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**Sent:** Friday, August 16, 2024 9:12 PM

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**Subject:** Urban Forest Canopy: Public Works agrees to plant trees in parks under Council's direction

**External Email:** Use caution with links and attachments

Dear Members of Council

As you know, during the past year I have been formulating a proposal that would see the City change its policies to allow for the planting of many, many more trees in parks and public lands, perhaps as many as 500,000 in the next few years.

This would be a tremendous boost in achieving Council's goal of increasing the urban forest canopy from 20% to 40%, and offsetting our current Climate Emergency.

I have been working with 6 levels of staff, and have met many of you in person and some on virtual calls in an attempt to understand the current situation, and what would be required to change the policies to reflect the wishes of Council and the majority of residents, in regards to trees.

One of the biggest obstacles that has been suggested by councillors, environmental groups and members of the general public is the belief that staff are opposed to more trees, preferring open space that can be quickly mowed. And that staff would do everything possible to block trees despite near unanimous support.

I also held that belief although I felt that if I could have a deeper discussion with staff this opposition would be resolved.

Most recently I have been communicating with Cynthia Graham, the Head of Public Works, which oversees Parks and Forestry.

Ms. Graham has been most helpful in explaining the current policies and how they are applied. In my last email, she clearly explained that current policies can definitely be changed by Council, and that any new direction from Council would be accepted by her and all members of her department.

Part of my email to her was about Vincent Massey Park, which as you know I have suggested could be a pilot project to design templates for tree plantings that could be used in parks and open spaces across the City. These templates could be used to accelerate planting, such that you would not need to go through several years of planning and consultation and engagement for each park separately.

In speaking about Vincent Massey Park, her exact words were: *"if there was direction from council to turn this property into a forest, we would implement that direction."*

This statement removes the largest barrier to a healthier, greener future: perceived staff opposition.

I feel that now we can move forward working with staff, Council and the public to quickly establish new protocols that would allow for maximizing tree planting in parks and on City owned property.

I look forward to presenting this proposal in more detail to Council in the Fall.

Lee Fairbanks

