

HERITAGE TREE PROTECTION TOOLS by Barbara Heidenreich

Introduction - LEGISLATIVE TOOLS FOR TREE PROTECTION:

Don't expect that trees, woodlands and forests will remain just because they have been there for hundreds of years. They don't have "rights"; the person who owns the land where they grow generally owns the trees. However the ecological benefits that trees provide go well beyond benefiting only the landowner and extend to society in general. That is why we all should be "tree huggers", "tree champions" and "public interest advocates" on their behalf. Only caring owners and the vigilance and action of individuals like yourself will ensure that future generations will enjoy the trees that mean so much to you. Since trees are so important to society in general, local governments have the ability to protect them and these tools have been made available through provincial legislation. The provincial *Planning Act* and the Section 135 (1) of the *Municipal Act* allow municipalities to protect trees very effectively. It is up to you to ensure that your municipality uses these tools. By working closely with your local Council and your municipal planning staff you can ensure that those unique natural spaces and special trees are protected forever.

This section of the Ontario Heritage Tree Protection Toolkit will describe the key legislative tools available in Ontario that allow various levels of government to conserve individual trees and woodlands and control tree destruction and injury on public and private land. We will review the most important sections of the *Planning Act, 1990*, the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the *Ontario Heritage Act, 1990*, the *Conservation Land Act, 1990*. Other relevant pieces of legislation such as the *Forestry Act, 1990*, *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, 1990, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, Greenbelt Act, 2005, Places to Grow Act, 2005* are less geographically general or tree specific.

The Planning Act

A first line of defense in natural heritage protection is the *Planning Act* which requires your Council to prepare a local municipal **Official Plan** and **zoning by-laws.** These are the most important tools that will shape what happens on the ground in your community. Official Plans give a vision of how your community will look in the future and this vision is required to be reviewed (under s. 26(1)) every five years. If your vision has natural areas, forests and heritage trees, make certain that your Official Plan states as "policies", that

these features are to be protected (see Appendix A for suggested wording). Then make certain that the Schedules attached to your Official Plan *designate* these natural features to be protected with designations such as "environmentally sensitive", "natural heritage protection", "significant forests", etc. Ensure that heritage trees are recognized in the definition section and covered in the protection polices written as the text part of the Official Plan even if you have not as yet gone through the process of the "Great Community Tree Hunt". The municipalities comprehensive zoning by-law needs to confirm these conservation land use designations. In the future, any changes to the Official Plan and Zoning-By-law are required to go through a public amendment process. Knowing how this process works, how subdivisions are approved and that tree protection conditions can be attached to their approval (talk to your planner, contact advocacy groups such as Ontario Nature, read the *Planning Act* and planning activist handbooks) and involving yourself in the planning process is the only way you have of ensuring that the natural areas that define your community are protected and stay protected... unless you plan to buy them all. Quality of life in your community is **your** responsibility.

How does the Planning Act work? The *Planning Act* compels municipalities to look after their ecological systems and provides many tools for accomplishing conservation throughout the municipality. These are listed below:

- (1) The "protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features and functions" is a statutory responsibility of government under Section 2 (a) of the *Planning Act*. Since trees are an integral part of ecological systems and natural heritage areas, their consideration in any land use decision is required by this statute.
- (2) **Provincial Policy Statements** (PPS) issued under Section 3 of the *Planning Act* came into effect March 1, 2005. The current PPS require Councils to make decisions that protect the province's natural heritage.

In addition to declaring the protection of natural heritage features to be of provincial interest, there are several other sections of the *Planning Act* listed next that explicitly provide for tree protection.

(3) Under Part III of the *Planning Act* municipalities are required to develop an **Official plan**, which, together with its land use schedules, describes the values of your community and how it will grow in the future. Heritage trees, natural heritage systems, significant woodlands, wetlands and environmental features and functions should all be included and defined in the Official Plan. Official Plan "designations" contain two key components: a land use designation with a name (such as "Significant Woodlands", ESA – Environmentally Sensitive Area, etc.) and land use provisions which set forth policies for allowable activities and subsequent by-laws. The policies should be forceful about protecting the identified areas and the areas should be identified and designated for protection on the accompanying schedules to the body of the Official Plan (APPENDIX A).

