



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Growing Toronto's Tree Canopy (Tree Planting Strategy)

Date:	October 4, 2016
To:	Parks and Environment Committee
From:	General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2016\Cluster A\PFR\PE14-101916-AFS#22315

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to advise City Council of the recommendations made by a consultant team (Beacon Environmental Ltd. and Urban Forest Innovations Inc.) in response to direction provided by City Council through the approved 2015 Operating Budget which included \$0.050 million to help direct future investment in tree planting.

The consultants were retained to facilitate stakeholder workshops and prepare recommended actions to direct the development of a tree planting strategy that will help achieve the City's tree canopy target of 40 per cent through partnerships and engagement of private landowners. The recommended actions are outlined in a report titled '*Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy*'. The report describes 16 actions focusing on programs and services to increase tree planting and stewardship on private property.

The City of Toronto has adopted the goal of increasing the city's current tree canopy cover, estimated at 26.6 - 28 per cent, to 40 per cent. [*Sustaining and Expanding the Urban Forest: Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan*](#) outlines the City's strategy for achieving this goal. Key findings identified in this plan are that more than half of Toronto's land area lies in private ownership and that successful implementation of the plan, including the goal of achieving 40 per cent tree canopy cover, can only be achieved through private-public partnerships.

The consultant's report supports the City's urban forest management vision and goals with particular regard to working with external stakeholders and private landowners to expand Toronto's urban forest. The recommended actions, developed through public input and stakeholder feedback, are organized in the report under the following categories: private tree establishment; promotion, partnership and outreach; planning and management; and

resources and leadership. These recommendations include the establishment of new private-public partnership programs, prioritization tools, funding mechanisms and process improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. City Council adopt "*Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy*", Attachment 1 to this report.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to develop a Tree Planting Strategy based on the recommendations included in the report "*Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy*" and report back in the third quarter of 2017.
3. City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to form an Urban Forest Working Group with key stakeholders to develop a Tree Planting Strategy and raise necessary funds to implement the recommendations in this report.
4. Council adopt the following policy with respect to the receipt of replacement tree planting funds collected under the Street Tree and Private Tree By-laws (City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Articles II and III):
 - a. That all replacement tree planting funds collected be contributed to the Tree Canopy Reserve (XR1220) at the end of every fiscal year to ensure actual revenues collected are available to expand the tree canopy and facilitate long term planning;
 - b. As part of the annual operating budget cycle, Parks, Forestry and Recreation estimate the replacement funds collected as current revenue to be received, and an equivalent expenditure in the form of a contribution to the Tree Canopy Reserve (XR1220) be included as part of the Operating Budget;
 - c. That the future expenditures for the Tree Planting Strategy be included as part of future Operating Budgets and funded by withdrawals from the Tree Canopy Reserve (XR1220); and
5. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer to transfer the 2016 final year end cumulative balances of replacement tree planting funds held in the deferred accounts 220239, 220288, 220289, 220290, 220291 to the Tree Canopy Reserve (XR1220) and discontinue their use once the appropriate alternative budgetary mechanisms are established.

Financial Impact

A business case for Council's consideration is included in the 2017 Operating Budget Submission for \$0.176 million gross and \$0 net in 2017, and \$0.046 million gross and \$0 net in 2018, fully funded by the Tree Canopy Reserve Fund. This will fund two full-time temporary positions for two years that are required to support the development and administration of a Tree Planting Strategy, one Project Manager and one Program Officer and the repurposing of existing temporary positions with no net change in FTE to support tree planting and maintenance going forward.

If directed, annual contributions to the Tree Canopy Reserve from the receipt of replacement tree planting funds collected under the Street Tree and Private Tree By-laws would be approximately \$2.800 million, based on the average amount of funds received between 2011 and 2015. Pending annual budget approval, the funding would continue to be used for planting activities and/or other initiatives such as development and implementation of the Tree Planting Strategy in the form of planned withdrawals from the reserve (currently funded by the balance sheet accounts).

