

Implementing the *Tree Policy of Montréal* – Maintenance Component

Background

By providing benefits to the ecosystem, trees contribute directly to the quality of the living environment and to fighting the effects of climate change. Adopted in 2005, the *Tree Policy of Montréal* (the Policy) of the Ville de Montréal (the City) establishes 11 actions aimed at ensuring the maintenance and development of Montréal's urban forest. At the time, costs were estimated at \$700M for an inventory of nearly 1.2 million trees (2012). For maintenance purposes, an overview of the inventory and condition of public trees was to have been established by the boroughs for their local urban forest and the Service des grands parcs, du Mont-Royal et des sports (SGPMRS) for the City as a whole. The overview was to have supported the boroughs in drawing up tree plans as a foundation for the management of public trees. It was also expected that maintenance programs would be developed in accordance with the inventory and with guidelines set out in the tree plans. All of these tools were to enable the management of public trees, including maintenance supported by quality information in a long-term perspective to ensure the maintenance and development of Montréal's urban forest now and in the future.

Purpose of the Audit

To ensure that the City has implemented actions to maintain public trees as stipulated in the *Tree Policy of Montréal*.

Results

The City has not ensured implementation of the actions to maintain public trees set out in its Policy. The boroughs and the SGPMRS do not have a full understanding of the composition and condition of the public trees under their responsibility. Tree plans and maintenance programs have not been developed, which has led to inconsistent maintenance practices that compromise the life expectancy of trees. The resource estimate required for the maintenance of public trees has not been determined, and no amounts are specifically budgeted for this activity. Finally, no follow-up to implementation of the Policy has taken place since it was adopted in 2005, which means that the City is not aware of progress made relative to the stipulated actions or of issues concerning the maintenance and development of its arboreal heritage.

Main Findings

Overall Picture of Public Trees

- The boroughs do not feel that they have a full picture of the inventory of trees under their responsibility or of the trees' condition.
- Data about tree mortality and reasons for the loss of arboreal assets are neither documented nor followed up.
- The intervention history is not systematically documented.
- Tools used by the boroughs to manage public trees are not integrated, which limits the ability of the City to maintain an overall picture of its trees.

Tree Plans and Maintenance Programs

- The tree plans required by the Policy and the resulting tree maintenance programs have not been developed by the boroughs.
- The SGPMRS does not systematically produce tree maintenance programs to follow up its projects to develop parks and public squares.
- The City has not adopted a management framework setting out maintenance standards for the City's public trees that the boroughs could have used.
- Maintenance practices are inconsistent across the City, and maintenance activities are not fully implemented.

Budget for the Maintenance of All Public Trees

- An estimate of the resources (human, material and financial) required to conduct all maintenance interventions on public trees has not been prepared.
- Specific budgets have not been allocated for public tree maintenance.
- The financial implications of planting new trees have not been estimated in advance and reflected in the maintenance budget.

Follow-up to Implementation of the Actions in the *Tree Policy of Montréal*

- No mechanism has been put in place to follow up implementation of the Policy nor has any follow-up taken place since it was adopted in 2005.
- In 2013, the Commission sur l'eau, l'environnement, le développement durable et les grands parcs recommended that the City update its Policy, but this has not yet happened.

In addition to these results, we have made various recommendations to the business units, which are presented in the following pages. The business units were given the opportunity to agree to the recommendations.