



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 15.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
April 8, 2025

TO: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council
FROM: Jerry Blackwood, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: March 24, 2025
SUBJECT: Growing Canada's Community Canopies Funds Application

ORIGIN

Staff Initiated

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2024, staff began the pre-application process to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Growing Canada's Community Canopy program, a matching funds grant program under the Federal 2 Billion Trees umbrella of programs. This funding was applied for in order to support additive tree planting on municipal lands. An application was submitted for a total of \$2,605,000 (\$1,302,500 to be contributed by the FCM) to support both the planting of new street and park trees, as well as four naturalization projects on parkland, to be completed over three years. This grant program will allow for the planting of 1000 net-new trees per year, both on streets and in parks, in alignment with targets set in the Urban Forest Management Plan.

The application is currently under review, and at this second stage, the FCM requires the Municipality to match the funds applied for and provide a letter of support from HRM for this project to proceed with the application review.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the commitment of \$629,750 from the 2026/27 capital budget, \$627,750 from the 2027/28 capital budget and \$45,000 from the 2028/29 capital budget, as detailed in the Financial Implications section of this report, in support of the Municipality's application to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Growing Canada's Community Canopy program; and,
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide a letter of support to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Growing Canada's Community Canopy program that outlines the HRM financial commitment to the program, as approved in Recommendation 1.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, the project to update the Urban Forest Master Plan began. Through this update process, 5 core objectives were identified: Planning & Protection, Planting, Maintenance, Stewardship, and Administration & Monitoring. Key to the success of this update includes implementing a robust planting program, focusing on urban forest investment in equity deserving communities, and engaging with the community in planning,

implementing, maintaining and monitoring the various programs identified within the plan.

In 2024, the program Growing Canada's Community Canopy (GCCC) of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund was identified as a possible source of funding for additional park and street tree plantings across HRM, supporting the objectives of the new Urban Forest Management Plan as well as Program Actions associated with community engagement and monitoring. The GCCC program is a matched funds grant model, receiving funding through the Federal 2 Billion Trees initiative. To be eligible for funding through the GCCC program, applicants must commit to matching funds through the application process.

Public Works submitted a pre-application in October 2024; which was subsequently accepted. The timing of the program did not align to have a completed application ahead of the 25/26 budget planning season. HRM must commit to matching grant funding for activities identified within the pre-application to continue the application process. This application requires no additional funding from the HRM beyond what is already committed within the 4-year budget plan.

If successful, this application will provide the maximum amount of matching funds available under the full term of the GCCC program to support tree planting to targets identified by the recently adopted Urban Forest Management Plan.

DISCUSSION

The tree planting project proposed in this application will support the objectives and strategies listed in the Urban Forest Management Plan. A portion of the trees requested will be planted in and around Urban Forest Enhancement Districts (UFEDs). UFEDs were identified in the Urban Forest Management Plan (2025) as areas with a high population of equity deserving communities and low canopy cover. In addition to street and park tree planting, the project proposes four parks for naturalization. The plan for these parks is to implement high-density tree planting to promote forest restoration in highly urbanized park settings. This project will support ongoing naturalization initiatives and canopy cover growth in the city core.

The project duration is three years, which is the maximum length of projects accepted under the GCCC program. In the project's first year, 1000 street and park trees will be planted, and two parks will be naturalized with an additional 1590 saplings and seedlings. In the second year, and additional 1000 street and park trees will be planted, and the final two parks will be naturalized with another 1590 saplings and seedlings. In the project's final year, as a requirement from GCCC, HRM will monitor the condition of all plantings and complete a final report. The project proposes the HRM plant trees at a greater rate than our current program because of the high-density planting that will occur in HRM parks. The traditional tree planting program within Public Works is for street trees only.

As part of the 25/26 budget planning process, a four-year capital project (PW01) was presented to Council to support planting new trees across the municipality. This project was defunded in the 25/26 fiscal year; however, the four-year budget still has funds to match with the GCCC application for the 26/27, 27/28, and 28/29 fiscal years, so long as it is funded through the annual capital budget process to the amounts that would support a matching funds application.

