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GREENING STRATEGY YORK NATURAL PLANTING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated April 15, 2011 from the Commissioner of Transportation Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize partnerships with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for continued delivery of the York Natural Planting Partnership Program, with a Regional contribution to each Conservation Authority not to exceed \$40,000 per year, inclusive of HST.
2. The Region enter into agreements with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority setting out the terms of the partnership, as set out in Section 4 of this report.
3. The Commissioner of Transportation Services, be authorized to execute the agreements, subject to the approval of Legal Services as to form and content.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks Council authorization to enter into partnership agreements with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for delivery of the Greening Strategy Program - York Natural Planting Partnership, for land reforestation projects.

3. BACKGROUND

The York Natural Planting Partnership has been successfully delivered by the Conservation Authorities since 2001, with a total of over 550,000 trees and shrubs being planted

In 2001, with adoption of the Greening Strategy, Council approved Regional funding for a partnership program – York Natural Planting Partnership, to be delivered by the Conservation Authorities. This program is currently the most significant Greening Strategy program when it comes to contributing to an increase in forest cover for the

Region. Since adoption in 2001, annual tree planting through this program ranged from 40,000 to 100,000, with a total of over 550,000 trees and shrubs being planted in the last ten years.

To date, the program has been administered without a formal partnership agreement. Criteria were developed jointly to determine eligible projects, and funding levels. Over the last two years, it has been determined that all partners could benefit from updated criteria and more clearly articulated deliverables associated with program delivery. The recommended means to do so is by entering into formal partnership agreements with the Conservation Authorities for delivery of this program.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Partnership agreements will identify appropriate funding levels

In 2001, Council approved the allocation of \$50,000 to each Conservation Authority for delivery of the York Natural Planting Partnership. The focus of this program is private land tree planting. In recent years, landowner participation in the program has decreased slightly, resulting in the allocation of more program funding to public land tree planting efforts. As a result, in 2010 and 2011, the program funding to the Conservation Authorities was reduced to \$40,000 annually. At this time, we are recommending that the Agreement reflect an annual Regional funding contribution of \$40,000 to each Authority.

In the fall of 2011, staff will be reporting to Council with recommendations for an updated Greening Strategy. At that time confirmation of the funding level will be provided with a recommendation for a longer-term agreement. It is recommended that the Region enter into one-year agreement with the Conservation Authorities for 2012 program delivery with the intent to enter into three-year agreements following the endorsement of an updated Greening Strategy in late 2011 or early 2012.

Updated criteria in the draft agreements are consistent with current Regional objectives

Updated criteria for York Natural Planting Partnership priorities and associated project funding levels is appended to this report (*Attachment 1*). As articulated in the Regional Official Plan (2009), Council has set an objective to increase forest cover from the existing 22.5%, to 25%. Additionally, through the updated Greening Strategy, staff are proposing that priorities and targets for reforestation be further established. Accordingly, the attached criteria reflect greater support for projects more closely meeting Regional objectives.

It is proposed that these criteria form part of the partnership agreement (as an appendix) providing more clarity to the Conservation Authorities and to participating landowners.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding in support of these partnership agreements is allocated from the annual Greening Strategy budget

The Greening Strategy continues to deliver in-the-ground action, and value added programs. Funds for this program are leveraged with grants from other levels of government and private landowner contributions. An annual contribution of \$1.35M is provided to the Land Securement Reserve for conservation land securement and Greening Strategy program delivery. Of this contribution, approximately \$350,000 annually is directed to support annual Greening Strategy program delivery (tree planting, education, Adopt-a-Stream Crossing program etc.), including the York Natural Planting partnership.

There are sufficient funds in the annual Land Securement Reserve contribution for continued delivery of this program.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in Greening Strategy program delivery and success. York Natural Planting Partnership projects are delivered on eligible properties of interested landowners throughout the Region. Through Vision 2026, adoption of the new Regional Official Plan, and State of the Environment reporting, York Region residents have reiterated the importance of the Region's natural heritage and taking action to protect and restore strategic areas.

7. CONCLUSION

Entering into partnership agreements for delivery of the York Natural Planting Partnership will result in more consistent program delivery, more accountability and potentially increased program participation through improved program promotion. It is recommended that one-year agreements be established for 2012 delivery, with the objective of three-year agreements after the endorsement of an updated Greening Strategy late 2011 or early 2012.

For more information on this report, please contact Ian D. Buchanan at Ext. 5204.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)

York Natural Planting Partnership

Criteria to be applied by the Authorities when allocating YNPP funding to planting projects

Planting Area Objective(criteria)	Portion of Planting Project eligible to be paid through York Region's YNPP Contribution	Other Comments or Limitations
1 Public land reforestation		Maximum of \$10,000 of YNPP funding annually
1a Isolated Block Size > 0.3 hectares	33%	
1b Contiguous with existing forest cover or riparian areas Planting Area > 0.1 hectares	50%	
2 Private land reforestation		
2a Isolated – Small scale reforestation not in Greenlands System Block Size 0.3 to 1.0 hectares	60%	
2b Riparian Planting – linear Planting Area > 0.1 hectares	50%	
2c Isolated – Small scale reforestation within Greenlands System Block Size 0.3 to 1.0 hectares	75%	
2d Isolated – Large scale reforestation Block Size > 1.0 hectares	90%	
2e Contiguous with existing forest cover (forest massing) Planting Area > 0.1 hectares	75%	
Other Tree and Shrub Planting	66%	To a maximum of 10% of total project value, not to exceed \$1,000