



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Utilization Plans – Wood from the Maple Leaf Forever Tree

Date:	June 4, 2014
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development & Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The silver maple tree at 62 Laing Street, believed to be the inspiration for Alexander Muir's *Maple Leaf Forever* song written in 1867, was felled by a storm on July 19, 2013.

At the October 8, 2013 meeting of City Council, Economic Development and Culture (EDC) was directed to proceed with the utilization plans approved by Council and to report back on the allocation and use of the salvaged wood from this tree.

This report outlines the plans for the utilization of the wood from the Maple Leaf Forever (MLF) tree including plans for the exhibition and display of the products produced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to continue to work with private and public sector partners to maximize the retention of the heritage and cultural value of the Maple Leaf Forever tree through appropriate uses of its wood.
2. City Council direct the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to report back with a final list of all projects which utilized the wood from the Maple Leaf Forever Tree and to provide the amount of funds raised to support urban forestry initiatives in Toronto.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts from the adoption of this report. All recommended actions can be accommodated with the 2014 budget.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council adopted the staff report, Utilization Plans for the Maple Leaf Forever Tree, on October 8, 2013. This report provides an update on item 1 of that report:

- 1. City Council authorize the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to work with Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Heritage Preservation Services and the City Manager to proceed with the utilization plan for the salvaged wood using the criteria outlined in 3a of the Comments section of the report (September 9, 2013) from the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, and to report back on the allocation and use of the salvaged wood.*

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX34.12>

City Council adopted the motion to utilize some of the wood from the Maple Leaf Forever Tree to build a new podium in City Council Chambers on May 6, 2014.

- 2. City Council direct the City Clerk, in consultation with the Chief Corporate Officer, to utilize the wood from the Maple Leaf Forever tree to build a new podium for the City Council Chamber, to be ready for the Inaugural Meeting of the new City Council in December 2014 and that the City Clerk's Office and Facilities Management cooperate to ensure this is accomplished.*

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.MM51.21>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

On July 19, 2013 a storm brought down an aged silver maple tree on Laing Street in Toronto's Leslieville neighbourhood (Ward 32). This famed maple tree was believed to be the inspiration for the song "Maple Leaf Forever" by Alexander Muir, which he wrote in 1867. This song, like the image of the maple leaf it evokes, has become a powerful symbol for Canadians and Torontonians.

Since the tree fell the City has engaged in a number of activities to preserve its wood and to extend its legacy locally and nationally:

- Between July 2013 and March 2014, the wood was stored inside a Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) warehouse in the port lands area.

- On March 8 - 9, 2014 EDC coordinated a public milling event at Evergreen Brickworks where the logs from the tree were turned into lumber and other "unique pieces." The event was covered by national media.
- The wood was then taken by PFR to a kiln in Toronto where the wood was dried. Kiln drying of wood normally takes between 3 and 6 months depending on the condition of wood.
- On June 7, 2014 EDC held a Wood Distribution Ceremony where the wood was distributed to individuals and/or organizations that had projects that were ready to begin working with the wood to produce the planned items.

COMMENTS

Amount of Wood from the Tree

Urban Forestry staff salvaged 48 logs from the Maple Leaf Forever tree. These varied in size from a 4" diameter x 35" long branch to a 41" diameter x 144" long trunk piece and varied in quality from solid to wood that is severely decayed.

Once the wood was milled, EDC staff categorized all wood into lumber and unique pieces:

- 647 board feet of lumber (enough to make 32 dining room tables)
- 108 unique smaller pieces classified as "crotch wood", "bark cut", "stumps", etc.
- 57 thin cross sectional pieces (or cookies) that are often used as displays of the "raw" wood.
- 20 logs or larger pieces kept in a green (undried) state.

Requests for Wood and Proposals for Uses

EDC staff have handled over 500 inquiries regarding proposed uses for the wood as well as numerous suggestions of how the wood could be put to use. An email in the City's internal news service to City staff yielded 85 suggestions for City uses.

Media Coverage

The fallen tree has attracted national attention, and what the City is doing with its wood continues to hold the interest of the media, the public and other stakeholders.

There have been 18 unique national media stories in print, radio and TV about the wood utilization efforts, and numerous stories done by local community papers and special interest journals. The milling event at Brickworks was the lead-in story on the CBC

National News on Saturday, March 8, 2014. A Google search of "maple leaf forever tree utilization plans" yielded 1,040,000 results on May 26, 2014. A number of the top stories are detailed in the attachment.

Projects using the Wood

As of June 4, 2014 there are 43 confirmed project developers with 75 projects that will produce over 150 individual items. There are an additional 52 projects which have been identified as meeting Council criteria which EDC staff are currently working with the project developers on. Staff estimate that there may be as many as 150 total projects that will use the MLF wood and over 5,000 individual items may ultimately be produced. This estimate includes smaller items such as pens and commemorative plaques.

An outline of the projects that have been given wood to date (or are at the stage to move to production) is found in the attachment to this report.

