

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** July 13, 2022

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

**SUBJECT:** Tree Planting – Greening the City

**ATTACHMENT(S):** None

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated July 13, 2022 from the Director of Civic Operations titled “Tree Planting – Greening the City”.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an understanding of the Parks Division’s tree-planting programs.

**BACKGROUND:**

With the increasing loss of trees to climate change, drought, fire, vandalism, pests and disease it is important that the City of Prince George is proactive with the planting of trees to help with the overall health and aesthetics of the community forest. The replacement of trees in our parks and open spaces is nothing new to Parks’ staff. The City of Prince George suffered extensive urban forestry losses in the late 1990’s during the mountain pine beetle devastation, resulting in the loss of tens of thousands of trees within City limits. The City of Prince George responded in the summer of 2000 by announcing a partnership with the Tree Canada Foundation and Petro Canada to provide funding for both the purchase and planting of 40,000 trees. Many community groups were involved in this reforestation process including local Beaver, Cubs and Scout troops as well as labour crews from Prince George Regional Corrections Centre.

The City of Prince George has a long history of working with community groups and youth organizations to secure additional grant funding to replant areas affected by disease and subsequent wildfire fuel mitigation projects. Many of these areas are well on their way to becoming healthy green spaces again as the seedlings continue to grow and establish themselves. From a reforestation point of view, these projects should be considered a success.

The focus of the Parks Division’s tree planting projects recently has changed from reforestation of decimated large greenspaces, to enhancing the City’s urban forest and street tree inventory by planting larger caliper shade trees that have an instant benefit. Examples of this strategy are visible along major arterial roads like Tabor, Ospika and Foothills Boulevards as well as major parks like Rainbow, Connaught Hill, Duchess, Exhibition, Carrie Jane Grey, Riverside, Bravery, Veterans Plaza and Memorial Park Cemetery.

The Parks Division also manages the City of Prince George's Gifts & Legacies program that provides residents the opportunity to memorialize a loved one by donating to have a tree planted or picnic table or bench installed in a park or green space. Tree donors are able to select their favorite species from a pre-determined list of recommended ornamental boulevard trees and then work with Park staff on a preferred location for planting. Once planted, the tree becomes a City asset and gets the same care and maintenance as all of our newly planted trees.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

An effective tree-planting program supports and promotes our communities health and relates to myPG goals of social connections, clear identity and pride, health and wellness and effective environmental governance.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The capital budget for tree plantings in 2022 is set at \$65,000. The cost of donating a tree through the Gifts & Legacies program in 2022 is set at \$1,000.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

Thanks to decades of concerted reforestation efforts, The City of Prince George is now fortunate to be in a position that allows us to be selective in an effort to expand the different species of trees we plant in Prince George. A diverse range of trees in an urban setting is not only aesthetically pleasing but also much less vulnerable to pests or disease. Each year the Parks Division plants a mixture of larger trees with a priority on replacing existing dead and vandalized street and boulevard trees in the downtown, Gateway and other major arterial roads. In advance of the BC Summer Games, the Parks Division will focus the bulk of 2022 new tree plantings along Del Laverdure Way in Carrie Jane Gray Park, and at other City facilities and venues hosting athletic competitions and visitors.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

**PREPARED BY:** Sean Lebrun, Manager Parks and Solid Waste

**APPROVED:**

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2022/07/25