
From: Switzer, Barbara on behalf of Regional Clerk
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2020 2:01 PM
Subject: Regional Council Decision - 2019 Greening Strategy Achievements
Attachments: 2019 Greening Strategy Achievements.pdf

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On April 30, 2020 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Laura McDowell, Director of Environmental Promotion and Protection 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75077 or James Lane, Manager, Natural Heritage and Forestry 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75271 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

Christopher Raynor | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

The Regional Municipality of York | 17250 Yonge Street | Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1
O: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71300 | christopher.raynor@york.ca | www.york.ca

Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole

Environmental Services

April 16, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Environmental Services

2019 Greening Strategy Achievements

1. Recommendations

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with an update on activities, partnerships and significant 2019 Greening Strategy achievements.

Key Points:

- Since 2001 the Greening Strategy has delivered on-the-ground actions that contribute to the Regional Official Plan goal of a sustainable natural environment, including increasing woodland cover to 25% by 2031
- In addition, York Region's Forest Management Plan identifies a target to increase overall canopy cover to 35% by 2031
- 2019 achievements include planting 102,332 trees and shrubs, securing nine hectares of environmentally significant lands, and inspiring residents to take action through 292 Region and partner events
- Strategy is delivered through successful partnerships with local municipalities, conservation authorities and non-government organizations, leveraging an additional \$890,000 in funding during 2019
- \$10 million in funding was secured (over eight years) through Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund to support urban tree planting and new woodland creation across the Region

3. Background

Engaging communities and partners since 2001, Greening Strategy programs protect, restore and enhance the natural environment

The Greening Strategy was developed to facilitate on-the-ground action in support of the Region's goal of a sustainable natural environment. The strategy supports healthy natural environments and sustainable communities for current and future generations through its four action areas: Stewardship and Education, Enhancement and Rehabilitation, Environmental Land Protection and Preservation, and Leadership, Innovation and Knowledge. The success of the program is built upon strong partnerships and engaging residents to take action. The Strategy continues to be an important delivery mechanism for increasing tree canopy and woodland cover in the Region.

Achievements contribute to increasing tree canopy and woodland cover toward Council adopted targets

The York Region Forest Management Plan, approved by council on [November 17, 2016](#) confirmed the Regional Official Plan objective to increase woodland cover to 25% by 2031, and established a Regional tree canopy cover target of 35% by 2031. Canopy cover includes all woodlands, individual trees and small treed areas (Figure 1). Woodlands are heavily treed areas that are at least 0.2 hectares in size. Woodland and canopy cover were last reported to Council on [March 23, 2017](#) as 23.2% and 31% respectively. An updated assessment of tree canopy and woodland cover is scheduled to be completed in 2020 and reported to Council in the 2021 State of the Forests report.

Figure 1

Canopy Cover Measures the Contribution of All Trees and Shrubs



4. Analysis

2019 Greening Strategy achievements continue to demonstrate the Region's leadership in protecting and enhancing the natural environment

Greening Strategy achievements are delivering results and building healthier sustainable communities through strong partnerships (Table 1). Efforts to preserve and protect the natural environment continue to provide a range of recreational, environmental and health benefits to the Region's residents, contributing to a high quality of life. The Regional Greening Strategy supports the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan priority to build sustainable communities and protect the environment. Attachment 1 showcases 2019 Greening Strategy achievements.