Fundraising For Urban Forestry Initiatives

Early on EDC staff identified the potential economic value of the tree based on inquiries received to purchase some of the wood. Council direction allows for up to 5% of the wood to be used for fundraising purposes.

EDC staff are working closely with the Toronto Parks and Tree Foundation (TPTF) and LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) to use pieces of the tree for their fundraising activities to support urban forestry initiatives in Toronto. These initiatives can be broken into three categories.

1. Donations for Raw Wood
Individuals or corporations can make a donation to TPTF or LEAF for a specific "unique" piece of wood. Currently there have been 6 donations and \$600 has been raised. The projects are listed in the project overview.
2. LEAF – MLF Branch Pieces
Four pieces were created from the smaller branches and leaves of the tree. To ensure these parts were utilized before they deteriorated, EDC supplied them to interested local designers from a juried group selected for the 2013 IIDEX Woodshop exhibition. The designers volunteered their time to craft these pieces which will be auctioned off to raise funds for LEAF's urban forest programs.
3. TPTF – Recover the Canopy Initiative
Toronto Parks and Tree Foundation is currently working to develop two projects. The first would see MLF wood being used to produce unique items (such as pens, bowls) made by the local wood crafts industry that could be sold on their e-commerce site. The second project would see larger pieces produced by designers

and artists this summer that would then be catalogued and exhibited through Toronto, and select cities within the Province of Ontario in September through December, before being auctioned off in February 2015 on the 50th Anniversary date of the National Flag of Canada. Net proceeds from both would go towards “Recover the Canopy.”

Completed Exhibitions of the Tree

EDC staff worked with LEAF to exhibit the early MLF branch designs produced from the tree:

- January 20-26, 2014; Agora Café as part of the Toronto Offsite Design Festival
- April 25-27, 2014; Green Living Show as part of the City of Toronto display
- June 7, 2014; Todmorden Mills as part of the MLF Wood Distribution Event

Future Plans for Exhibition

Short term exhibition plans include:

- A small exhibition at the Leslieville Tree Festival on June 21 in conjunction with LEAF.
- EDC is working with PFR, local councillors, the Leslieville BIA and TPTF to create an exhibition of these early produced projects in Leslieville on July 19, 2014, the anniversary date of the tree coming down.

Where the project recipients are in Toronto, they have agreed to provide their MLF pieces to the City so that the City can exhibit as many of them as possible. There has been interest expressed by the provincial and federal governments to support an exhibition if it also travels outside Toronto. A unique cultural opportunity exists as 2015 is the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Maple Leaf Flag (proclaimed as the national flag on February 15, 1965).

The Business Growth Services and Arts & Culture Services sections of EDC are collaborating to develop a curated exhibition of Maple Leaf Forever designs that would be shown in Toronto with the potential of a larger provincial or national travelling exhibition.

Using this Iconic Tree to Build Awareness of Toronto’s Urban Wood Industry

Coordinating the use of the salvaged wood of this downed iconic silver maple by the City has created national acknowledgement of Toronto's leadership in considering Toronto's fallen trees as a natural resource. By demonstrating the opportunities for using Toronto's urban wood resource with this tree, Toronto homeowners who similarly face the loss of a

tree have been made aware of the ways that they too can preserve some element of their tree as a family heirloom. This creates economic growth in Toronto's urban wood industry which includes designers, carvers, wood turners and other wood craft professionals.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment No. 1: Examples of Media Coverage
Attachment No. 2: Project Outlines: Maple Leaf Forever Tree Wood Projects

Examples of Media Coverage

- **Windstorm fells piece of living history**; The Globe and Mail; July 21, 2013
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/windstorm-fells-piece-of-living-history/article13337868/>
- **Keeping the Maple Leaf alive forever**; July 21, 2013; Sun News Network
<http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/sunnews/canada/archives/2013/07/20130721-073632.html>
- **City to repurpose historic Maple Leaf Forever" tree**; Toronto Star; July 25, 2013
http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/07/25/city_to_repurpose_historic_maple_leaf_forever_tree.html
- **Toronto 'Maple Leaf Forever' tree may be remembered through art**; Toronto Star; September 17, 2013
http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/09/17/toronto_maple_leaf_forever_tree_may_be_remembered_through_art.html#
- **Maple Leaf Forever tree takes on a new life**; CBC Radio; January 20, 2014
<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Shows/ID/2431100090/>
- **Felled Maple Leaf Forever tree's legend will live on**; Toronto Star; March 8, 2014
http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/03/08/felled_maple_leaf_forever_trees_legend_will_live_on.html
- **The Maple Leaf Forever**; CBC National News; March 8, 2014
<http://www.cbc.ca/player/News/ID/2440872892/>
- **Canadian icon finds new home in New West**; Royal City Record (BC); May 19, 2014
<http://www.royalcityrecord.com/news/update-canadian-icon-finds-new-home-in-new-west-1.1066932>