- (4) Under Part V (s. 34) of the *Planning Act*, municipalities are able to pass comprehensive and site specific **Zoning By-laws**. The *Planning Act* specifically provides for the passing of zoning by-laws to conserve the municipality's natural features. Section 34 (3.2) allows municipalities to prohibit "any use of land and the erecting, locating or using of any class or classes of buildings or structures within any defined area or areas, (i) that is a significant wildlife habitat, wetland, woodland, ravine, valley or area of natural and scientific interest, (ii) that is a significant corridor or shoreline of a lake, river or stream, or (iii) that is a significant natural corridor, feature or area."
- (5) Under Part V (s. 41) the *Planning Act* provides for **Site Plan Control** which allows municipalities to examine any development application and ensure among other site plan details, which trees get protected, where new trees should be planted, all provided for under s. 41 (7 (a) 6) that specifically covers a site's trees, hedges and shrubs. Site plans are negotiated between the developer and municipality and public input is at the discretion of council. Public input can be forced through an OMB hearing on an amending zoning by-law if required, but it is far better to work with council to ensure they use their power to secure what the neighbourhood wishes.
- (6) Further, under Section V (s. 42.1) "as a condition of development or redevelopment of land, the council of a local municipality may, by by-law applicable to the whole municipality or to any defined area or areas thereof, require that land in an amount not exceeding, in the case of land proposed for development or redevelopment for commercial or industrial purposes, 2 per cent and in all other cases 5 per cent of the land be conveyed to the municipality for park or other public recreational purposes." This parkland dedication requirement for any development application is also a useful provision for protecting a grove or heritage tree as a condition of development.
- (5) Under Part VI of the *Planning Act* of the PPS, **subdivision control** also provides for the protection of natural heritage features. Section 51 which covers the subdivision approval process requires developers under S. 51(17) to describe all natural features such as watercourses, drainage ditches, wetlands and wooded areas within or adjacent to the land proposed to be subdivided and then obligates council under Section 51(24) in deciding whether to approve the plan of subdivision, to determine whether the application appropriately conserves "natural resources". Council is also mandated to attach any reasonable conditions (s. 51(25) to the approval of the plan which could include protection of all natural heritage features including trees...if they have not already been removed. Under Section 51.1(1), Council is allowed to impose, as a condition of subdivision approval, a parkland dedication comparable to s. 41 which can be used as an additional tool for tree protection if such sites have not been previously set aside and protected through the Official Plan process. However, s. 51.1(3) also provides for "cash-in-lieu" so a watchful public eye and local offers to become "stewardship partners" for any parkland set aside may be required to encourage those municipalities who are reluctant to add "pocket parks" to their parkland responsibilities.

YOUR ACTION PLAN:

- √ familiarise yourself with the "tools" under the Planning Act;
- ✓ watch your local paper and Council agendas and attend any public meetings related to updating or amending your municipality's Official Plan (no appeal of Council decisions are allowed if you fail to be part of the public process, so you have had to register at public meetings and make submissions)
- ✓ get to know your planning staff, Council, by-law enforcement officer, clerk, conservation officer, arborist (if there is one) and Heritage Advisory Committee, and make them aware of your interest in trees and offer to be involved in any process affecting trees.
- ✓ Ensure that your municipality's Official Plan has strong natural heritage protection policies and specifically ensures that woodlots and heritage trees are mentioned and protection policies are in place (APPENDIX A).
- ✓ Ensure that areas designated for development have existing trees protected (and more planted) by ensuring tree protection is part of the conditions of draft plan approval and site plan control.
- Monitor Council agendas and attend any meetings that involve development applications that may affect your municipality's trees.
- ✓ Speak out for your community's trees, they cannot speak for themselves!

The Municipal Act

Even more directly related to tree preservation is Ontario's *Municipal Act*. Under Section 135-138 of the *Municipal Act*, municipalities are able to pass by-laws that can specifically "prohibit or regulate the destruction or injuring of trees" (including heritage trees) and substantial fines (S. 138) for violations are possible. Some municipalities have gone through the process of ensuring that trees greater than a specific size are protected on public and privately owned land using this tool known as a comprehensive tree protection by-law. Examples of municipal tree protection by-laws are included in Appendix B.

