



PORT COLBORNE

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

To: Council

From: Public Works Department

Report Number: 2025-14

Meeting Date: January 28, 2025

Recommendation:

That Public Works Department Report 2025-14 be received; and

That Council approve the Director of Public Works to authorize an agreement with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) for tree planting services on private lands in the amount of \$55,000, funded from the 2025 Tree Planting operating budget, provided private landowners sign up for the program;

That Council authorize the Director of Public works to approve future Trees For All program expenses up to a maximum of \$35,000 per year until 2031 funded from the annual operating budget, provided private landowners sign up for the program.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to enter into an agreement with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) to assist with the goal of planting 1 million native trees in the Niagara Peninsula Watershed (NPW) by 2031.

Background:

Trees For All is a large-scale tree planting program proposed for private land in the urban and rural areas within the Niagara Peninsula Watershed. This multi-year, planting program is being led by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority 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.

In 2021, the City of Port Colborne provided the NPCA a letter indicating the City's support in the 2 Billion Tree initiative and intention to cost-share planting projects to scale the City's planting efforts with Federal funding support.

Discussion:

In 2024, the City of Port Colborne adopted an Urban Forest Management Plan and increased operating funds for tree maintenance and planting programs to grow the City's tree canopy along with its sustainability and resilience. The first year of this program resulted in the planting of over 400 trees within the City's road and park networks and the creation of a multi year urban forest maintenance plan to begin in 2025. Staff are always seeking alternative sources of funding to support Council's strategic plan and the NPCA's Trees For All program fits within Council's Environment and Climate Change goal of growing the total tree population within the City of Port Colborne.

Since 2021, the NPCA has partnered with numerous municipalities within their watershed to lead the efforts in obtaining funding from the Federal Government's 2 Billion Trees program (2BT). The goal of the 2BT is to provide financial support to organizations to plant trees over 10 years to mitigate climate change as well as the loss of biodiversity. The NPCA successfully obtained funding from 2BT to begin planning a large-scale tree-planting program within their watershed. NPCA have completed the following objectives:

- Inventory of County lands for reforestation;
- Develop methodologies for prioritizing reforestation sites;
- Facilitate a Certified Seed Collector Workshop;
- Implement a social media campaign to invite private landowners to apply to the program;
- Created a list of private landowners interested in reforestation;
- Submit an Urban/Suburban 2BT application (larger potted/landscape trees) that is pending approval; and
- Submit a Small-Scale Rural 2BT application (small seedlings) for reforestation.

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 position 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 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 year, 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. Under the program, 6,300 trees are planned to be planted on private land in Port Colborne under this proposed agreement.

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.

The NPCA identifies that the Niagara Peninsula Watershed is part of the Carolinian life zone and is an incredibly biodiverse 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. Subsidizing mass plantings on private land through the NPCA's Tree for All program is an effective way to increase the City's tree canopy and restore forests on lands not utilized for agricultural production.

Internal Consultations:

This project was reviewed by Roads & Parks Division and Environmental Services Division.

Financial Implications:

In 2023 the NPCA sought out private landowners to express their interest in tree planting opportunities on their property to include as part of a planting grant application and to help share the Trees For All program. Based on preliminary mapping, the NPCA determined that approximately 6,300 saplings would be able to be planted on the

properties that expressed interest. This equates to a total obligation of \$55,000; staff propose this be funded from the City's 2025 tree planting and maintenance operating budgets.

Future opportunities may be available for the program based on property owner interest within the City. Staff recommend future requests be funded through the operating budget to a maximum of \$35,000 per year.

Public Engagement:

The Environmental Advisory Committee provided feedback and support for this program.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillars of the strategic plan:

- Environment and Climate Change
 - Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
 - Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure
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Conclusion:

Trees For All will help Canada meet climate mitigation goals by increasing tree cover and climate sequestration potential. It will help Canadians by making the watershed more climate resilient, biodiverse, and protecting species and places. Increasing forest and woodlot cover will help restore a highly degraded and fragmented ecosystem and provide greener public spaces for residents and citizens to explore.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.