Table 1
Greening Strategy Action Areas, Goals, Annual Targets and Achievements

Action Area	Goal	Target (Minimum)	2019 Achievement
Stewardship and Education	Educate residents about the value of green infrastructure and provide opportunities to connect with nature and inspire action	100 outreach events Engage 50,000 residents	292 outreach events Over 50,000 residents engaged
Enhancement and Rehabilitation	Enhance and rehabilitate the natural environment on both public and private lands	Plant 70,000 trees and shrubs	102,332 trees and shrubs planted
Environmental Land Protection and Preservation	Protect core natural areas and restore linkages	Increasing area (hectares) of environmental lands secured	Nine hectares of environmental land secured
Leadership, Innovation and Knowledge	Share knowledge, demonstrate leadership and be innovative in the protection of the natural environment	Host four technical regional forums Present at two science and technology forums	14 forums hosted with agencies and local municipalities Seven presentations at science and technology forums

Forest Management Plan short term actions targeting increased tree canopy and woodland cover are on track

The York Region Forest Management Plan (2016) identified 34 short term actions to be implemented in 2017-2019 with a focus on increasing tree canopy and woodland cover. Twenty-one of these actions are being delivered through existing programs and 13 have been completed through new initiatives. Ten of the 13 new initiatives have been completed and only three actions remain in progress and are expected to be completed in 2020.

New initiatives included the development of a prioritized planting plan for York Region and preparation of the “It’s in our Nature” York Regional Forest 20 Year Forest Management Plan for 2019-2038. Through these actions, programs and partnerships have been refined to increase resident awareness regarding trees and forests, and increase uptake in planting programs. Attachment 2 summarizes the details and progress on the 34 short term actions. In 2020 work will begin on delivery of the 31 medium term actions identified in the plan. Medium term actions will build on the short term achievements and will include utilizing the results of the prioritized planting plan to inform future tree planting and exploring new tree planting partnerships targeting industrial and commercial land uses.

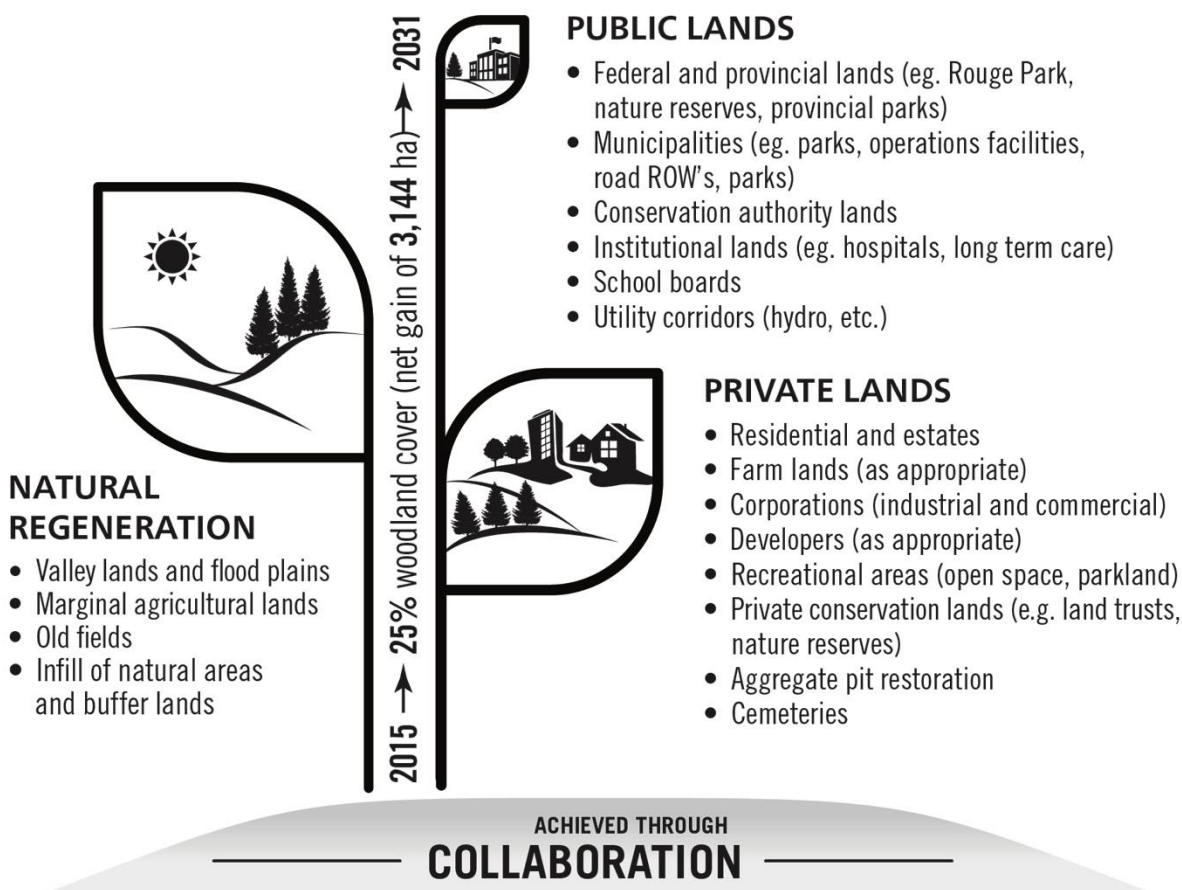
Progress towards tree canopy and woodland cover will be re-assessed in 2020

