
MEMORANDUM

PDS-C 44-2021

Subject: Regional Greening Initiative Update

Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Katie Young, Planner

At the May 12, 2021 Planning and Economic Development Committee, staff presented the Niagara Official Plan Consolidated Policy Report (PDS 17-2021), which included an overview of the Climate Change Work Program for the Niagara Official Plan (NOP).

The purpose of this memo is to update Committee on the development of the Regional Greening Initiative.

Connection to the Niagara Official Plan

The Regional Greening Initiative has been endorsed by Council as part of the Climate Change Work Program for the NOP, however the initiative will be run as a separate process and does not require completion by the July 1, 2022 Official Plan conformity deadline.

As outlined in PDS 17-2021, the Regional Greening Initiative will be connected to Chapter 3: Sustainable Region, with connections to the Natural Environment System, Stewardship, and Climate Change sections. Policies in the NOP will reference this initiative.

Provincial policy emphasizes supporting long-term economic prosperity by minimizing negative impacts from a changing climate and considering the ecological benefits provided by nature. Additionally, the Province encourages the promotion of green infrastructure, which is identified as natural and human-made elements providing ecological and hydrological functions and processes.

There are several municipalities across Ontario that have greening strategies or urban forest strategies with a key component of identifying natural features as green infrastructure and promoting the many environmental, economic, and social benefits

that can be captured. The development of the Regional Greening Initiative is considering these many different elements.

Work Plan & Expected Public Consultation

A work plan has been prepared to develop this initiative. The following chart outlines the four phases of the project.

Phase	Activity
1. Project Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive Council direction to commence research• Undertake preliminary research• Set up internal working group and hold first meeting
2. Research (Current Stage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compile research and categorize into groups• Prepare short paper and survey for public
3. Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share paper and survey to the public, stakeholders, Council, Indigenous groups• Hold public session to seek input
4. Program Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put final recommendation together based on research conducted and feedback obtained through consultation• Present final recommendation to Council

A staff level working group has been formed to support the development of this initiative and incorporate a range of perspectives. This working group includes Public Health and Planning staff from the Region, local municipal planning staff, and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) staff.

In the fall/early winter, Staff plan to draft a short paper and survey to engage stakeholders and the public on the development of this initiative. Staff will prepare a report to Committee following consultation activities.

Based on research and consultation conducted, Staff will advance a recommended program for the Regional Greening Initiative in 2022.

Regional Sites for Prioritization

A key priority during the Project Initiation stage has been identifying Region-owned properties that may be suitable for increasing vegetative cover through existing programming from the NPCA and Land Care Niagara.

Staff have worked with NPCA staff to identify a number of regional properties that may be suitable through NPCA's restoration program across Niagara. These sites could be planted, starting as early as spring of 2022. Additional collaboration is required cross-departmentally at the Region to ensure sites can accommodate vegetative enhancements and not interrupt operations. Through early discussions cross-departmentally, there is desire to have trees planted at a variety of regionally-owned and operated sites.

Key Highlights from Other Greening Programs

Through the Project Initiation phase of the project, preliminary research has been undertaken to understand different initiatives that other municipalities have with respect to greening. York Region, Wellington County, and Greater Sudbury have well established programs.

York Region's Greening Strategy was first established in 2001 and has planted close to 1 million trees and shrubs. Their most recently updated program has 4 action areas, which includes land securement, enhancement and rehabilitation, leadership/innovation/knowledge, and stewardship and education.

Wellington County has the Green Legacy program which was first established in 2004. The purpose of the program was to plant 150,000 trees for the County's 150 year anniversary. However, the program was very successful and remains active to this day, with the success of planting over 2 million trees. Unique to the Green Legacy program is that the County grows their own trees in a nursery on a property donated to the County for the purposes of managing it as a perpetual forest.

The City of Greater Sudbury has a Regreening Program that has been running since 1978. Their program includes liming and tree planting and has major financial contributions from the mining companies in the city. More recently the program has

been testing the suitability of different tree species and their ability to adapt to climate change.

Critical to the success of these programs includes:

- Implementing pilot programs and evaluating suitability
- Forming key partnerships with conservation authorities, local municipalities, school boards, companies, not-for-profits, among others
- Steady source of funding and continuously seeking funding opportunities
- Education and outreach, including a volunteer base
- Plantings other than trees, such as shrubs, grass, etc. based on the suitability of the area

Growing Canada's Forests program

In December 2020 the Federal Government announced the Growing Canada's Forests program with a goal of planting 2 billion trees over the next 10 years. A total of \$3.16 billion has been allocated to this program over the 10 year period.

The federal government has prepared a Future Participants Request, seeking requests for information (RFI) from a range of stakeholders to outline potential future projects. In May of 2020 Regional Council endorsed NPCA's RFI to the 2 billion tree program, with the NPCA looking to undertake a 10 year program to plant 2 million trees across Niagara. Planning staff are working with the NPCA to determine how the Regional Greening Initiative can support NPCA's program and meet shared objectives and goals.

Next Steps

The Regional Greening Initiative remains in a preliminary stage of development as the project team works to clearly identify what will be within in-scope for the project. A key component to this will be reaching out to members of the public for their feedback. As described in this memo, a short paper and survey will be prepared to reach out to the public on this initiative later this year.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Planner