

Subject: Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority 'Trees for All' Partnership Opportunity

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2024-0023 – Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority 'Trees for All' Partnership Opportunity, for information;

AND THAT Council endorse and support the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's Trees for All Program;

AND THAT Council direct staff to utilize \$11,327 from the 2024 Beautification Operating Budget to fulfill the Town's 2024 contribution to the Trees for All Program;

AND THAT Council further directs staff to include the following new expenditures in the subsequent operating budgets for Council's consideration to sustain the Town's commitments to the Trees for All Program:

- 1. 2025 - \$11,931**
- 2. 2026 - \$11,891**
- 3. 2027 - \$12,327**
- 4. 2028 - \$12,701**

Background:

'Trees for All' is a large-scale tree planting program proposed for both public and private land in the Urban and Rural areas within the Niagara Peninsula Watershed (NPW). This multi-year, planting program is being led by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) and supported by a broad number of organizations and government agencies.

The objective of the program is to plant 1 million trees across the NPW by 2031, with an overall goal to improve the health of the watershed, restore woodlots and forests and build a more resilient natural system able to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

This report serves to provide Council with general information regarding the status of the 'Trees for All' program and the NPCA's request for the Town of Pelham's support and funding for the small-scale rural planting program in Pelham.

Analysis:

In 2022 the NPCA was awarded a Capacity Building Grant under the Federal 2 Billion Trees Program (2BT). The grant was used for a marketing campaign designed to create a database of private landowners within the NPW interested in the opportunity of planting trees and shrubs on their properties. The campaign was successful in signing up 800 landowners. Municipalities within the watershed were also asked to provide public tree planting opportunities to be added to the database as well. The data captured in this process was utilized to develop the Trees for All program with the goal of planting 1,000,000 trees throughout the watershed.

In June 2023, the NPCA applied for two grant funding streams under the 2BT grant including the Rural Small-Scale, and Urban Tree Planting stream. The Rural Small-Scale stream is focused on large-volume rural tree planting opportunities on both private and public property. The goal of this program is to plant 840,000 trees across the watershed over an 8-year time frame. The Urban Tree Planting stream focuses on increasing the tree canopy on both private and public property within urban settings. The goal of this program is to plant 160,000 trees in various urban environments across the watershed over an 8-year time frame.

In November 2023, the NPCA submitted a subsequent Capacity Building Application to the 2BT grant with the goal of creating a seed collection community of practice. This involves the hiring of a seed coordinator to facilitate the location of high-quality areas within the Niagara Region, identify gaps in species supply for tree planting and collect seeds to be stored and propagated at partner nurseries to ensure seeds and stock are available to support the program's high-volume tree planting goals.

The Urban Tree Planting stream is still under review, however, the NPCA received notice from the Federal Government in September 2023 that the Rural Small-Scale program would not be chosen for the next phase of the selection process, and it was placed on hold while the NPCA looked for alternative funding opportunities to continue the rural program.

Over the last three months, NPCA staff revised the 'Trees for All' program. It worked to secure partnerships with Trees Canada and Forest Ontario to partially subsidize the cost of the rural program with the balance of the program costs split between 15 municipalities according to the volume of trees to be planted in each. The goal of the Rural Small-Scale program is to plant 350,000 trees within the NPW over the next 5 years, with an opportunity to plant more than 500,000 should extra

funding be available. Tree Canada and Forests Ontario were approved as aggregators of the Federal 2BT grant. Currently, only Rural Bareroot planting areas are being considered for implementation due to the currently available funding.

The NPCA anticipates that the total cost of the revised Rural Small-Scale program over 5 years is \$5,002,453. Tree Canada, Forests Ontario, private landowner contributions, and NPCA (in kind) funding totals \$1,960,703. The NPCA requests Municipal support for the program and funding for the remaining \$3,041,750.