Woodland cover was last assessed in 2015 at 23.2%. To achieve the Official Plan target of 25% woodland cover by 2031 a net gain of almost 200 hectares per year is required. Increases in woodland cover are achieved through natural expansion of existing woodlands and establishment of new woodlands through tree planting (Figure 2). Each year Greening Strategy initiatives create 25-50 hectares of new woodland through programs and leveraging partnerships. Tree canopy and woodland cover are currently being re-assessed with results being reported to Council in 2021.

Opportunities to close the gap and reach the 2031 target include natural forest regeneration and planting on public and private land. Tree planting efforts from our conservation authorities, local municipalities and private residents help to increase woodland cover. As an example, tree planting efforts in Rouge National Urban Park over the past decade will mature into quantifiable woodland cover. Natural regeneration and growth of these woodlands will contribute to achieving the Region’s target.

Figure 2

Opportunities to Achieve 25% Woodland Cover by 2031



A total of 102,332 trees and shrubs were planted on public and private lands creating an additional 47 hectares of woodland cover

York Region and its partners continued to deliver strong results in 2019 with 102,332 trees and shrubs planted through a number of initiatives (Figure 3). Partners are able to use the Region's contribution to leverage additional resources through other funding opportunities.

Planting efforts created 47 hectares of woodland cover, primarily located in the Regional Greenlands System. Over 67,000 trees were planted through Grow Your Legacy, a subsidized large-scale planting program delivered by conservation authorities. Collaboration between Regional departments resulted in the planting of 14,180 trees on Regional property through a combination of programs including Adopt-A-Stream, York Regional Forest planting, large-scale private land reforestation and naturalizing of Regional non-forest properties. These actions exemplify the Region's commitment to increase tree canopy and woodland cover.

Figure 3
2019 Tree and Shrub Planting Accomplishments



Land securement protected nine hectares of environmentally significant lands in 2019

In 2019 a nine hectare property was secured in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to expand an existing York Regional Forest, the Davis Drive Tract. Acquisition of this property provides opportunities to increase woodland cover through tree planting and promotes outdoor recreation opportunities through an expanded trail system. With this acquisition a total of 1,376 hectares of land have been secured through the Greening Strategy since 2001.

Funding provided through Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Mitigation and Adoption Fund will be used to acquire and reforest an additional 100 hectares of land over the next eight years. Managed as York Regional Forest these lands will allow the expansion of existing trail networks, promoting healthy active lifestyles for Region residents.

Communities moved to action through strong partnerships, creating 292 environmental outreach and education opportunities for 13,061 participants

Communities coming together can inspire residents to take personal actions to protect and preserve the natural environment. The Greening Strategy engages residents through education and outreach programs including interpretive forest walks, presence at local festivals/events, and a variety of environmental outreach activities delivered by partners. In 2019, over 50,000 residents were engaged through a variety of media and activities, including 13,061 residents participating in 292 outreach events. More than half of these events were delivered by partners; feedback from participants indicates a strong interest in learning more about the natural environment.

