



CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Environmental Services Division

TO:	Mayor and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 30, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Opportunities to Partner with Educational Institutions to Plant Trees (PW23066) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Robyn Pollard (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3919
SUBMITTED BY:	Cynthia Graham Director, Environmental Services Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That Forestry and Horticulture staff be authorized and directed to:
- (i) Pursue opportunities with representatives from Conservation Authorities and educational institutions (the “Organizations”) in the City of Hamilton to plan tree planting projects on lands which are readily accessed by the public and owned by these Organizations; and
 - (ii) Present these opportunities to Ward Councillors and assist in drafting motions which detail the project(s) and which requests the use of the Area Rating Special Capital Re-Investment Discretionary Funds following Ward-Specific Funding Initiatives Procedures outlined in Report FCS18014(a).
- (b) That the General Manager, Public Works, or their designate, be authorized and directed to:
- (i) Apply for grant funding on behalf of the City of Hamilton for forestry initiatives related to increasing tree canopy on all City of Hamilton owned lands;

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- (ii) Support grant applications initiated by collaborating Organizations, including not for profit organization by providing letters of support, and/or by assisting with the completion of applications for grants respecting forestry initiatives related to increasing tree canopy on all City of Hamilton owned lands; by and
- (iii) Approve and execute any letters of support, grant applications, grant agreements or any other agreements and documentation required to give effect to the recommendations made within this report, provided they are in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (iv) To accept any grant funding that supports forestry initiatives related to increasing tree canopy on all City of Hamilton owned lands.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 1, 2023 the motion, “Opportunities to Partner with Educational Institutions to Plant Trees (City Wide)”, was approved at Public Works Committee that directed staff to work with institutional education representatives to identify potential partnerships with the City to help meet canopy targets through larger scale tree planting initiatives utilizing current budgets and staffing resources. The results were then to be reported back to the Public Works Committee, and Report PW23066 completes this direction.

Report PW23066 outlines recommendations meant to build the City of Hamilton’s urban forest canopy and reach the Urban Forest Strategy’s goal of 40% urban forest canopy coverage by 2050 by;

- 1) Supplementing the current tree planting budget by engaging with community Organizations and Ward Councillors to utilize the Area Rating Special Capital Re-Investment Discretionary Funds to assist Organizations to plan, fund and execute tree planting on their lands, which are readily accessed by the public. Agreements with these Organizations will be executed to ensure the planting is completed with City staff assistance and Ward funds, but that ownership and all maintenance of the trees is the responsibility of the landowner; and
- 2) Streamlining the process for staff to apply for grants to fund Forestry related initiatives focused on growing and improving the urban tree canopy on City lands.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: N/A

Staffing: Recognizing that two (2) FTE's are being considered, as part of the 2024 operating budget, referred by Report PED20173(a), existing complement of Forestry staff are able to accommodate the annual tree planting target increase to 20,000 trees, for which the recommendations in Report PW23066 will support. As programs grow to reach targets set out in the Urban Forest Strategy, Forestry may need increased staff resources which would be requested through the budget process as business cases.

Legal: Legal and Risk Management Services will draft agreements with Organizations for tree planting on private lands to ensure the City of Hamilton maintains the responsibilities of planning, fully or partially funding, and planting of trees, but that all after care, ownership and maintenance will remain the responsibility of the landowner.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Downtown areas of Canadian cities are intensifying more rapidly than ever before. From 2016 to 2021, the downtown populations of the large urban centres grew faster (+10.9%) than the urban centres (+6.1%) (Government of Canada, 2022). In Hamilton, population increases are not limited to downtown; surrounding areas such as Waterdown, Stoney Creek and Flamborough are also seeing development. This development pressure is exacerbating the lack of suitable land for growing the urban tree canopy and creates areas where there is little to no tree canopy.

Trees are one tool that cities have to help mitigate the effects of climate change and create more liveable cities while accommodating increased population and density. With climate change and growing urbanization pressures, adjusting current practices, optimizing land for planting, and streamlining accessibility of grant funding are critical needs to be prioritized in order to reach canopy coverage targets.

On May 1, 2023 the motion, "Opportunities to Partner with Educational Institutions to Plant Trees (City Wide)", was approved at Public Works Committee that directed staff to work with institutional education representatives to identify potential partnerships with the City to help meet canopy targets through larger scale tree planting initiatives utilizing current budgets and staffing resources. The results were then to be reported back to the Public Works Committee.

Council approved the Urban Forest Strategy on June 21, 2023, that directed staff to increase the current urban tree canopy to 40% by 2050, increase the annual target for City-led tree planting from 12,000 to 20,000 trees per year, partner with organizations that support the City's urban forestry program, and increase the level of tree planting

and/or natural forest regeneration in the City over the next five years. Planning for these new targets requires new approaches.