The powers that a municipality has to protect trees by a by-law passed under Section 135 of the Municipal Act are significant and the relevant sections of the *Municipal Act* are cited below.

135. (1) Subject to subsection (4), a local municipality may prohibit or regulate the destruction or injuring of trees. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (1).

Woodlands

(2) An upper-tier municipality may prohibit or regulate the destruction or injuring of trees in woodlands designated in the by-law. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (2).

Definition

(3) In this section, "woodlands" means woodlands as defined in the *Forestry Act* that are one hectare or more in area. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (3).

Restriction

(4) If an upper-tier municipality by-law in respect of woodlands is in effect in a lower-tier municipality, the lower-tier municipality may not prohibit or regulate the destruction of trees in any woodlands designated in the upper-tier by-law and any lower-tier by-law, whether passed before or

after the upper-tier by-law comes into force, is inoperative to the extent that it applies to trees in the designated woodlands. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (4).

Factor to be considered

(5) In passing a by-law regulating or prohibiting the injuring or destruction of trees in woodlands, a municipality shall have regard to good forestry practices as defined in the *Forestry Act.* 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (5); 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 27 (1).

Notice

(6) An upper-tier municipality shall immediately notify its lower-tier municipalities of the passing of a by-law under subsection (2). 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (6).

Conditions

- (7) A by-law passed under this section may,
- (a) require that a permit be obtained to injure or destroy trees; and
- (b) impose conditions to a permit, including conditions relating to the manner in which destruction occurs and the qualifications of persons authorized to injure or destroy trees. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (7).

Delegation to lower-tier municipality

(8) An upper-tier municipality may delegate all or part of its power to pass a by-law respecting the destruction or injuring of trees in woodlands to one or more of its lower-tier municipalities with the agreement of the lower-tier municipality or municipalities, as the case may be. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (8).

Effect of delegation

(9) Subsection (4) does not apply to that part of a lower-tier by-law authorized by the delegation of power from the upper-tier municipality. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (9).

Delegation to upper-tier municipality

(10) A lower-tier municipality may delegate all or part of its power to pass a by-law respecting the destruction or injuring of trees to its upper-tier municipality with the agreement of the upper-tier municipality. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (10).

Officers

(11) A municipality may designate persons as officers for the purpose of this section and sections 136 to 140 and may, on such conditions as the municipality considers appropriate, delegate to them the power to issue permits and impose conditions to the permits. 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (11); 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 27 (2).

Exemption from by-law

- (12) A by-law passed under this section does not apply to,
- (a) activities or matters undertaken by a municipality or a local board of a municipality;
- (b) activities or matters undertaken under a licence issued under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994:
- (c) the injuring or destruction of trees by a person licensed under the *Surveyors Act* to engage in the practice of cadastral surveying or his or her agent, while making a survey;
- (d) the injuring or destruction of trees imposed after December 31, 2002 as a condition to the approval of a site plan, a plan of subdivision or a consent under section 41, 51 or 53, respectively, of the *Planning Act* or as a requirement of a site plan agreement or subdivision agreement entered into under those sections;

- (e) the injuring or destruction of trees imposed after December 31, 2002 as a condition to a development permit authorized by regulation made under section 70.2 of the *Planning Act* or as a requirement of an agreement entered into under the regulation;
 - (f) the injuring or destruction of trees by a transmitter or distributor, as those terms are defined in section 2 of the *Electricity Act*, 1998, for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a transmission system or a distribution system, as those terms are defined in that section;
 - (g) the injuring or destruction of trees undertaken on land described in a licence for a pit or quarry or a permit for a wayside pit or wayside quarry issued under the Aggregate Resources Act, or
 - (h) the injuring or destruction of trees undertaken on land in order to lawfully establish and operate or enlarge any pit or quarry on land,
 - (i) that has not been designated under the Aggregate Resources Act or a predecessor of that Act, and
 - (ii) on which a pit or quarry is a permitted land use under a by-law passed under section 34 of the *Planning Act.* 2001, c. 25, s. 135 (12); 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 27 (3, 4).

