October 22, 2019

To: The Mayor and Member of Council  
Town of the Blue Mountains

Regarding: Deputation to Council – Our Natural Future – A Comprehensive Tree Program for TBM

Who are we:
We are a group of residents with an interest and desire to see an increase in the tree canopy in TBM. We have shared versions of this presentation with the Citizens Forum and Climate Action Network Now (CANN). We have also held discussions with town staff and have conducted research into best practices and examples of successful tree canopy enhancement programs in Canada (attached as reference) and shared this research with the Sustainability Committee of Council.

Our goal: The goal of our group and this deputation is to make the case for the town and town residents to implement an important climate-change mitigation measure that would preserve and significantly enhance our beautiful natural environment through a comprehensive tree canopy program.

Our vision: Strong planting, maintenance and preservation policies and programs that support achievement of a 40% canopy cover in the Town of the Blue Mountains. A quick scan of Ontario municipalities reveals a range of 30-40% canopy cover targets. Many municipalities have committed to 40% canopy targets (City of Toronto, Guelph, the City of Markham). Completion of a tree inventory would allow us to better understand the nature of this challenge, but our group recommends that 40% be established as our vision and goal and that action plans be developed accordingly.

Why a Tree Canopy Strategy and Program?
Trees provide enormous economic and natural benefits, particularly in our area and TBM. Trees provide clean air, reduce energy use from heating and cooling, store carbon, filter storm water and support storm water management, support watershed management, stabilize soil, help to protect shorelines, create beautiful and attractive neighbourhoods and recreational areas and provide many tangible and intangible health and well-being benefits. Meanwhile, our tree canopy is under threat due to land-clearing development practices and due to invasive insect infestation (emerald ash borer) and other diseases that threaten tree viability in our changing climate conditions.

Our Ask: That the TBM commit to staff resources and funding for the development of a Tree Canopy Strategy and Program to be completed in 2020 and ready for implementation in 2021. Public and staff input will be key to building such a strategy and related implementation programming, but the aim of this deputation is to ensure sufficient resources are available to implement a public engagement process that will resulting in an action-ready plan. This deputation also recommends the scope and components of a comprehensive and three-component strategy, addressing both public and private lands in the TBM:

Recommended components of a TBM Tree Canopy Strategy:
1. Planting
2. Care and maintenance
3. Preservation of existing canopy
1. **A Planting Program** for TBM would be initiated that builds towards and meets a 40% canopy target goal on public lands properties (both existing parks and recreational lands/trails and newly dedicated development agreement parcels and other public lands (such as county properties, schools, etc). For privately held residential and agricultural properties, we recommend that the town consider acting as a catalyst or facilitator to help establish a coordinated and funded tree planting program. Several examples of municipality-wide full-service residential tree planting programs exist that provide free (or small cost) trees and or trees plus planting support and maintenance follow ups. ALUS is a charitable organization that maybe able to support dedicated efforts within the agricultural sector. Considerable citizen and NGO partnering support of this kind of robust tree planting program is likely in TBM.

2. **A Tree Maintenance Program** would go hand-in-hand with any tree planting and canopy program. We recommend that any tree canopy strategy and programming include a dedicated effort on the maintenance and care of newly planted and existing trees (found on public and private lands). For public lands, this may mean a dedicated maintenance schedule and for private lands, this may mean education and awareness but also may include service offerings that are included with or follow tree plantings.

3. **Preservation of Existing Canopy.** We would like to acknowledge the Council and staff efforts regarding policies that protect existing trees from being cut down. Unfortunately, it is still the case that beautiful adolescent and mature trees are regularly being cut from private property and trees are being essentially clear cut from development-ready properties in TBM. Respecting the work already underway regarding tree preservation in TBM— our recommendation is that these policies (and ultimately enforceable by-laws) set a high bar in terms of relevant property size, tree caliper, permitting process for cutting and ultimately, fines.

**In Summary:** We would like council to consider setting a “high bar” vision of 40% canopy cover as a way to respond to community interest in maintaining TBM as an exceptionally beautiful community, full of nature and natural spaces while at the same time, allowing citizens to participate in a significant and pro-active climate change mitigation measure. Supporting this vision would be the initiation and resourcing of a process to engage the citizens on the development of associated planting, maintenance and preservation programming.
Town of the Blue Mountains
Sustaining and Expanding the Urban / Rural Forest on all Public and Private Properties in our Township and County
Citizen Research

The Town of the Blue Mountains (TBM) has had a number of successful tree programs in the past including planting at Tomohawk, creating a town tree nursery, planting along the Georgian Trail, creating the memorial tree program, planting by the waste water plant, live snow fence plantings and implementation of TD Green Streets.

This compilation of citizen research supports a deputation (October 28, 2019) and aims to identify examples and justification in support of a significant expansion of TBM tree-related planting and preservation related efforts to accomplish a 40% canopy tree canopy cover objective.

