



TREES Winnipeg

The Coalition to Save the Elms

Trees Winnipeg (Coalition to Save the Elms) Recommendations for Improvements to Winnipeg's Dutch Elm Disease (DED) Management Program

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Historic Success of the DED Program

DED is the most destructive disease of elms in North America, and has devastated elm populations around the world. Before the occurrence of DED in Manitoba, it is estimated that the natural elm population in the central and southern portions of the province was approximately 20 million trees. Also since the early 1900's over five million elms were planted in cities, towns and in rural shelter belts. The disease was identified in Winnipeg in 1975, at which time, municipal and provincial authorities initiated a cost-shared, **integrated** program of control which currently includes the following components:

**Surveillance
Removal
Sanitation (wood disposal)
Pruning
Basal spray treatments**

**Replanting trees
Public education
Research
Community Action**

In 1980, Manitoba enacted the Dutch Elm Disease Act (now the Forest Health Act), a legal framework for the administration of the DED control program. By 1990, the DED program was a fully integrated pest management effort that encompassed 50 towns, cities and municipalities across an area of approximately 100,000 square kilometres.

Over the years, both the province and the city have spent a lot of money to manage DED losses. In Winnipeg, over \$2 million each year is spent on DED control. The annual loss of elms to DED was kept to a level of less than 2% of the total inventory for many years. This figure is considered acceptable to maintain a large elm population. More recently the loss rate has crept up to 3%. In recent years, we have been working with the Province of Manitoba and City of Winnipeg to reassess the DED program and have been exploring options for revising the current management practices.

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Points of Concern & Recommendations

Our urban forest is a dynamic system which undergoes frequent change. Trees Winnipeg recognizes that our DED control program must also evolve with this system in order to maintain its effectiveness. Through our relationships with the city of Winnipeg, the province, homeowners, academic institutions, and the arboriculture industry, we have identified the following concerns:

1. Diseased elms marked for removal are not removed prior to the flight period for the elm bark beetle (EBB) in spring, increasing the risk of infection of nearby healthy trees

Recommendations: Recognizing that a full rapid-removal system may not be feasible at this time, the city may consider allocating additional funds to the Forestry department for a selective rapid-removal program (prioritizing trees based on infection level, etc.), and/or use these funds to investigate the potential of using “trap trees” (i.e. dying elms that serve as bait to EBB and are then removed) to help lower beetle populations in diseased areas.

2. The tree replacement rate falls short of the removal rate, meaning that not enough trees are being planted to maintain our current population of trees (elms, as well as other species)
3. Elm firewood continues to be stored on private property, which serves as a breeding ground for EBB

Recommendations: It is important to maintain a replacement ration of 1:1 in order to maintain our current tree population. Given that 80% of tree removals are on private property, it is important that homeowners be part of the management program. While the city removes such a large proportion of trees on private property, it is clear from the population decrease that homeowners are not replacing these trees. To help encourage replanting, the city may consider subsidizing planting on private property, which would be significantly cheaper than bearing the full cost of all tree replacements. As part of such a program, we advocate for the continued planting of a range of tree species to increase species diversity in the urban forest.

In addition, homeowners need to recognize the importance of long-term care and maintenance for the trees on their property (i.e. pruning, watering, spraying,

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disposal of elm firewood, fungicide injections if necessary, etc.) as their participation is crucial to the success of any city forest management program.

Our Role

Trees Winnipeg is proud of the partnerships we have maintained with the City of Winnipeg, the Province, and the public. As already stated, the success of the DED management program depends on the continued cooperation of all three groups. As educators, Trees Winnipeg is prepared to assist with improving Winnipeg's DED program in the following ways:

1. Offer assistance (in-kind or financial assistance where possible) for additional research on the feasibility of rapid-removal options and the employment of alternate methods (i.e. trap trees) to help facilitate faster removal of infected elms
2. Collaborate with the city to provide free tree planting workshops for the public as part of a subsidized tree planting program and develop an awareness campaign for tree care and firewood disposal on private property
3. Continue to engage the public in educational workshops on all aspects of tree care, and raise awareness of urban forest issues and volunteer opportunities through public events such as the annual Arbor Day Festival and the Winnipeg Forest Watch Program.
4. Encourage the public to use ISA-certified arborists for their tree care concerns on private property.

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