

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Town of Whitby Official Tree Campaign

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: June 12, 2023

Report Number: CAO 16-23

Department(s) Responsible:
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Submitted by:

Sarah Klein, Director, Strategic Initiatives

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief
Administrative Officer**

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Report CAO 16-23 be received for information; and,
2. That Council endorse the Town of Whitby Official Tree Campaign and adopt the tree species to be selected by the community as an official symbol of the Town.

2. Highlights:

- In celebration of National Forest Week 2023 (September 17 to 23), staff are proposing to launch the Town of Whitby Official Tree Campaign, through which the community will be able to vote for the tree species they believe best represents Whitby.
- Through this report, Staff are recommending that the tree species selected by the community be adopted by Council as an official symbol of the Town.

3. Background:

The Town recognizes the essential role that trees and the urban forest play in providing a healthy and sustainable quality of life for all residents. As one of 169 Tree Cities of the World, the protection, preservation, growth, and enhancement of the urban forest is a

priority for the Town of Whitby. To achieve the status as a Tree City of the World, the Town is committed to the following:

1. Establishing responsibility for the care and protection of trees
2. Setting rules for managing trees
3. Having an updated inventory of local tree resources
4. Allocating resources for tree management
5. Celebrating trees and forests within our community

To celebrate trees and forests within our community, each year, the Town formally proclaims the third week of September as **National Forest Week**. The objective of National Forest Week is to raise awareness about one of the most valuable and renewable resources – forests. This year marks the 12th National Forest Week, and this year's theme will focus on Canada's Forests: Supporting Biological Diversity.

4. Discussion:

In 2023, to celebrate National Forest Week and the Town's ongoing commitments to the urban forest, the Sustainability Division is planning to launch a community campaign to select the Official Tree of Whitby. Residents will be encouraged through the Town's social media channels and Whitby.ca to visit Connect Whitby between September 18 and October 16, 2023, to cast their vote for the Town's Official Tree. Residents will be able to vote for one of the following eight native tree species:

1. Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*)
2. Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)
3. White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)
4. Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)
5. Northern Catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*)
6. Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)
7. Black Willow (*Salix nigra*)
8. Tamarack (*Larix laricina*)

The tree species above were selected for their abundance and significance in Whitby, while also considering species that are not already recognized as official trees nationally, provincially, or near neighbouring communities.

Photos and a brief description of each tree will be available on Connect Whitby to help our residents understand why the tree may be the best representative of our Town.

Staff are recommending that the tree species selected by the community be adopted by Council as an official symbol of the Town. Once adopted by Council, the Official Tree of Whitby will be used in communication materials to support the Sustainability Division's initiatives. Staff also recommend planting a tree of the species selected for the Official Tree of Whitby at Town Hall to recognize its significance to the Town.

5. Financial Considerations:

There are no immediate financial impacts associated with this campaign as the tree that may be planted at Town Hall to recognize the Official Tree of Whitby would be provided by LEAF through the Town's existing programs and partnership.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

As a public campaign, the community will be engaged to select the Town's Official Tree. The campaign will be promoted through the Town's social media channels, Whitby.ca, and Connect Whitby. Residents will visit Connect Whitby to complete a survey to select the tree species they believe best represents the Town.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

The Sustainability Division generated the list of eight native tree species that residents can vote on with input from the Parks Planning Division and Operational Services Division.

8. Strategic Priorities:

The recognition of a tree as an official symbol of the Town aligns with corporate goals by recognizing the role that the urban forest plays in being an economically, socially, and environmentally responsible municipality. The Town of Whitby Official Tree Campaign will educate residents on the role that trees play in reducing the impacts of climate change.

9. Attachments:

Not Applicable.