Under the program, 7797 trees are planned to be planted on Public and Private land in Pelham. The total cost of the program over 5 years is \$111,451 with \$51,274 coming from grants, private landowners, and the NPCA (in kind), and the remaining \$60,177 requested from the Town of Pelham or \$7.72 per tree. NPCA's proposed funding request, throughout the program, is as follows:

- 2024 - \$11,327
- 2025 - \$11,931
- 2026 - \$11,891
- 2027 - \$12,327
- 2028 - \$12,701

Further breakdown on program costs is provided in the 'Trees for All' Pelham Municipal Summary as provided by the NPCA, attached to this report.

As part of this program, the NPCA provides full turnkey project management services including procurement and storage of stock, communicating and securing agreements with landowners, educational and community programming, site preparation, preparing planting plans approved by a Registered Professional Forester, supply of labour for tree planting projects, on-site supervision and inspection of planting operations, survival assessments at years 3, 5 and 10, preparation and submission of all post-planting and final reports to funders.

During the initial phase of the program 4 public sites were identified for rural high volume bare root planting, and 12 private sites totaling 6,040 and 11,700 trees respectively, however, this has been reduced to 7,797, including 1540 trees on public sites and 6,257 on private, during the program's revision once the 2BT funding was not secured. The public sites identified by the NPCA were explored by staff and concluded that they were not acceptable for mass plantings due to current and future use. These sites including Hillside Cemetery, and Harold Black Park were intended to be part of the Urban Tree Planting Program, where potted or caliper stock would be utilized. While staff expect there will be suitable public locations for planting in subsequent years, the bulk of the planting in 2024 will be focused on private property, contingent upon Council approval.

The NPCA identifies that the Niagara Peninsula Watershed is part of the Carolinian life zone and is an incredibly biodiverse area. The region boasts fully one-third of the rare, threatened, and endangered species in all of Canada. 65% of Ontario's rare plants are found in the region, and 40% are restricted to the Carolinian zone which is why the NPCA plans incorporate early successional species native to the Carolinian Zone and grown from seed collected within the Carolinian area. These species include, but are not limited to: White Pine, White Spruce, Tamarack, Swamp White Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Bitternut Hickory, Black Cherry, Sycamore, Hybrid Maple and Poplar, Cottonwood, and Aspen. The goal is that more shade-tolerant species will naturally move in overtime as the planting transitions into a free-growing forest.

As previously reported in Public Works Report 2022-0272, the Town of Pelham boasts a tree canopy coverage of 32.2% within the town's urban boundary. The Tree Canopy and Reforestation is identified as an action item in the Council-approved 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. With a robust urban tree canopy and lack of available municipally owned properties suitable for mass planting and reforestation, increasing tree planting on private land is necessary to continue to expand the Town's tree canopy. Subsidizing mass plantings on private land through the NPCA's Tree for All program is an effective way to expand the Town's tree canopy and restore forests on lands not utilized for agricultural production.

Financial Considerations:

The Annual Contracted Services Beautification Operating Budget for Tree Planting in 2024 is \$32,500. As Staff complete tree planting and replacement works through a combination of in-house and contracted planting projects, staff are confident that the Contracted Services Tree Planting budget line could be used to fund the Trees for All program (\$11,327) while completing the prescribed number of tree replacements required by the Tree Maintenance Policy S802-01, as well as fulfilling a key priority of the 2023-2027 Town of Pelham Strategic Plan.

Staff recommend funding the "Trees for All" program in 2025 through 2028 as a separate budget line item under the Beautification Operating Budget.

Alternatives Reviewed:

Council may decide not to provide funding support to the NPCA's Trees for All Rural Small-Scale Planting Program.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Environmental and Climate Change Adaptation

Expansion of the tree canopy within the municipal boundary on both public and private lands is vital to the high quality of life within the Town of Pelham, while

protection of Pelham's tree canopy is identified as an action item in the Strategic Plan.

Consultation:

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and the Town's Senior Leadership team was consulted in the preparation of this report.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

NPCA Trees for All Pelham Summary

2023-2027 Town of Pelham Strategic Plan

Public Works Report 2022-0272 Tree Maintenance Summary Report

Tree Maintenance Policy S802-01

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