Appeal

- 136. (1) An applicant for a permit under a by-law passed under section 135 may appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board,
- (a) if the municipality refuses to issue a permit, within 30 days after the refusal;
- (b) if the municipality fails to make a decision on the application, within 45 days after the application is received by the clerk; or
- (c) if the applicant objects to a condition in the permit, within 30 days after the issuance of the permit. 2001, c. 25, s. 136 (1).

Order

- (2) The Board may by order,
- (a) uphold the decision of the municipality;
- (b) require the municipality to vary any condition in a permit; or
- (c) require the municipality to issue a permit on such conditions as the Board considers appropriate. 2001, c. 25, s. 136 (2).

Decision final

(3) The decision of the Board is final. 2001, c. 25, s. 136 (3).

No petition

(4) Section 95 of the Ontario Municipal Board Act does not apply to a decision of the Board under this section. 2001, c. 25, s. 136 (4).

Power of entry

137. (1) A municipality may, at any reasonable time, enter and inspect any land to determine whether a by-law, order or a condition to a permit under section 135 or 136 or this section or a court order under subsection 138 (2) is being complied with. 2001, c. 25, s. 137 (1); 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 28.

Limitation

(2) The power of entry under this section does not allow a municipality to enter any building. 2001, c. 25, s. 137 (2).

Order to discontinue activity

- (3) If an officer is satisfied that a contravention of a by-law has occurred, the officer may make an order requiring the person who contravened the by-law or who caused or permitted the injuring or destruction of trees in contravention of the by-law to stop the injuring or destruction of trees and the order shall set out.
- (a) the municipal address or the legal description of the land;
- (b) reasonable particulars of the contravention; and
- (c) the period within which there must be compliance with the order. 2001, c. 25, s. 137 (3).

Offence

- 138. (1) A by-law passed under section 135 may provide that any person who contravenes the by-law or an order under subsection 137 (3) is guilty of an offence and is liable,
- (a) on a first conviction, to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or \$1,000 per tree, whichever is greater, and
- (b) on any subsequent conviction, to a fine of not more than \$25,000 or \$2,500 per tree, whichever is greater. 2001, c. 25, s. 138 (1).

Corporations

- (1.1) Despite subsection (1), where the person convicted is a corporation,
- (a) the maximum fines in clause (1) (a) are \$50,000 or \$5,000 per tree; and
- (b) the maximum fines in clause (1) (b) are \$100,000 or \$10,000 per tree. 2002, c. 17, Sched. A, s. 29.

Replacement

(2) If a person is convicted of an offence for contravening a by-law passed under section 135 or an order under subsection 137 (3), the court in which the conviction has been entered, and any court of competent jurisdiction thereafter, may order the person to rehabilitate the land or to plant or replant trees in such manner and within such period as the court considers appropriate, including any silvicultural treatment necessary to re-establish the trees. 2001, c. 25, s. 138 (2).

Agreement re: enforcement by upper-tier

139. An upper-tier municipality may enter into an agreement with any of its lower-tier municipalities for the upper-tier municipality to designate one or more of its officers to enforce by-laws passed by the lower-tier municipality under section 135 and to charge the lower-tier municipality the whole or any part of the costs of the officers. 2001, c. 25, s. 139.

Agreement re: enforcement by lower-tier

140. A lower-tier municipality may enter into an agreement with its upper-tier municipality for the lower-tier municipality to designate one or more of its officers to enforce by-laws passed by the upper-tier municipality under section 135 and to charge the upper-tier municipality the whole or any part of the costs of the officers. 2001, c. 25, s. 140.

Planting trees adjacent to highways

141. A municipality may provide trees to the owners of land adjacent to any highway and may plant the trees on the owners' land with their consent. 2001, c. 25, s. 141.

YOUR ACTION PLAN:

✓ Ask your municipal by-law officer, the Clerk or search on-line for a copy of your municipality's tree protection by-law. ✓ Find out how and where trees are protected and what the deterrents are used to ensure trees are not injured or cut down. Find out if heritage trees are defined and included. Compare it to the by-laws included in APPENDIX B. Your municipal heritage tree protection by-law should have the following standard contents:

Definitions:

- what is a "Heritage Tree"
- registry (this enables a list to be maintained by the municipality...a first step in designating them for protection (after they have been identified).

