

To: Councillor Hoekstra  
cc. Council

From: Matthew Goudy, CAO

Date: March 18, 2019

**Reference: 11/154/2019-143**

## RE: Black Knot Questions

Thank you for relaying citizen concerns about the City of Lacombe's management of black knot disease in City park and boulevard trees. To recap, the concerns expressed were that the City may be failing to address its black knot responsibilities through a lack of expertise or understaffing, at the same time it is placing a much higher expectation on private property owners to address theirs; and also that citizens' questions to the parks department are going unanswered.

Black knot is a serious infectious disease prevalent throughout Central Alberta and continuous control is key. A tree's health may be affected as much as a year prior to the observable "knots" and signs are usually visible only after leaf-fall, so it is important to maintain a rigorous pruning schedule throughout fall, winter and spring before the fungus matures and discharges spores into the air.

While the City does not currently utilize a "task force" approach to the problem, staff fully recognize the risk and the City applies the maximum service level that budget permits. The parks department has an ongoing program to prune affected tree limbs and to remove trees whose health is overly compromised either by disease or other causes. For this work the City has employed a certified arborist since 2015, augmented by contract services for specialized tasks such as high pruning. However the arborist does fulfill other essential parks duties in addition to tree work, so for 2019 Council approved the new position of full time certified horticulturist to help address plant health throughout parks and boulevards. We anticipate filling this position shortly.

I understand that the citizen in question is knowledgeable in the field, and has had an opportunity to discuss his concerns with both the arborist and with Parks & Facilities Manager Calvin Bennefield. Both staff have urged the citizen to report any observations of black knot as soon as possible, and have assured me they appreciate his input when it is provided.

Please let me know if you have any further questions related to this issue and the City's responses.

Sincerely,

FOIP Act section 17(1)

Matthew Goudy, P.Eng  
Chief Administrative Officer

