

Strategy to Expand the City's Tree Canopy on Private Lands

Date: April 20, 2017

To: Parks and Environment Committee

From: General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to provide a grant of \$1.060 million to the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation as part of a strategy and plan to expand the City's tree canopy on private land. The 2017 Council Approved Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation includes \$1.060 million for the development of private partnerships for new tree planting and tree care on private lands. The \$1.060 million allocation in 2017 will accelerate the launch of key recommended actions in the consultant's report, "Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy", providing a pilot opportunity to test select programs and services this year.

Urban Forestry will work in partnership with Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation to deliver tree planting and tree care partnership programs on private properties. In 2017, program areas will include direct tree planting and tree care support and expansion of the Every Tree Counts marketing and communications campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council approve a 2017 grant allocation of \$1.060 million to the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation funded from the 2017 Parks, Forestry and Recreation Operating Budget.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation enter into a delivery agreement with the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation to administer the program funding in 2017, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from the recommendations in this report.

The 2017 Council Approved Operating Budget for Parks, Forestry and Recreation includes \$1.060 million for the development of private partnerships for new tree planting and tree care on private lands. Prior to spending this funding, City Council directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report to the Parks and Environment Committee on a strategy and plan.

The proposed strategy outlined in this report dedicates up to \$1.060 million grant to the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation ("the Foundation") for the delivery of private tree planting programs and public outreach. The Foundation is the official fundraising partner of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation and has been working with the City since 2002 to meet urban forestry objectives including increasing tree canopy cover. The Foundation is uniquely positioned to leverage private and public sector donations in support of these new programs, has a demonstrated track-record of meeting urban forestry goals within a public-private partnership model, and has an established accountability model for working with the City, including City representation on its Board of Directors.

Table 1: Summary of Grant Allocation

Program / Initiative	City Allocation	Matching Grants / In-Kind	Deliverables
- Tree For Me - Making Trees Count - Tree Planting Partnerships	up to \$230,000 up to \$350,000 up to \$350,000	up to \$930,000	5,000 - 10,000 trees
Every Tree Counts - Campaign	\$ 60,000	Potential sponsorship	Increase awareness of tree planting programs
Administration	\$ 70,000	n/a	Accounting, grant administration, auditing
Total 2017 Budget	\$1,060,000	up to \$930,000	

The 2017 allocation is expected to be leveraged by the Foundation to generate a total program value of up to \$2.0 million. The actual allocation and the number of trees planted will depend on actual program participation levels. As part of the 2018 budget process, this funding allocation will be reviewed together with recommended actions developed by the Urban Forest Working Group in the Tree Planting Strategy and implementation plan, which will be reviewed as part of the annual budget process.

DECISION HISTORY

On February 15 and 16, 2017, City Council amended item EX22.2, "2017 Capital and Operating Budgets" and approved a motion for \$1.060 M to be spent in 2017 for the development of private partnerships for new tree planting and tree care on private land.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX22.2>

On November 8 and 9, 2016 City Council adopted the consultant's report, "Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy" through item PE14.2, "Growing Toronto's Tree Canopy (Tree Planting Strategy)", which provided a comprehensive range of practical recommendations that leverage existing tools, programs and organizations to maximize the City's return on investment with respect to tree establishment, particularly on private lands.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PE14.2>

On February 20 and 21, 2013, City Council adopted the [Sustaining and Expanding the Urban Forest: Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan](#) (SFMP) via item PE18.4, "Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan". One of the six strategic goals is to increase the tree canopy cover to 40 per cent. As the greatest opportunities for tree canopy expansion are on private land, the plan recommends that the City pursue private public partnerships to encourage tree planting and tree care on private property.

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

COMMENTS

City Council adopted the [Sustaining and Expanding the Urban Forest: Toronto's Strategic Forest Management Plan](#) (SFMP). One of the six strategic goals is to increase the tree canopy cover to 40 per cent. The conclusion of the strategic forest management plan states that:

With approximately 40% of the resource in public ownership and the remaining 60% of the resource in private ownership, partnerships, internally and externally, are fundamental to making progress towards the goal of expanding the quality and quantity of the urban forest across the city.

As part of the 2017 Budget process, City Council directed that the tree canopy be expanded by increasing tree plantings in 2017 from 103,000 to 120,000 annually. City Council also directed the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to report to the Parks and Environment Committee on a strategy and plan on how the City can expand its tree canopy on private lands prior to spending the \$1.060 million included in the 2017 Budget Committee Recommended Operating Budget for the development of private partnerships for new tree planting and tree care on private lands.