The naturalization portion of the project will be completed in collaboration with the Naturalization Coordinator for Parks & Recreation. Native tree species will be planted in all four parks, most of which will be deciduous. Promoting and planting deciduous species aligns with FireSmart practices and climate adaptation management options. In addition to native species planting, an area of one of the parks will also be slated for a food forest. This also aligns with the engagement and insights we heard through the UFMP.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Support of the recommendation would require the funding of the Public Works capital project PW01 to:

- \$629,750 in the 26/27 capital budget to support street and park tree planting
- \$627,750 in the 27/28 capital budget to support street and park tree planting
- \$45,000 in the 28/29 capital budget in support of monitoring

PW01 – Urban Forest Management Plan Implementation is included in the four-year capital plan as follows:

Fiscal Year	Capital Plan	GCCC Matching
		Contribution from HRM
2026-27	\$ 965,000	\$ 629,750
2027-28	\$ 990,000	\$ 627,750
2028-29	\$ 1,015,000	\$ 45,000
Total	\$ 2,970,000	\$ 1,302,500

The above table demonstrates that HRM has budgeted sufficient funds to match proposed contributions from Growing Canada's Community Canopy program. Planned capital over the amount required to match GCCC would be used to implement other elements of the Urban Forest Management Plan.

Accepting the recommendation to commit funds into future years will result in this being included in the draft capital plan for 2026-27 when it is presented to Council.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Despite approval for funding from Council, there is no guarantee that the HRM's application will be approved.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Significant community and stakeholder engagement has occurred over the past two years to support the Urban Forest Management Plan and its actions. This project directly supports several of the actions as identified within the Urban Forest Management Plan. In addition to general public engagement, stakeholder engagement, and Indigenous engagement, targeted groups such as newcomers/immigrants, African Nova Scotians, and people with disabilities were also consulted during the development of the UFMP.

As a focus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, GCCC's program values engagement with a specific focus on targeted engagement strategies for stakeholders, rights-holders and equity deserving groups. This support of engagement ties well with the extensive engagement completed for the UFMP. Receiving this funding would allow more opportunities for Urban Forestry to build upon the engagement completed in the UFMP.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Approval of the recommendation in this report will permit planting additional new trees on municipal lands, which would include all associated environmental benefits. Street and park trees provide additional benefits compared to naturalized or forested areas. Being actively pruned and managed, street and park trees can be planted near benches, infrastructure and streets, providing benefits such as shade and flood mitigation in areas with high impervious cover and land surface temperatures. Conversely, naturalization/reforestation provides benefits such as promoting biodiversity, mitigating erosion and improving soil health. Each type of tree planting creates a cohesive and collective approach to promoting canopy cover in HRM.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose not to support this application.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

7A The purposes of the municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the municipality;
- (b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or
- (c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid.

(2) The Municipality may expend money provided for in an operating budget or capital budget for a purpose other than that set out in the operating budget or capital budget for that fiscal year if the expenditure does not affect the total of the amounts estimated for the operating budget and the capital budget.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Growing Canada's Community Canopy Program Letter of Support.docx

Report Prepared by: Crispin Wood, Manager, Urban Forestry, IMO 902-225-2774

[Date]

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Re: Letter of Support and Financial Contribution for the Halifax Regional Municipal Urban Forest Tree Planting and Naturalization Project

To the Federation of Canadian Municipalities,

I am writing on behalf of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) in support of its application for funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC) initiative for the Halifax Regional Municipal Urban Forest Tree Planting and Naturalization Project (Project).

The Project supports the objectives of HRM's Urban Forest Management Plan as well as the Council Priorities Outcomes of Climate Resilience and Protected & Sustainable Environment.

Should the project be selected by FCM for this initiative, I confirm that HRM will, over the Project's three-year duration, provide the following financial contributions to the Project as matching funding provided by FCM:

\$629,750 from the 2026/27 HRM capital budget, \$627,750 from the 2027/28 HRM capital budget and \$45,000 from the 2028/29 HRM capital budget.

Sincerely,

Cathie O'Toole MBA, FCPA, ICD.d
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

HALIFAX

HALIFAX

Halifax Regional Municipality
PO Box 1749, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3A5

halifax.ca