As part of the Tree Planting Strategy, a private-public partnership funding model will be developed by the Urban Forestry Working Group to address future year costs of implementing new programs and services. Funding models could include the future use of the Tree Canopy Reserve to collect private-public sector donations, participating landowner contributions and replacement tree planting funds collected under the Private Tree By-law. Development of the Tree Planting Strategy and implementation plan will include the development of a detailed funding goal.

The recommended funding model will be reported on in the third quarter of 2017 and included in future year Operating Budget Submissions for Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On January 16, 2013, City Council directed Parks, Forestry and Recreation to re-instate the original timelines outlined in the 2008 Urban Forestry Service Plan to achieve the tree canopy target of 40 per cent.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.EX27.1>

On February 20 and 21, 2013, City Council adopted *Sustaining and Expanding the Urban Forest: Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan*. The plan includes six strategic goals aimed at protecting, maintaining and expanding the urban forest to achieve a healthy, sustainable forest with a canopy cover of 40 per cent.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PE18.4>

On March 10, 2015, City Council directed Urban Forestry to allocate \$0.05 million to help direct future investments in the Forestry Service Plan.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.EX3.4>

On September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015, City Council considered the Staff Report "Green City: Why Nature Matters to Health" and adopted a motion to dedicate sufficient resources to meet the strategic goal of increasing canopy cover in Toronto to 40 per cent as set out by the 2013 *Strategic Forest Management Plan*.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.HL6.2>

On February 3, 2016, City Council amended item EX11.6, a report titled, "Administrative Amendments to Reserve Fund Accounts – 2015" to establish a discretionary reserve fund account named the "Tree Canopy Reserve Fund". The purpose of the account will be to hold funds to maintain the tree canopy and foster the City's forest canopy targets, as approved under the City's Strategic Forest Management Plan as well as to mitigate storm water runoff and climate change impacts.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EX11.6>

On February 17 2016, City Council amended item EX12.2, a report titled, "2016 Capital and Operating Budgets" and approved a motion to approve two annual grants: one of up to \$200,000 to the Toronto Parks and Tree Foundation (TPTF), and one of up to \$50,000 to Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF). City funds will be leveraged by the TPTF and LEAF, with donations from the private and public sector, to support meeting the City's tree canopy goal.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EX12.2>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto's urban forest is a vital city asset contributing to the quality of life in Canada's largest urban centre. Torontonians have come to understand and value the tremendous contributions trees make to healthy communities. It is estimated that the city's trees provide benefits equivalent to \$16.9 million in pollution filtration, \$10.2 million in energy savings related to lowering heating requirements in the winter and cooling requirements in the summer, and another \$1.1 million in carbon sequestration each year. This is in addition to the less quantifiable benefits and services provided by trees such as flood protection and erosion control, contributions to human physical health and well-being, and economic factors including enhancements to property values, tourism and consumer spending.

Urban foresters recommend tree cover for urban areas of between 30 per cent and 40 per cent to maximize the social, economic and ecological benefits derived from trees. The City has committed to sustaining and expanding the urban forest as described in *Sustaining and Expanding the Urban Forest: Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan 2012-2022*. Developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, the Plan provides the direction necessary to achieve a healthy, sustainable urban forest and includes the following six strategic goals:

1. ***Increase canopy cover*** – *Protect, maintain and expand the urban forest to achieve a healthy, sustainable forest with a canopy cover of 40 per cent.*
2. ***Achieve equitable distribution*** – *Achieve an equitable distribution of the urban forest, increasing canopy where it is most needed.*
3. ***Increase Biodiversity*** – *Increase biodiversity to improve urban forest resiliency and respond to climate change.*
4. ***Increase awareness*** – *Increase awareness of the value of trees, the natural environment and the sensitivity of these resources.*
5. ***Promote stewardship*** – *Promote stewardship and education of the multiple benefits of the urban forest and build collaborative partnerships for expanding the forest.*
6. ***Improve monitoring*** – *Improve information management systems and enhance the ability to inventory, monitor and analyze the urban forest.*

In 2009, the Urban Forestry Service Plan, an eight year financial plan to sustain and expand the urban forest, was approved by City Council. A primary focus of this plan is increasing Toronto's tree canopy cover to 40 per cent by addressing tree planting, maintenance and protection needs on public land and promoting the same on private land.

