SUBJECT: Tree Trimming & Removal Request - Scenic Vistas of Hamilton Harbour (PW06042) - (Wards 1, 6, 7 & 8)  
Public Works, Infrastructure & Environment Outstanding Business List

RECOMMENDATION:
(a) That the Forestry and Horticulture Section refer “Harvey”, “Sam Lawrence”, “Mountain Brow West” and “Mountain Drive” Parks to the customer service request list and perform tree maintenance work through the Capital Street Tree Trimming Enhancement Program as outlined in Report PW06042 to improve the existing scenic vistas of Hamilton Harbour.

(b) That the item relating to Tree Removal for Scenic Vistas be removed from the Public Works, Infrastructure & Environment Committee Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
As a delegation before City Council, Mr. William Mitchell expressed his concerns respecting the deterioration of scenic vistas of Hamilton Harbour from five vantage points within the city due to vegetation growth. Forestry and Horticulture staff has investigated the sites and do not support the enhancement of the vistas through tree removal, concluding that vista enhancements could be achieved through tree and shrub
trimming. Two locations identified are considered problematic as they are regulated by Niagara Escarpment Commission policy, present environmental concerns and constitute “high risk” work situations. This report presents the results of staff’s investigations addressing the feasibility of the requested works.

**BACKGROUND:**

That the information/recommendations contained within this report primarily affect Wards 1, 6, 7, and 8.

Mr. William Mitchell appeared as a delegation before Council, November 21, 2005 respecting tree removals at several parks in the City which traditionally have provided a view of Hamilton Harbour. These parks and green spaces are identified as outlined in Report PW06042 Appendix “A” as:

- Dundurn Park
- Harvey Park
- Sam Lawrence Park
- Mountain Brow West and Mountain Drive Parks
- Southam Park

Mr. Mitchell expressed his concern that harbour vistas from these locations are being obscured by vegetation growth and he is requesting that overgrown trees and shrubs be pruned and/or removed to restore former vistas. Subsequently staff met with Mr. Mitchell on site at Dundurn Park and Sam Lawrence Park to discuss his concerns and upon further investigation, staff provides the following responses:

**Dundurn Park**

The Cultural Services Section has completed phase one of a two-phased historic landscape restoration project on the grounds of Dundurn Castle. In 2006, phase two will begin which will include the selective removal of invasive underbrush and tree trimming to create six viewing areas along the north slope of Dundurn Park. This naturalized area poses noteworthy challenges for tree maintenance as the terrain in this area is steep, making accessibility difficult for equipment and crews. This maintenance work has been approved as part of the landscape redevelopment plans for Dundurn Castle as per Council report PW03154 and will be co-ordinated through Wendy Shearer Landscape Architects Limited, the firm designing the restoration.

**Harvey Park**

There are currently seven viewing areas overlooking the Harbour from Harvey Park along York Boulevard between Dundurn Castle and the T.B. McQuesten Bridge; each site is furnished with a bench overlooking the Harbour. The sight lines in these areas are relatively clear and are presently not obstructed by tree branches, thus creating a snapshot of Hamilton Harbour. No immediate works are required at this time.

**Sam Lawrence Park**

Sam Lawrence Park offers generous unobstructed views of the lower city most notably from the west parking lot and the sitting area below the rock garden. However, views from the pavilion situated in the east side of the park are obstructed by trees growing on the escarpment slope. Being a naturalized area and part of the Niagara escarpment
with regulation and accessibility issues, the Forestry Section has not performed tree removals or trimming in this area. If a vista was implemented in this area, it would require major tree trimming to open up the view. The removal of healthy trees would also be necessary.

Mountain Brow West and Mountain Drive Parks

There are several viewing areas along this stretch of parkland from Upper Wentworth to east of Upper Gage, causing supplementary ones to be unnecessary. The creation of any additional viewing areas in this vicinity would involve clearing the vegetation overgrowth on the side of the escarpment within the naturalized area beyond the fence line. This location has a very steep slope and if accessible, any tree maintenance or vegetation control efforts performed would require additional safety precautions by staff.

Southam Park

Subsequent to Mr. Mitchell’s presentation, staff had discussed the situation at Southam Park with him. The trees obstructing the view from this park are situated on the opposite side of the Claremont Access on the escarpment face, and as such are subject to Niagara Escarpment Commission development regulations requiring a permit. In addition, the area constitutes a high risk work environment for undertaking tree removal operations, therein would require extraordinary safe working practices and higher job costs. Implementing a vista at Southam Park would require a substantial number of trees to be removed within the naturalized area of the escarpment. There are presently no viewing areas located within this Park.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The limited available budget resources for preventative tree trimming activities are focused on Street Tree infrastructure leaving trees in municipal parks and natural areas un-serviced vis a vis preventative tree trimming (including vista management). This strategic use of resources attempts to manage higher probability risk, and derive the best value of benefits for the community from city owned trees. Resource issues notwithstanding, the Division has also adopted a practice of not removing trees (living or dead) within natural areas (excluding for public safety concerns) as an environmental stewardship best practice. As a result, some scenic vistas have been compromised by tree growth on municipally owned lands as a matter of best practices in Land Stewardship and best use of available resources for tree maintenance programs.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

As an alternative to the recommendation, Council may choose to direct staff to include tree trimming at “Harvey” and “Sam Lawrence” Parks within the Street Tree Trimming Program to maintain the existing viewing areas. This approach is not recommended as it will be performed at the expense of the overall Street Tree Trimming Program and therefore does not represent best value from available program resources in managing risk, or optimizing benefits of a healthy street tree infrastructure.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:
The report recommendations have no financial, staffing or legal implications. The alternatives provided for council's consideration have no staff complement or apparent legal implications.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:
N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:
The Forestry and Horticulture Section consulted with Cultural Services staff, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Niagara Escarpment Commission staff regarding this report.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:
By evaluating the "Triple Bottom Line", (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☐ No
The public are involved in the definition and development of local solutions.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☐ No
Human health and safety are protected.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☐ No
Hamilton's high-quality environmental amenities are maintained and enhanced.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☐ No
The creation of a respectful, desirable and supportive workplace.