The recommended actions outlined in Report PW23066 aim to increase publicly accessible lands available to plant trees, improve staff efficiencies in pursuing grant applications, and optimize the use of Ward funds for tree planting, in order to reach the 40% canopy cover target.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Should council approve recommendation (a) of Report PW23066, Ward Councillors will be able to utilize Area Rating Special Capital Re-Investment Discretionary Funds for tree planting projects on privately owned lands (including educational institutions and conservation authority owned land) following Ward-Specific Funding Initiatives Procedures outlined in Report FCS18014(a), which requires approval of a motion for approval of projects on private lands.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff have consulted with representatives from Hamilton Catholic and Public School Boards and Mohawk College, who are interested in collaborating with the City to advance tree planting projects which will increase their overall tree canopy and contribute to the City's goals. In addition, staff consulted with Conservation Halton staff who are also interested in collaborating with the City to plant trees, which aligns with their strategic plans.

Additional consultation with internal stakeholders, who are supportive of the recommendations of Report PW23066, included:

- Legal and Risk Management Services Division, Finance and Corporate Services Department
- Financial Planning Administration and Policy Division, Finance and Corporate Services Department

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

By engaging with Ward Councillors and Organizations, staff can supplement existing budgets and perform the work needed to increase canopy cover and meet the increased annual tree planting target which requires an addition of 8,000 trees beginning in 2024. Tree planting programs are funded through 450053001 - Tree Planting Program, revenues from public tree permits, including the Loss of Canopy fee, and to a much lesser extent Ward funds, occasional donations, and approved grant funding. The current average cost to install and water a 50-to-70-millimetre deciduous

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tree, the most commonly installed size, for two years is about \$475 total. These trees are procured competitively, and installation and watering are completed utilizing contractors. Costs for nursery stock and contractual activities are expected to increase due to increasing costs of fuel and labour. Therefore, supplementing existing budgets is suggested to reduce the need for requests for increases to 450053001 – Tree Planting Program.

Supporting the Urban Forest Strategy targets through grant funding is another way to supplement 450053001 - Tree Planting Program and offset budget pressures. The Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario have released several grant programs designed for increasing and/or protecting tree canopy tree (i.e., tree planting or invasive species removal grants). Some examples of these programs include the 2 Billion Trees Program and the Invasive Species Action Fund.

Letters of support which commit City owned lands for tree planting purposes have resulted in approved grant funds being received by the City supplementing the City's tree planting budget in the past. On February 10, 2022 and May 19, 2023, the City issued letters of support to Green Communities Canada and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, to support tree planting projects on City lands using the 2 Billion Trees Program. By collaborating with Green Communities Canada, the City has been able to leverage an additional \$14,000 from the 2 Billion Trees Program for tree planting in 2023 (PW23006).

The grant application for the 2 Billion Trees Program with Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority was recently denied, however given the grant applications for the 2 Billion Trees Program with Green Communities Canada was successful, there may be an additional estimated \$15,000 in grant funding available for 2024 tree planting programs. Other grant sources for tree protection against invasive species will also become available in 2024, such as the Invasive Species Action Fund (\$10,000), which is a program supported by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. By providing delegated authority to the General Manager of Public Works, City staff are able to quickly apply for grants that have tight deadlines (i.e., Invasive Species Action Fund in 2023 had a two-week deadline from the release of the application) and improve Forestry's ability to tackle the actions set out in the Urban Forest Strategy.

Report PW23066 recommends actions to increase the City's ability to plant more trees by directing the Forestry and Horticulture Section to expand tree planting to include lands owned by educational institutions and conservation authorities as these are accessed by all demographics of the public and provide significant beneficial greenspace to the community.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.
OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.
OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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Alternative to Recommendation (a)

Council could direct staff to not pursue partnerships with representatives from Conservation Authorities, Hamilton Catholic and Public School Boards and Mohawk College, who are interested in collaborating with the City on tree planting projects to increase the tree canopy and contribute to the City's goals. This would place the sole responsibility of pursuing these collaborations on Ward Councillors who are less equipped to strategically plan and execute tree planting initiatives. Thereby, the work associated with the evaluation and coordination of tree planting is best placed with forestry staff, this alternative is not recommended.

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

Alternative to Recommendation (b)

Council could direct staff to continue to present grant opportunities for approval through recommendation reports. This process requires additional staff time and effort to prepare the reports and may result in missing the window of time required to apply for these grant opportunities. If Council decides on this option, the opportunities for grant funding will be reduced to those with significant lead time for application submission, and because staff support pursuing all opportunities to find additional sources of funding to support tree planting programs, staff do not recommend this alternative.

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A