Prohibitions:

- prohibitions against cutting down "designated" trees without a permit;
- prohibitions against tree damaging activities;
- prohibitions against activities taking place around the tree, see <u>City of Toronto</u>

Exemptions

- exemptions vary from by-law to by-law, but generally all cover the same exemptions;
- the process for obtaining a permit to cut trees;
- a fee schedule for permits, fees range between \$25.00 \$100.00;
- · conditions where trees must be replaced when cut down;

Care Expectations

- in most by-laws, inspections are carried out by an officer who is appointed by the city council (see Designation of Officers in The City of Barrie)
- · monitoring processes for designated trees;
- the process for completing maintenance on trees;

General Protection Policies:

- conditions where trees in areas of environmental importance can or cannot be disturbed;
- the requirements for tree management plans for larger developments;

Enforcement:

- enforcement and penalty provisions;
- enforcement of the by-laws, are usually completed by designated officers
- fines for offences range between \$500 \$2,500 per tree and \$10,000 \$25,000 for a group of trees. For corporations (See <u>City of Toronto</u>) the fines are much higher, ranging from \$5,000 \$10,000 per tree and \$50,000 \$100,000 for a group of trees.

Schedules:

- schedules outlining the location of significant trees in the municipality;
- types of native trees suitable for planting and replanting;
- application requirements (information required in order to grant permits, see <u>Grey County Forest Conservation By-law</u>)
- ✓ Find your "partners" in this process (sympathetic Council members, residents, non-profit groups, heritage planners, land use planners and parks staff, naturalist clubs, etc)

- ✓ Start the "Great Heritage Tree Hunt"...identifying and selecting the heritage trees of your community and find landowners interested in seeing their heritage trees protected:
- ✓ Ask Council to set up a "Registry" (by a by-law) and request that these heritage trees be nominated for placement on the Registry.
- ✓ Request Council to add to the current tree-protection by-law or establish as part of a new tree protection by-law, a Heritage Tree Conservation By-law which will define "heritage trees" (see Paul Aird's definition), recognize the Registry and designate for protection some or all of the trees nominated and placed on the Registry (APPENDIX B – Examples of a Heritage Tree By-law and examples of a Tree Conservation By-law with a "Heritage Tree" component)

The Ontario Heritage Act

The objects of the Ontario Heritage Act specifically provide (under s. 7.(d)) a role for the Trust "to preserve, maintain, reconstruct, restore and manage property of historical, architectural, archaeological, recreational, aesthetic, natural and scenic interest". The word "natural" encompasses trees and Section IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, enables municipalities to conserve properties of cultural heritage value or interest and provides for a Register to be established (s. 27) and the process for designating such properties by municipal by-law (s. 29). It also provides for the Trust to use "easements" containing covenants (restrictions) that will be registered on title to protect (s. 37) cultural heritage values on real property. As a tool this Act has been infrequently used to protect natural "heritage value" and the Ministry of Culture's Ontario Heritage Properties data base provides the following trees protected by by-law under Part 4 of the *Ontario Heritage Act:*

- The Comfort Sugar Maple Tree in Pelham, Niagara Region(OHA Part 4)
- Carolinian Oak Tree on Mill Road (north side), 350 metres west of CPR, Colborne Township, Huron County (OHA Part 4, designated January 21, 1992).
- Double-trunked grafted sugar maple tree on bank of Welland River in part lot 28, concession 9 (Binbrook), Glanbrook Township, Hamilton-Wentworth Region. Purportedly grafted at 12 feet in a unique fashion by Cayuga Indians many years ago as a territorial marker (OHA Part 4, designated April 5, 1982).
- ➤ Jacob Fisher Oak Tree at 300 Trowers Road, Woodbridge, Vaughan, York Region (OHA Part 4, designated September 11, 1991).
- ➤ Osage Orange Tree Hedgerow on west side of Torbram Road running north from Old School Road in Caledon, Peel Region. A North American species rare in Caledon (not native to Ontario) this was estimated to be planted in 1880 as a 'natural' fence and regarded as the last Osage Orange hedge in Peel (OHA Part 4 designated September 27, 1999).
- Falcon Inn Site (trees) on Kingston Road, Scarborough, Toronto (OHA Part 4).

