

Recommendation:

That the C.A.O.-2023-27 report, dated October 17, 2023, regarding the Township of Douro-Dummer Tree Planting Project report be received; and
That Council direct staff to allocated \$10,000.00 in the 2024 draft budget for discussion during budget negotiations to run a similar program next year.

Overview:

At the April 11, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting Mayor Watson provided a report regarding a potential tree program as a way to assist property owners replace trees lost during the May 21, 2022 derecho. The following resolution was adopted:

Moved By: Mayor Watson

Seconded By: Deputy Mayor Nelson

That staff bring forward options for the funding and delivery of a community tree seedling program to help residents of the Township Douro-Dummer with their property recovery and rehabilitation from the May 21, 2022 derecho.

At the June 27, 2023 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council received Report-CAO-2023-16 Tree Replacement Program (attached) and the following resolution was adopted:

Moved By: Deputy Mayor Nelson

Seconded By: Councillor Vervoort

That the C.A.O.-2023-27 report, dated June 27, 2023 regarding the Tree Replacement Program be received; and

That staff establish an information campaign for residents to order trees at a reduced cost, subsidized by the Township;

That Council allocate \$10,000 from the funds received from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Seven (7) different tree varieties were offered, Red Maple and River Birch in 3-gallon pots and White Spruce, Norway Spruce, White Pine, Red Oak and Bur Oak in 2-gallon pots. The cost of the trees to the Township ranged from \$12.00 - \$30.00, and were sold to Township of Douro-Dummer property owners for \$5.00 for a 2-gallon and \$10.00 for a 3-gallon tree. Staff forecasted that we would be able to purchase 400-500 trees to be planted in the community.

Advanced tree orders along with payment were required and sales began on Monday, July 31st with a cut-off date of Wednesday, August 23rd as we had to place the order with Pineneedle Farms Inc. to ensure they would arrive in time to be planted in the fall. Sales were limited five (5) trees per property and proof of ownership/residency was required. It became apparent very quickly that the program was going to be popular with over 150 trees ordered on the first day. We conducted some additional

calculations and determined if we reinvested the revenue from the orders and put it back into the program we would be able to offer more trees to the public. Front line staff did an amazing job of offering information and providing excellent customer service as over 155 orders were conducted in person.

Before the end of day on August 9th, trees sales came to an end with a total order of almost 696 trees, representing 155 individual properties. The total cost of the trees invoiced from Pineneedle Farms Inc. was \$14,557.00 which was covered through the allocation of \$10,000 from Council and tree sale revenues.

Delivery of the trees was scheduled for Thursday, September 21st and pick-up made available on Friday, September 22nd 8:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, September 23rd from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Staff deserve a huge amount of credit as everyone who was available participated in unloading the trees and organizing them in the Town Hall under the guidance of our Administrative Assistant Tara Lember, who organized most of the communication and took charge over the program and also made herself available along with the CAO and the Mayor on Saturday morning. Attached to this report are some of the photographs taken over the course of the three (3) days.

On Friday morning before our doors opened at 8:30 a.m. there was a line up along the sidewalk of those looking to pick up their trees. Staff worked all day to assist residents with their orders and loading up their vehicles. The morale was amazing from everyone involved, staff were happy to help and residents were very excited about their trees. Pineneedle Farms Inc. and particularly, owner Paul Richardson had exceeded the expectation of the size and quality of the trees ordered and everyone was very happy.

By Saturday at noon there were a few orders left for pick up who received a call the following week from staff to remind them and arrange a time to pick up their trees.

We could not have anticipated the success or the positivity that came from this program both through the work of staff and the public. Although this was not the type of normal engagement where we asked for feedback on an initiative or an item Council is required to make a decision on, the positive public engagement as a result of this program was exceptional.

Conclusion:

While we had intended this to be a one-time project, the success and results provide a solid argument to offer this program again. Staff is requesting that Council approve an allocation of \$10,000 in the draft 2024 budget for discussion during budget negotiations to run the program again in 2024. Staff would re-evaluate the program and the cost of trees, possibly increasing the cost slightly to allow additional trees to be planted in the community and those that missed out this year an opportunity to take part next year.

Financial Impact:

\$10,000 will be identified in the 2024 draft budget for discussion and deliberation of Council during the negotiations and finalizing of the 2024 Township of Douro-Dummer budget.

Strategic Plan Applicability:

To preserve and enhance the natural heritage features and resources of the Township.

Sustainability Plan Applicability:

