

Briefing Note

Title	Vegetation Management Standards Policy Review
Summary	Provide an outline of the resource implications of amending the Vegetation Management Standards Policy 2016 to include increased service levels for weed trimming around County Entrance Signs and man-made obstacles within high-traffic road allowances.
Previous Council Direction	December 13, 2016 - Motion 467/16: That Council direct Administration to bring forward a recommendation or policy amendment, defining levels of service for area Type 2 vegetation management, to include trimming around road signs and obstacles on road rights-of-way, and provide information regarding fiscal impact.
Report	<p><u>Background Information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The current Vegetation Management Standards Policy was approved by Council on May 10, 2016.• During the 2017 Budget Process, concerns regarding the vegetation management adjacent to Sturgeon County Entrance Signs and obstacles along high traffic, paved roadways were brought forward.• Administration provided a possible solution in response to Budget Information Request (BIR) # 01, which inquired about the resource implications of increasing the service levels for all 'Type 2' Areas to include weed trimming around man-made obstacles.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The cost to increase the service levels was calculated to be \$44,000, which includes the equipment and personnel costs to complete the additional work.• Upon further discussion, Council determined the need to review and amend the current policy before committing additional resources to enhance current service levels. \$44,000 was allocated to an operating reserve, pending a Council determination of whether to amend the policy to increase service levels for 2017.• Based on Council discussions, the two main areas of concern have been identified as:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The lack of weed trimming around obstacles along high traffic County roadways.

2) The lack of weed trimming around Sturgeon County entrance signs.

- Options to address each concern individually and jointly have been prepared for Council's consideration.

Options to Address Concern #1

- 85% of Sturgeon County Municipal Reserves and paved road allowances are classified as 'Type 2'. According to the Vegetation Management Standards Policy, the standards for Type 2 Areas do not include trimming around man-made obstacles.
- There are two ways to increase the service levels to include weed trimming around man-made obstacles along paved roadways. They are as follows:
 - 1) Amend the policy to include weed trimming around man-made obstacles for all Type 2 Areas. To perform trimming at a frequency of two times per year minimum (same as mowing), the cost would be **\$44,000** (as outlined in BIR # 01), or
 - 2) Amend the policy to address paved road allowances separately from Type 2 Areas, and outline standards for those areas that match Type 2 Standards, with the additional standard of weed trimming around man-made obstacles a frequency of two times per year minimum. This would have a lesser cost of approximately **\$34,000**. Note: most man-made obstacles within Type 2 areas fall within paved road allowances. Reserves with significant numbers of man-made obstacles (ie. playgrounds, sport infrastructure) are typically included within the 'Type 1' Category and already receive weed trimming as a minimum service level.

Options to Address Concern #2

- Many Sturgeon County Entrance Signs are located within Provincial Highway Road Allowances. Vegetation Management within Provincial Highways is not currently included in the scope of the Vegetation Management Standards Policy. While the policy mostly pertains to Sturgeon County owned lands, it does allow for Sturgeon County to perform vegetation management in public areas which are not county owned "should there be public benefit in doing so."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy specifies that “Sturgeon County may consider providing vegetation management services on public areas which are not owned by the County.” To outline the terms and conditions under which such services will be provided, Sturgeon County may enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that formally outlines the arrangement.” Under this provision, Sturgeon County could pursue an MOU with the Provincial Government outlining the terms surrounding weed trimming adjacent to Sturgeon County Entrance Signs with Provincial Highway road allowances. The frequency, cost structure and any other conditions would be negotiated and agreed upon and formalized in an MOU. Formal amendment to the Policy would likely not be necessary to incorporate this item alone. However, additional resources would need to be allocated to create operational capacity to perform this work. The estimated of cost for this service alone would be \$10,000 (including personnel and equipment costs). This would allow for mowing of a 100 m² area around each sign and trimming adjacent to sign posts at a frequency of four times per year (about once per month during the growing season). <p>Options to Address Both Concern #1 and #2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of all options described above can be used to address both concerns. The cost would be between \$44,000 and \$54,000, depending on how Council wishes to proceed with addressing concern #1. <p><u>External Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable <p><u>Relevant Policy/Legislation/Practices:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation Management Standards Policy
Implication	<p><u>Strategic Alignment:</u></p> <p>Consistent with multiple focus areas in Sturgeon County’s Strategic Plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Excellence Maintain and Enhance Strong Communities Community Identity and Spirit <p><u>Organizational:</u></p> <p>More resources are required to increase the level of service.</p>

	<p><u>Financial:</u></p> <p>The cost of adjusting Vegetation Management Service Levels to address the concerns brought forward will be between \$10,000 and \$54,000.</p>
Follow Up Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring proposed revisions to the Vegetation Management Standards Policy for Council Approval on February 28, 2017.
Attachment (s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vegetation Management Standards Policy 2016 2. Presentation
Report Reviewed by:	<p>  Angela Veenstra, Agriculture Services Manager </p> <p>  Peter Tarnawsky, County Commissioner – CAO </p>