York Region is recognized as a global leader in protecting the natural environment

The Region's Green Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (2017) was recognized on the global stage as a silver award winner at the Green World Awards for environmental best practices. This award is presented in 2019 by the Green World Organization, which is an international, independent, non-profit, non-political, environment group, dedicated to recognizing, rewarding and promoting environmental best practices around the world.

In 2019, York Region was approved for \$10 million in funding through Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund to implement a natural infrastructure project. The project will result in over 400,000 trees and shrubs being planted across the Region, including the establishment of 100 hectares of new woodland. The goal of the project aims to mitigate the risk of flooding and lessen the impact of extreme heat events in urban areas.

5. Financial

Through partnerships, the Greening Strategy leverages significant resources and funds for each action area. In 2019, \$1,840,000 was allocated to the Greening Strategy, including a \$825,000 contribution to the Land Securement reserve. The remaining \$1,015,000 supports a number of programs and partnerships including large scale reforestation, backyard tree planting, outdoor education and land securement partnership agreements. The Region's investment in the Greening Strategy leveraged an additional \$890,000 in funding for program delivery.

6. Local Impact

Greening Strategy programs provide local municipalities and residents with opportunities to enhance the natural environment. Sustainable communities are built and supported through greening initiatives that prioritize protection of Regional and local natural heritage systems.

Local municipalities have a long history of partnering with York Region on natural environmental projects and programs, and have benefited directly from the Greening Strategy. Local Municipalities are consulted or involved in the development and implementation of many programs and projects related to outreach, tree planting and environmental land protection and preservation initiatives. Local municipal staff are active on Greening Strategy working groups including the Land Securement Working Group, Invasive Species Working Group and Urban Forestry Forum. Collaborative forums provide an opportunity for information sharing, alignment and experience sharing.

7. Conclusion

A sustainable natural environment built through partnerships and community engagement is key to delivering Greening Strategy programs and projects. Success continues to be made towards increasing tree canopy and woodland cover with 102,332 trees and shrubs planted in 2019. Continuous improvement, leadership and innovation allow the Greening Strategy to adapt, and create stronger programs and partnerships. These achievements demonstrate the Region's leadership and the value of the Greening Strategy as a proactive strategy supporting a healthy sustainable Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Laura McDowell, Director of Environmental Promotion and Protection 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75077 or James Lane, Manager, Natural Heritage and Forestry 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75271. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: **Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.**
Commissioner of Environmental Services

Approved for Submission: **Bruce Macgregor**
Chief Administrative Officer

March 27, 2020
Attachments (2)
eDOCS#10412925

2019 GREENING STRATEGY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Greening Strategy promotes on the ground action that supports healthy natural environments. It plants the seeds of inspiration for people of all ages to cultivate sustainable communities, now and for the future.

ENHANCEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Trees and shrubs produce oxygen, remove pollutants, reduce floods, filter water, improve health, provide shade and offer many more valuable ecosystem services.



PLANTED
102,332 TREES AND SHRUBS

EXCEEDED TARGET OF 70,000 PLANTINGS

102,332 trees were planted through more than **21 partnerships** and many programs including:

- 67,986** Grow Your Legacy program
- 14,180** York Regional property plantings
- 9,766** Green Action Partnership Fund
- 3,063** Adopt-A-Stream Crossing
- 7,337** Other programs

Plantings occurred on both public and private land. Enhancement is accomplished for all habitat types including woodlands, meadows, prairies, wetlands and streams.



47 HECTARES

OF WOODLAND COVER CREATED IN 2019

Targets

WOODLAND COVER

Current

2031 Target

23%

25%

CANOPY COVER

Current

2031 Target

31%

35%

STEWARDSHIP AND EDUCATION

Our greatest gains are when residents are inspired to make a personal commitment to protect and preserve the natural environment.