The Conservation Land Act

The Conservation Land Act allows property owners to grant an "Easement" which contains covenants (restriction(s)) to a qualified "conservation body" which could include a Conservation Authority, charitable land trust, municipal council etc. for the purpose of conserving our natural heritage [trees, heritage trees, woodlands, etc.]. The contents of such an Easement and its restrictive covenants have to be agreed to by the owner and the third party holder of the covenant ("conservation body"). The "easement" allows the easement holder right of access over the property to ensure that the restrictions imposed are being adhered to. So the Easement would be drafted to include monitoring protocols and penalties for violation of the covenant(s). To ensure protection in perpetuity the Easement gets registered on title in a land registry office and binds all future owners of the property. As a natural heritage protection tool, Easements are extensively used by provincial land trusts and conservation authorities to protect natural heritage areas while the land continues to remain in private ownership. If the Easement removes "development rights" on ecologically significant areas such as woodlots, the landowner may be eligible for tax benefits if the easement is donated to the charitable land trust. Such a tool has considerable potential to protect a single "heritage tree" on private property where no tree protection by-laws exits, but it does require a landowner willing to enter into such an arrangement and a "conservation body" that will hold the easement, monitor it and ensure that the provisions of the Easement are upheld.

The Forestry Act and Woodlands Improvement Act

Under the provincial *Forestry Act*, the MNR can enter into agreements with private woodlands owners and offer grant programs, while municipalities can pass by-laws to acquire land for forestry purposes and enter into agreements for reforestation, tree conservation and tree planting. Contraventions of the Act are provided for through imprisonment or fines up to \$20,000.

<u>APPENDIX A</u> – OFFICIAL PLAN POLICIES for PROTECTING "NATURAL HERITAGE", "TREES" and "HERITAGE TREES"

APPENDIX B – HERITAGE TREE BY-LAWS and TREE BY-LAW RESOURCES

B.1 – Examples of Heritage Tree By-Laws

Gananoque Heritage Tree Draft By-Law

Preservation of Heritage Trees and Heritage Shrubs in Santa-Cruz http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pr/parksrec/TreePrograms/treeord.html

City of Seattle Heritage Tree Program http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/transportation/heritagetree.htm

B.2 – Example of a Tree Conservation By-Law

The Corporation of the City of Waterloo http://www.city.waterloo.on.ca/Portals/57ad7180-c5e7-49f5-b282-c6475cdb7ee7/LIBRARY BYLAWS documents/streettreeBylaw.pdf

B.3 - Tree By-Laws and Other Information in Locations with Populations Less Than 100,000

City of Parksville Tree Protection By-Law http://city.parksville.bc.ca/cms/wpattachments/wpID29atID30.pdf

The Corporation of the County of Grey Forest Conservation By-Law http://www.greycounty.ca/council/by-laws/4129-tree.pdf

B.4 - Tree By-Laws and Other Information in Locations with Populations Between 100,000 and 500,000

City of London, Ontario Tree Conservation By-Law http://www.london.ca/Cityhall/CorpServices/CityClerks/bylaws/tree_conservation.pdf

The Regional Municipality of Niagara Tree Conservation By-Law http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/government/committees/tree-bylaw/pdf/Bylaw_s.pdf

The Corporation of the District of Saanich Covenant

The District of Saanich

The City of Barrie Tree By-law
The City of Barrie

B.5 - Tree By-Laws and Other Information in Locations with Populations Greater Than 500,000

California Report to Board of Forestry on Heritage Tree Petition http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/pdfs/action%20Plan%203_21__05%201%20final%20to%20BOF.pdf

Table of Tree Protection By-Laws in British Columbia http://www.wcel.org/issues/urban/sbg/Part6/usewisely/Trees Protection.pdf

The City of Toronto Private Tree By-law The City of Toronto