

Parks Service Enhancement

DESCRIPTION:

The City of Prince George operates a weed abatement program that is responsible for controlling nuisance and noxious weeds in hard surface areas such as sidewalks, trails, medians and boulevards. The plan consists of the eradication of vegetative growth for aesthetics, accessibility, sightlines, safety and maintaining the integrity of City infrastructure. Numerous methods are used including: prevention by flushing sidewalks and medians; mechanical reduction with string trimmers and mowers; manual pulling; and carefully timed applications of reduced risk herbicides. As no one method is completely successful, multiple treatments are required during the growing season especially to high visibility areas. The City is continually trying new alternatives to herbicides such as flaming and steam and horticultural vinegar, so far with limited success.

Currently the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Coordinator does not have enough full time workers dedicated to this program and often has to borrow staff from other Parks areas to complete tasks. This enhancement would enable the Coordinator to manage all other responsibilities and still have operation staff on the ground dealing with problem areas.

A successful program would require an increased labour budget for the hiring of a seasonal Parks Worker 2 IPM, increasing the limited duration Labourer 1 position currently working for the IPM Coordinator to a seasonal appointment, additional flushing cycles of problem areas to remove growing material, and a rental vehicle for the crew.

While safety and infrastructure integrity are legitimate factors in pursuing an efficient and effective weed abatement program, the main driver for increasing the service level is complaint driven regarding aesthetics. Beautification and revitalization, particularly about “weeds in the islands” in the downtown, were constant topics of discussion during the recent citywide Talktober public meetings. Community satisfaction is the number one measurement when it comes to gauging success with any level of service based on aesthetics or beautification. Based on results from Talktober and the number of service requests that come in every week during the summer, many residents are dissatisfied with the City’s current service level for weed control.

FINANCIAL COST OF THE ENHANCEMENT:

The cost of establishing an effective weed abatement crew, that is on the ground 5 days per week, would require the following enhancements to Parks Operations:

1. Hire a seasonal Parks Worker 2 IPM 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) = \$36,587
2. Increase limited duration Labourer 1 from 0.38 FTE to a seasonal 0.50 FTE = \$8,264
3. Add two flushing cycles of the hard surfaces by the Roads Division – water truck and crew at \$170 per hour for 160 hours = \$27,200
4. Rent or lease a pickup truck for the summer - \$1,500 per month for 6 months = \$9,000

The total cost to fully support an enhanced hard surface weed program would be approximately \$81,051