Importance of Trees

- **Climate Change Mitigation**
  Trees are a major botanical benefit to all life on the planet. Trees are a major element in the filtration of air pollution and carbon dioxide and offer the potential for energy savings for homes and other buildings via shade. Planting a trillion trees could be the "most effective way to fight global warming," according to a recent study. The study, published in the *Journal of Science,* suggests that planting trees could be an affordable and effective way of combating the climate crisis. It also named Canada as one of the six countries with enough land to make an effort in this tree planting process.

- **Pressures on Existing Tree Canopy**
  Climate change, invasive species, development / urbanization, pests, recreational pressures and pathogens, are all impacting the trees and forests of southern Ontario.

- **Protection of Watersheds**
  According to *Environmental Commissioner of Ontario 2018 Report* (Chapter 4), watersheds, to be effective, need to have a min of a 30% forest cover to ensure even marginal functional ecosystems.

- **Biodiversity**
  Trees area foundational species in eco-systems and provide “eco-system services” and support to the soil, plant life, pollinators, birds, and wildlife.

Examples from Other Municipalities

Richmond Hill has a 10-year plan that includes a strong vision statement and encompasses all trees on public and private property. Highlights include:

- A **Community Stewardship Program** for Volunteer Tree Planting and planting of 10,000 trees per year.
- A **Healthy Yards Program** to help residents plant local / indigenous trees and shrubs on their properties which are hardy and long lived.
- A **Planting Guidelines, Tree Maintenance and Tree Preservation Document** that includes four service pillars 1. Plant to Expand the Urban Forest, 2. Maintenance of the forest 3. Protection of the Forest, and 4. Plan and Resources to Ensure the Other Three.

The City of Toronto has a very robust Strategic Forest Plan that includes a 40% canopy target which includes goals related to sustaining and expanding forestry cover.

The City of Edmonton has a very clear and specific Forestry Plan including guiding principles, clear and measurable objectives, and quantitative and qualitative measures associated with short and longer term objectives related to a 10 year plan.

The City of Cambridge has a highly useful and comprehensive report and plan (based on extensive citizen engagement) that includes specific guidelines/best practices for urban design, tree management policies and guidelines for new development and also suggests specific bylaws.

**Town of Collingwood and FCM**
In the past, the Town of Collingwood having received money from Federation of Canadian Municipalities and also partnered with Tree Canada to do an Urban Forest Management Plan as part of an urban greening program that included tree planting and maintenance services for residents.

**ALUS Canada Agricultural Lands**
Alternate Land Use Services (ALUS) Canada helps farmers be part of the solution to saving habitat and old forest. This NGO pays farmers to repurpose marginal land that they might otherwise cultivate and instead put it to work providing ecosystem services.

**Some Potential Funding and Community Resources**

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) - Green Municipal Fund has many sub categories (including one for development of Sustainable Development Community
The categories are Plans, Studies, Pilot Projects, Capital Projects, Asset management, and Partner Grants.

- The Tree Canada website lists a Community Tree Grant program
- The status of The 50 Million Tree Program is a bit unclear (Provincial funding was recently cut, although the Federal government committed to make up the difference). Durham Region has a 5 million tree program funded by this program.
- Northwoods  [www.neighbourwoodsnorth.com](http://www.neighbourwoodsnorth.com) Owen Sound
- Tree Trust  [https://eloraenvironmentcentre.ca/tree-trust/](https://eloraenvironmentcentre.ca/tree-trust/)
- TD Environment Fund has a dedicated program for tree planting and urban greening.
- Natural Heritage Conservation Program, (Federally funded), aimed at landowners who are seeking to donate or manage their property for its ecological benefit.

Local Resources
- Citizens Forum
- FAO
- Watershed Trust
- Boy Scouts
- 4H Clubs
- Grey Sauble Conservation Authority

“Let us not be a landscape of regret”
A NATURAL FUTURE:
A Comprehensive Tree Strategy and Program for TBM
Subtitle
WHO WE ARE

TBM residents interested in expanding tree canopy in of itself and as a broadly supported climate change mitigation action - emerged out of Climate Action Network Now (CANN)

Who have we talked to:

• CANN
• Citizens Forum – tree planting as most frequently cited climate change measure in response to informal poll
• Town staff
• Local Arborist

Research:

• We also completed research re the importance of trees and other municipal tree programs (Richmond Hill, Toronto, Edmonton, Cambridge, Collingwood, ALUS Canada).
OUR VISION:

Strong planting, maintenance and preservation policies and programs that support achievement of a 40% canopy cover in the Town of the Blue Mountains
A POWERFUL WHY. TREES PROVIDE....

• Carbon capture/One of the strongest, least contentious climate mitigation strategies
• Clean air,
• Reduce energy use from heating and cooling
• Stabilizes soil,
• Aids storm water management and shoreline stabilization
• Creates beautiful and attractive neighbourhoods
• Provide numerous recreational and health benefits
• Considerable economic value and importance to the region
A TREE CANOPY STRATEGY AND PROGRAM: OUR ASK

That TBM adopt a 40% canopy goal and initiate a process (Staff lead but citizen supported) to develop a Tree Canopy Strategy and Program ready for implementation in 2021.

- Addresses BOTH public and private lands.
- Process of public engagement to develop the strategy and programming

Recommended Components:

- 1. Planting
- 2. Care and Maintenance
- 3. Preservation