With the arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer pest in 2007, combined with other budget pressures, resources were reallocated within the financial plan resulting in the Consolidated Funding Plan 2016-2023 being adopted by City Council at its meeting of November 27 - 29, 2012. As a result, implementation of the Service Plan was extended by seven years. Further, the 2016 Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Key Service Issues and Priority Actions for 2016 included increasing biodiversity to increase resiliency, increasing tree canopy cover and increasing planting on private land. In addition, on February 17, 2016 City Council directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report to the Parks and Environment Committee on how funds collected for replacement tree planting under the City's Private Tree By-law can be used to increase tree planting on private lands (EX12.2 # 138). In response to this direction, Urban Forestry is proposing to utilize these funds in the delivery of private tree planting programs and services.

The above-mentioned goals of the *Strategic Forest Management Plan* are supported by the recent report prepared by the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer,

[*Resilient City – Preparing for a Changing Climate*](#) (2014). This report made a number of recommendations to address climate change and to build resiliency, including planting more trees to increase shade and to clean and cool the air. The report recognized that a healthy urban forest contributes to a city's resiliency and that trees can help the city adapt to a changing climate. In particular, large-stature trees in urban areas are known to both moderate temperature extremes and improve air quality. The maintenance and expansion of the urban tree canopy is one important factor in reducing impacts associated with the urban heat island effect such as increased summertime peak energy demand; air conditioning costs; air pollution; heat-related illness; and water quality.

A number of other recent reports also support expanding Toronto's urban forest, including;

- [*Green City: Why Nature Matters to Health – An Evidence Review*](#). Released by Toronto Public Health in 2015, key conclusions of the report included that green space improves physical and mental health and wellbeing of urban residents.
- The City's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, [*Ahead of the Storm: Preparing Toronto for Climate Change*](#) outlined a number of actions to improve the city's resilience to climate change and extreme weather events including tree planting.
- The report [*Resilient City: Preparing for Extreme Weather Events*](#) (2013) was adopted by City Council to further the City's efforts in creating a more resilient Toronto. Planting more trees to increase shade and to clean and cool the air is one example of an adaptation action that residents and businesses can take to make buildings and infrastructure more resilient to extreme weather and improve the city's overall sustainability.

In 2016, Toronto was selected to join the 100 Resilient Cities network, a global community of cities working together to build urban resilience. As noted previously, a healthy urban forest contributes to a city's resiliency.

COMMENTS

The most recent analysis of Toronto's urban forest, completed in 2009 and published in [*Every Tree Counts: A Portrait of Toronto's Urban Forest*](#), found that Toronto has between 26.6 per cent and 28 per cent tree canopy cover. This tree cover is comprised of about 10.2 million trees, 40 per cent of which are located on City-owned and managed lands (34 per cent in public parks and natural areas and 6 per cent along City streets). The remaining 60 per cent of the City's tree canopy cover is found on private property, primarily residential land, but also on industrial, commercial and institutional lands.

Toronto's tree canopy cover is not distributed evenly. Not surprisingly, parks and other open spaces, including the river valleys and ravines, enjoy an estimated 52 per cent tree canopy cover while on industrial, commercial and institutional lands, the average tree canopy cover is between 4 and 17 per cent.

Current Programs

The City has been actively working toward sustaining and enhancing the urban forest by implementing a variety of policies, bylaws, guidelines, programs and management activities, guided by the Strategic Forest Management Plan. Urban Forestry plants and maintains trees on public property including parks, natural areas and City property adjacent to City streets. Through this work the City plants approximately 105,000 trees and shrubs on an annual basis. Tree planting and stewardship activities also include stewardship at seven naturalization sites, the hosting of 90-100 tree planting and stewardship events annually and the engagement of over 4,000 private and public volunteers annually.

