

Forestry Services Audit

Recommendation

That the September 18, 2020, Office of the City Auditor report OCA00036, be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the Forestry Services Audit.

Report

The City of Edmonton is responsible for the maintenance of over 385,000 trees in its inventory. This work includes pruning, tree removal, tree planting, and tree watering. The value of these trees are approximately \$1.8 Billion.

The purpose of this audit was to determine whether the City is: effective in maintaining and monitoring their tree inventory, efficient in using resources to support a healthy and growing urban forest, and whether guiding documents provide clear direction in managing the urban forest.

We made two recommendations to improve on effectiveness. The annual workload for pruning as well as the 4-year and 7-year cycle for pruning trees should be reviewed in order to ensure pruning targets can be met. Additionally, documenting and verifying invoices can be improved upon in order to ensure work has been completed and paid appropriately. Forestry is effective in ensuring staff are completing their mandatory training as well as having plans in place to deal with potential pest outbreaks.

In general, Forestry is efficient in using its resources to support a healthy and growing urban forest. This includes trialling the use of tablets to record tree information and being cost efficient in planting and watering trees. In order to improve on efficiency, we recommended a review of their tree inventory data to ensure the data is complete and accurate. Additionally, Forestry should review their equipment utilization in order to optimize the use of equipment.

The guiding documents have a focus on growth, sustainability, acquisition, maintenance, protection and preservation of the City's urban forest. However, we found opportunities to improve on the clarity, accuracy, and consistency in these documents. Additionally, reported performance measures should be described with a clear methodology, are understandable, accurate, and comparable.

Policy

Bylaw 16097, Audit Committee Bylaw, Section 14(d) states that, “Committee will review all reports from the City Auditor dealing with completed audit projects.”

Public Engagement

Public engagement was not required for this report.

Attachment

1. Forestry Services Audit Report