Based on direction from the SFMP, Urban Forestry undertook a stakeholder engagement process in the fall of 2015 to develop recommendations to establish new private-public partnership programs, prioritization tools, funding mechanisms and process improvements intended to encourage tree planting and tree stewardship on private property. In the fall of 2016, City Council approved a staff report and the consultant's report, "Actions to Grow Toronto's Tree Canopy", which described 16 recommended actions to leverage tools and develop new partnerships and programs aimed at promoting and increasing tree establishment on private lands. The report recognizes that planting trees on public lands alone will not meet community needs for expanded tree cover or be sufficient to meet the City's target of 40 per cent tree canopy cover. Nine of the 16 recommended actions are related to tree planting and tree care, in addition to actions related to promotion, outreach and the development of new private public partnerships. Proposed program delivery models include City-supported, community-led partnerships and individual agreements with private landowners/property managers.

City Council also recommended the formation of an Urban Forest Working Group to help develop and implement a tree planting strategy based on the recommendations of the consultant's report. A staff report detailing the strategy and implementation plan will be presented to the Parks and Environment Committee in fall 2017.

Current Tree Planting Partnership

In February 2016, City Council approved a grant of up to \$200,00 to the Foundation for activities designed to support the City's urban forest management objectives, specifically the City's target of achieving 40 per cent tree canopy cover. Further to the executed delivery agreement, the Foundation launched the Every Tree Counts communications and marketing campaign and the 'Tree For Me' program at the Green Living Show in April 2016. The Foundation was able to engage private landowners to plant 263 trees in their backyards and leverage sponsorship support to plant 2,080 trees on public land.

Proposed Programs for 2017

City of Toronto, in partnership with Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, proposes to leverage the budgeted City funds to develop and offer financial support and capacity-building for private tree planting programs. Programs will support residential landowners and industrial / commercial / institutional landowners. The Foundation, as a registered charity and official fundraising partner of the City of Toronto, is able to leverage private sector donations to deliver private tree planting programs and public outreach in order to help the City achieve the target of 40 per cent tree canopy cover. The Foundation will be required to enter into a delivery agreement with the City to deliver these new programs and services based on an approved operations and fundraising strategy. Public and private sector response to the following initiatives will help inform recommendations by the Urban Forest Working Group in the finalization of the Tree Planting Strategy and implementation plan.

Proposed programs for creation or expansion in 2017 include:

Tree For Me: Initiated in 2016, this partnership program provides funding, tree seedlings and hands-on support to eligible groups and individuals to organize and host a 'Tree For Me' event in their neighbourhood. Eligible groups include existing City partners such as Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF). Participants take part in a mandatory one-day workshop on proper tree planting and tree care, and then take home a free native tree, grown with local Toronto seed stock. Carefully selecting the right species for site conditions helps to increase successful tree establishment. Post-planting monitoring and tree care support is an important part of this program.

Making Trees Count: This new incentive program will focus on providing matching grants to community groups in partnership with non-profit organizations, to deliver neighbourhood tree planting efforts for residential, industrial and institutional landowners and businesses in their area. The program will provide financial support and hands-on training necessary to undertake successful tree planting on private property. The Foundation will be responsible for registration, inventory, training, advice, logistical support and branded promotional materials. Program partners will identify desirable planting locations and contribute to tree planting activities with financial or in-kind support. A number of potential partners have expressed interest, including Toronto Community Housing Corporation, faith-based community organizations, health care facilities and local school boards.

Tree Planting Partnerships: This new public-private partnership program will focus on partnerships with for-profit organizations including the arboriculture and landscaping sectors and private landowners. Program delivery agreements would include tree planting targets, survival rates, mapping and monitoring. Funding support through the Foundation would be matched by the for-profit organization and the private landowner. This partnership program would closely model the 50 Million Tree Program currently delivered by Forests Ontario on behalf of the Province of Ontario. It would apply to all private landowners in Toronto.

Every Tree Counts Campaign: Beginning in 2017, the Foundation will begin promoting and supporting new programs under this brand and campaign. The overall purpose of the campaign is to raise public awareness of the value of the urban forest and to promote new private tree planting programs. In partnership with the Foundation, the City will deliver simple, clear and consistent messaging under the Every Tree Counts brand. Various marketing methods including web-based materials, social media and both on-line and print materials will be used to raise awareness, promote new private tree planting and tree care programs, and track new tree planting participation and program deliverables.

The Every Tree Counts Campaign, launched in 2016, will be the umbrella for all tree establishment partnerships with the City, providing a unifying framework for new private tree planting programs. The success of the Tree For Me and the Community Grant Program will be influenced by this campaign and will be measured by such performance indicators as the number of program events, number of program participants and number of trees planted.

Conclusion

The \$1.060 million allocation in 2017 will accelerate the launch of key recommended actions in the consultant's report, providing a pilot opportunity to test select programs and services this year. Public and private sector response to these initiatives will help inform recommendations by the Urban Forest Working Group in the finalization of the Tree Planting Strategy and implementation plan. The Strategy and implementation plan will be presented to Parks and Environment Committee in fall 2017.

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SIGNATURE

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