Urban Forestry works in partnership with the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board to supply and plant trees on school property. Urban Forestry also works with LEAF to support private tree planting programs and other community outreach and education activities. In addition to securing sponsorship funding, the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, with support from Urban Forestry, has developed a tree counting application (#citytrees) to help engage private landowners, counting trees planted on their own property. This tool will help gather much-needed information to guide new program development.

Urban Forestry also works with corporate partners, local community groups and the public to plant and maintain trees on public lands including partnerships with local Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to plant street trees in commercial areas.

Current tree planting and stewardship programs target public and quasi-public lands exclusively and do not address tree establishment or tree canopy expansion on private property. There are currently no formal mechanisms whereby the City provides direct or indirect support for tree establishment on private lands on a voluntary or stewardship basis. Spatial analysis of land cover across the city has revealed that there are significant opportunities for additional tree establishment on private lands – on residential, industrial, commercial and institutional properties. If the City is to encourage more tree establishment on private lands, an investment of additional resources to foster and support this kind of tree planting and stewardship is required.

Suitable planting space on City-owned lands is becoming more limited as competition increases for existing green space use and desirable spaces for urban forest expansion fill up as part of City and community-led tree planting initiatives. In addition, there are other constraints to expanding the urban forest on public property such as inadequate soil quantities, lack of soil nutrients and exposure to contaminants such as road salt.

While opportunities remain for tree planting and natural regeneration to occur in some of the city's less disturbed natural areas and open spaces, a more hands-on approach is required to establish trees in other parts of the urban environment. This approach is particularly important as cities face competition for available planting space, replacement

of an aging tree canopy and other stressors such as climate change and forest health threats like the Emerald Ash Borer. Active forest management is needed on both public and private lands in order to achieve the tree canopy target and to ensure the city's inhabitants continue to enjoy the environmental, social and economic benefits of a healthy, sustainable urban forest.

Tree Planting Targets

In order to achieve 40 per cent tree canopy cover city-wide, the *Strategic Forest Management Plan* identifies a tree planting target for public property of approximately 114,000 trees annually. The tree planting target for public land, which represents less than half of the land area in the city, takes into account rates of natural regeneration. Urban Forestry currently has the resources to plant approximately 105,000 trees annually. However, additional one-time funding received in 2016 allows for the projected planting of 113,000 trees and shrubs this year. In 2017 planting levels are expected to return to approximately 105,000 trees.

Land Ownership	Tree Establishment Target	Natural Regeneration Target	Tree Planting Target
Public	256,500	142,680	113,820
Private	313,500	unknown	313,500
Total	570,000	142,680	427,320

As more than half of the city's land base is private property, private landowners have an important role in the maintenance and expansion of the urban forest. The *Strategic Forest Management Plan* identifies that achieving the canopy cover target will require the establishment of approximately 314,000 trees on private land annually. Currently, there are no ongoing programs to support tree planting on private lands and the total number of trees naturally regenerating or being planted on private land is unknown. Gathering information on the current level of tree planting on private land is an important step in setting future targets for new private tree planting programs and will be part of the mandate of the proposed Urban Forest Working Group.

A work plan will be produced that includes prioritization, potential deliverables and preliminary targets for the proposed actions in the consultant's report. The work plan, coordinated by the new program manager and project officer, will be developed in partnership with the proposed Urban Forest Working Group. The program deliverables could include such performance targets as the number of trees and shrubs planted, the number of partnerships established and other stewardship and outreach performance indicators. Program deliverables will be dependent on the level of funding secured through public and private sector donations.

In Year 1, the Project Manager and the Program Officer would form the Urban Forest Working Group and oversee the development of a Tree Planting Strategy and

implementation plan. In Year 2, with the support of the Urban Forest Working Group, the Project Manager and Program Officer would implement the strategy.

Funding for Replacement Tree Planting

Urban Forestry receives payments for replacement tree planting under the Street Tree and Private Tree By-laws as a condition of permits issued for tree injury and/or removal. The payments, which averaged \$2.800 million annually between 2011 and 2015, are used to fund tree planting and maintenance activities on public land that contribute to achieving the City's tree canopy target. The funds are currently held in balance sheet accounts and transferred to operating accounts based on budgeted revenue targets for appropriate tree planting activities.

Urban Forestry is proposing that starting in 2017, the replacement tree planting funds collected under the Street Tree and Private Tree By-laws be used to make annually budgeted contributions to the Tree Canopy Reserve Fund (XR1220). At the end of the 2016 fiscal year, the funds currently held in balance sheet accounts would be transferred to the Tree Canopy Reserve.

The purpose of payments for replacement tree planting align with the purpose of the reserve fund which is to hold funds to foster and maintain the tree canopy. Pending annual budget approval, the funding would be withdrawn from the Tree Canopy Reserve Fund to continue planting activities that are currently funded by the balance sheet accounts and/or other appropriate initiatives such as development and implementation of the Tree Planting Strategy.

The 2017 and 2018 proposed budgets include the use of approximately \$4.871 million and \$4.000 million in replacement tree planting funds respectively for tree planting activities on public land. Urban Forestry is proposing to redirect \$0.176 million in 2017, and \$0.188 million in 2018, to invest in two temporary staff positions for the development and initial implementation of the Tree Planting Strategy. Funding for permanent positions to support the Tree Planting Strategy is included in the Urban Forestry Service Plan and will be requested through the 2018 budget process.

Consultant Recommendations

In the fall of 2015, the City retained a consultant team (Beacon Environmental Ltd. and Urban Forest Innovations Inc.) to facilitate a series of stakeholder workshops and to recommend a series of actions intended primarily to foster and support tree establishment on private lands. The results are presented in a report titled "*Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy*". The consultant's report, informed by the vision and goals of the City's *Strategic Forest Management Plan*, identifies opportunities for refinement of existing programs and areas where additional investment is required in order to increase tree planting and stewardship. Both of these factors are presented as being essential to achieving the City's tree canopy goal.

The report describes 16 actions to address opportunities and constraints associated with growing the City's tree canopy. These actions are organized into the following categories: Private Tree Establishment Programs; Promotion, Partnership and Outreach; Planning and Management; and Resources and Leadership. Each of the 16 actions described in the report includes: a description and rationale; considers current practices and best practices from other jurisdictions; highlights relevant input received from stakeholders; and includes preliminary implementation guidance, potential partners, and interim targets.

Key stakeholders that participated in consultation workshops were invited to review the draft consultant's report prior to finalization. Generally, feedback was very positive. Stakeholders supported the rationale for new initiatives, including dedicated programs to encourage tree planting and tree care on private property. Specific comments were provided on target setting, program evaluation and communications. Community partners recognized the need for expanded private-public partnerships and expressed eagerness to participate with Urban Forestry. There was particular interest in providing insights and input into the development of a tree planting prioritization tool and an urban forest working group. Overall, the recommended actions were seen as ambitious but necessary to help achieve the City's tree canopy target.

Private Tree Establishment Programs

Sixty per cent of Toronto's existing tree canopy is on private land. Recognizing this significant contribution and the opportunities that exist for tree canopy expansion on private lands, a number of recommendations support the development and implementation of new tree planting and tree care support programs designed to encourage tree establishment on private residential, industrial, commercial and institutional lands. These recommendations support the *Strategic Forest Management Plan* goals of increasing canopy cover and promoting stewardship.

