

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: January 25, 2023
To: Mayor and Council
From: Sadaf Ghalib, Climate Change Programs Manager
Report #: ITS23-004
Attachments: None

Title: Earth Day Canada 2023

Objective: To provide an overview of the City's plan to organize a tree planting event in recognition of Earth Day 2023 and seek approval of Council to proceed with this event.

Background: Earth Day will be celebrated globally on April 22, 2023. The City of Stratford intends to acknowledge this day with a program offering to residents and organizations who would like to participate and make a difference through a community tree planting event. It is further intended that the City register this Earth Day activity with the Earth Day Canada organization.

Earth Day, first celebrated in 1970, was conceived as a means of raising public environmental consciousness. Although Earth Day incorporates many environmental themes, there has been a great focus in more recent years on efforts related to addressing the impacts of climate change globally. Given the City's strengthened commitment to climate action and as a means of working towards our emissions reduction goals, this event is intended to foster community participation and direct efforts toward improving the city's urban tree canopy cover.

Analysis: The development of a community tree planting event is supported by principles outlined within the following guiding documents and strategies:

- [2018-2022 Strategic Priorities](#)
- [Official Plan](#) (2015)
- [Climate Emergency Response](#) (2020)
- [Greenhouse Gas \(GHG\) Reduction Plan](#) (2021)
- [Private Tree Preservation By-law](#) (2020)

Staff have signed up the City of Stratford as a Municipal Partner for the Mobilizing Municipalities campaign organized by Earth Day Canada and intends to organize one

tree planting event as a part of the Earth Day Canada Tree Planting Relay starting in April, 2023. As a part of this Relay, on the 22nd of every month until Earth Day 2024, cities across Canada will announce their pledge to plant trees in celebration of Earth Day. As planting trees is an important strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation, this event will be an opportunity for the city to highlight its dedication to addressing climate change and to reiterate their commitment to sustainability.

In creating a plan for Earth Day, the following criteria were considered:

- Promotes environmental stewardship and awareness within the community.
- Highlights ongoing efforts related to climate action at a local level.
- Encourages participation from residents of all ages and contribute to a robust urban tree canopy cover.
- Supports the City's work towards implementation of overarching climate action goals and emissions reduction targets.

Staff will be collaborating with Energy and Environment Advisory Committee (E&E), Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) and partnering with community-led groups such as Climate Momentum and ReLeaf to maximize opportunities for public participation.

Staff have shared the plan for acknowledging Earth Day 2023 with the E&E and Climate Change Working Group for feedback. Further, a working group consisting of Staff, members of E&E and other community-led groups will be established to refine and promote the event. By also registering this event with the Earth Day Canada organization, the City will be joining over 100 communities across the country in making environmental commitments to create healthier environments for their citizens.

Aligning with Earth Day Canada's 2023 Tree Planting Relay wherein municipalities pledge to plant at least 50 trees in honor of Earth Day, a community tree planting event is planned to take place during the week of April 17-23, 2023. The City of Stratford intends to go above and beyond the minimum requirements of planting 50 trees, and is committed to planting a minimum of 250 native tree and shrub saplings in natural areas.

This event will be open to volunteers from the community to participate in and support the planting of native trees to contribute to the city's urban tree canopy cover. Details such as the date of the event will be established by the working group in due course. Staff are coordinating with UTRCA to procure native tree and shrub saplings, expected to arrive by Spring 2023.

As a next step, Staff will identify public lands in the City where there is a need for reforestation or afforestation and establish locations where the tree planting event will take place. Staff from Infrastructure and Development Services Department will coordinate with the Community Services Department, E&E, UTRCA and community partners.

Staff would like to announce the City's pledge to plant 250 native tree saplings as a part of the Tree Planting Relay in celebration of Earth Day. The event will be promoted through the City's website, social media channels and traditional media outlets in advance of Earth Day, to gather maximum community interest and participation. It is further intended that final count of tree and shrub saplings planted be communicated publicly after the event.

Financial Implications

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

There will be a financial impact on the 2023 operating budget, and future year operating budget should this program be implemented and further expanded annually. Additional analysis may be required at the time. Staffing costs to manage and implement this initiative are included in the Infrastructure and Development Services, and Parks and Forestry Division 2023 draft budget. It is anticipated that a planting of 250 trees and shrubs will cost approximately \$6,000 – \$7,000. Procurement costs for tree and shrub saplings can be managed in the proposed draft 2023 Parks and Forestry Division operational budget.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

Community tree plantings will be accounted for within future year operating budgets. Newly planted trees will become part of the City's tree inventory and the associated costs of maintenance will be absorbed into the Parks and Forestry Division operational budget.

Established trees have several additional benefits, some that could result in operational savings. These savings are difficult to quantify at this time.

If this event or future pledges are continued in future years, the respective costs would be determined at that time.

Link to asset management plan and strategy:

As per Provincial guidelines under O. Reg. 588/17 Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure, trees are not currently included in the city's core infrastructure comprising tangible capital assets, nor in the required Asset Management Plan. There is no direct link to the City's Asset Management Plan at this stage, however, the Parks Division does maintain an inventory of trees for maintenance and replacement purposes.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Developing our Resources

Optimizing Stratford's physical assets and digital resources. Planning a sustainable future for Stratford's resources and environment.

Alignment with One Planet Principles

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Land and Nature

Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Sustainable Water

Using water efficiently, protecting local water resources and reducing flooding and drought.

Staff Recommendation: THAT Staff be authorized to proceed with organizing the tree planting event as outlined in Report ITS23-004.

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Recommended by: Taylor Crinklaw, M.Sc., P.Eng., Director of Infrastructure and Development Services
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