davey Tree Service does the job.

"The whole program is premised on not cutting down healthy trees," Fleming said, but he agreed to report back about the success of the program and compare it to that in Oakville.

"The city has listened," a pleased Holburn said afterward. His group wants to see 1.5 large-diameter trees planted for each ash removed as compensation.

The Tobin Court delegation drew a sympathetic ear from Coun. Judy Bryant who said losing a tree is like losing a member of the family.

"People need to grieve and pine," Bryant said, as she backed the bid for a moratorium and an emergency meeting before council's May 1 session to deal with the issue.

Coun. Joni Baechler said the situation in Oakville is worth assessing to see if it knows something London doesn't.

It was agreed the removal of obviously dead or dying trees will continue in the meantime.

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