New tree planting and stewardship programs include financial incentive programs like those used by other municipalities. A direct rebate program could be modeled on other similar programs previously offered by the City, such as rebates for low flow toilet installation as a means of reducing water consumption. Implementation of these new tree planting programs is dependent on a private-public partnership to raise funds for subsidies and rebates. Partnering with established non-profit organizations would help secure matching funding to take some of the resource burden from Urban Forestry and help to coordinate and implement new tree planting and stewardship programs. The consultant report recommends building to a target of up to 12,000 trees established annually through Actions #1-5.

Action #1 – Tree Planting and Support Program for Residential Landowners

- Subsidize private tree planting and tree care in partnership with community partners such as LEAF.

Action #2 – Direct Tree Rebate Program for Residential Landowners

- Provide direct rebate for tree planting on residential lots, together with education and outreach activities.

Action #3 – Tree Planting and Support Program for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Landowners

- Subsidize tree planting and tree care for landowners and property managers to encourage conversion of underused lands to tree cover.

Action #4 – Direct Tree Rebate Program for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Landowners

- Provide direct rebate for tree planting on underused industrial, commercial and institutional lands.

Action #5 – Tree Planting and Support Program for Schools

- Expand existing tree planting and stewardship in partnership with school boards and other educational institutions.

Promotion, Partnerships and Outreach

A number of recommendations focus on outreach and communications necessary to promote the benefits of trees in our urban environment, including the development of partnerships with the community to encourage new tree planting and tree care. These recommendations support the *Strategic Forest Management Plan* goals of increasing awareness and promoting stewardship.

Action #6 – Develop an "Every Tree Counts" Campaign

- Develop a simple and clear engagement campaign to raise public awareness about the benefits of trees, tree planting opportunities and stewardship.

Action #7 – Leverage Partnerships to Expand Outreach and Promotion

- Maximize impact of education and outreach initiatives by leveraging existing partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders.

Action #8 – Undertake Outreach and Education Events for the "Every Tree Counts" Campaign

- Utilize existing outreach and education models to develop tree planting opportunities and stewardship events on private lands.

Action #9 – Expand Street Tree and Park Tree Adoption Programs

- Support and build on established tree planting and tree care initiatives carried out by neighbourhood volunteers.

Planning and Management

There are a number of recommendations that focus on improvements to ensure success of tree establishment on both public and private lands. These include policy and planning tools, as well as young tree maintenance and monitoring. These recommendations support the *Strategic Forest Management Plan* goals of increasing biodiversity and improving monitoring.

Action #10 – Develop Policies and Guidelines for Species Diversity

- Develop policies and guidelines to address native species selection and increase urban forest resiliency.

Action #11 – Comprehensive Review of Impediments to Tree Planting and Maintenance

- Work with City divisions to ensure all relevant policies and bylaws are supportive of tree establishment to the greatest extent possible.

Action #12 – Improve Young Tree Maintenance on Public Land

- Enhance watering and pruning practices to improve short and long term success of young trees.

Action #13 – New Tree Establishment Monitoring

- Monitor tree health and survival rates under different conditions in order to inform future management approaches.

Resources and Leadership

The need for additional resources to deliver new programs and services is vital to achieving the target of 40 per cent tree canopy cover. New City staff and the formation of an Urban Forest Working Group will be essential to building the necessary programs and partnerships to achieve the target of 40 per cent tree canopy cover. These recommendations support the *Strategic Forest Management Plan* goals of achieving equitable distribution and promoting stewardship.

Action #14 – Create Staff Positions to Coordinate and Oversee New Tree Planting Programs

- Provide sufficient resources to develop and implement new programs and services to meet urban forest management objectives.

Action #15 – Develop a Tree Planting Prioritization Tool

- Develop a map-based tool in collaboration with key stakeholders to help refine priority planting areas.

Action #16 – Form an Urban Forest Working Group

- Provide a mechanism for two-way communication between the City and key stakeholders in order to implement new programs and services.

The recommended actions described above include the establishment of new private-public partnership programs, prioritization tools, funding mechanisms and process improvements intended to encourage tree planting and tree stewardship on private property in order to help the City achieve the target of 40 per cent tree canopy cover.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy