

Infrastructure and Environment Committee

IE9.8		Referred		Ward: All
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Federal Funding for Tree Planting in the City of Toronto

City Council Decision

City Council on November 26 and 27, 2019, referred Item IE9.8 back to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee for further consideration.

Committee Recommendations

The Infrastructure and Environment Committee recommends that:

1. City Council request the Federal Government to provide \$4,000,000 in annual funding to Urban Forestry to assist the City in achieving its 40 percent tree canopy target.
2. City Council request the Federal Government to provide additional funding for 10 million new trees to be planted in Toronto in the next three years.

Origin

(November 7, 2019) Letter from Councillor Mike Layton, Ward 11 University-Rosedale

Summary

Our urban forest (meaning all trees within the City of Toronto's boundaries) provide a wide range of environmental, ecological, social, cultural and economic benefits to residents. This shared resource has direct financial benefits to the City from air pollution filtration to energy savings that have been estimated at over \$28 million per year to Toronto residents.

The City of Toronto has been working hard to maintain its tree canopy in the last decade, with multiple and varied threats from Dutch Elm Disease, Emerald Ash Borer, Asian Long-horned Beetle, and extreme weather events wreaking havoc on our mature and established trees. While Forestry works hard to mitigate and replace these negative impacts, these efforts take away from the expansion plans for our canopy.

The City's Tree Planting Strategy has the aim of creating 40 percent tree canopy cover. In 2012, it was estimated we sat around 27 percent, meaning substantial growth and planting will need to occur over the coming years if we are to take our commitments seriously to reducing the impacts of climate change, and providing cleaner air for our residents.

Using the City's calculations in the Strategic Forest Management Plan 2012-2022, it is expected that we need to plant between 57 000 – 114 000 trees/year on publicly owned land to achieve a 40 percent canopy by 2060. Any opportunity to speed up this timeline must be explored.

Based on the 2019 budget, we are expecting to contribute about \$4 million/year to the Tree Canopy Reserve, but we are consistently pulling a similar amount from this account to fund tree maintenance and other operational measures. We cannot rely upon one-time funding and reserves to make a substantial impact over the next 40 years.

During the recent Federal election, all political parties spoke to a commitment to the environment, and the Prime Minister made a point of saying they will plant 2 billion new trees. With a new federal budget on the horizon, our urban forest cannot be ignored and City Council must work to ensure that the funding for this tree planting commitment is being directed to the City of Toronto.

Background Information (Committee)

(November 7, 2019) Letter from Councillor Mike Layton on Federal Funding for Tree Planting in the City of Toronto

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-139780.pdf>)