ENGAGED
13,061 RESIDENTS
AT 292 EVENTS

101 EVENTS HOSTED BY YORK REGION

Residents learned about the importance of the natural environment and the benefits of trees at a variety of events hosted by York Region and partners. These events provide opportunity to further educate residents about protection and enhancement of the natural environment.



NEW
SENIORS PILOT PROGRAMS
DELIVERED WITH PARTNERS

Senior specific outdoor education programming was created to teach seniors about the benefits of connecting with nature and to highlight the York Regional Forest.

Continued development is supported through new funding from Ontario's Community Grant and partnerships with York Region Community and Health Services Department and the Oak Ridges Trail Association.



REACHED MORE THAN
50,000 RESIDENTS
ANNUALLY

THROUGH A VARIETY OF MEDIA

PROGRAM, PARTNERSHIP A

2001	2002	2005	2007	2010	2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greening Strategy Adopted Partnerships and Programs Begin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Walks and Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant Woodland Criteria Forest Conservation Bylaw Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backyard Tree Planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First York Regional Forest Accessible Trail Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Envirothon Education Competition Greening Strategy Refinement

PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

Protection of our Regional Greenland System is fundamental to achieving our canopy and woodland cover targets and an ecologically diverse natural environment.



9 HECTARES PROTECTED

In 2019, the Region secured a property in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, linking natural areas in the Greenlands System and expanding the York Regional Forest. Since 2001, this program has protected more than **1,376 hectares** of environmentally significant land.

Through partnership agreements, partners work cooperatively with residents, municipalities and others to encourage environmental land protection and secure individual lands.



\$10 MILLION
LEVERAGED OVER 8 YEARS THROUGH
DISASTER MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION FUND

Natural Heritage and Forestry secured \$10 Million in federal funding to support land securement and tree planting to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat and flooding.

LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

To support a diverse and healthy ecosystem, York Region shares knowledge, demonstrates leadership and promotes innovation with partners and local municipalities.

Exchanged information, shared accomplishments and continued innovation at **14 Regional forums** and **seven technical presentations** throughout the Region.



SILVER AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL BEST PRACTICES

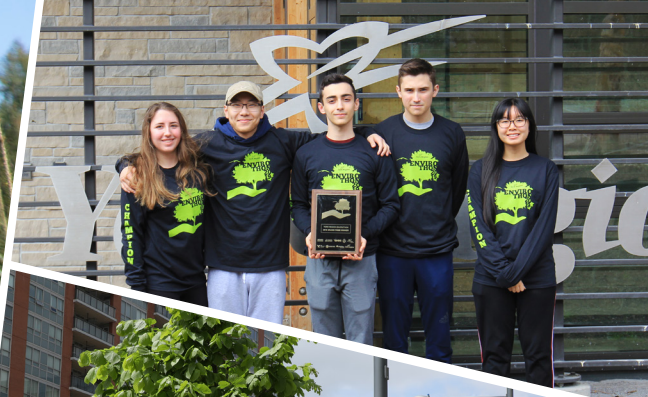
In 2019, The Region's Green Infrastructure Asset Management Plan received the Silver Green World Award for Environmental Best Practices. The Green World Organization is dedicated to recognizing, rewarding and promoting environmental best practices around the world.



ESTIMATED 30 MILLION TREES IN YORK REGION

ND ACHIEVEMENT HISTORY

2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none">One Millionth Tree Planted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre Opens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">York Region Forest Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">State of the Forests ReportMonarch Friendly Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre receives full Living Building Challenge Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It's in our Nature: Management Plan for the York Regional Forest 2019-2038 adopted



FORESTRY

1-877-464-9675

Tty 1-888-512-6228

accessyork@york.ca

york.ca/forestry

edocs #10548659


York Region

YORK REGION FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

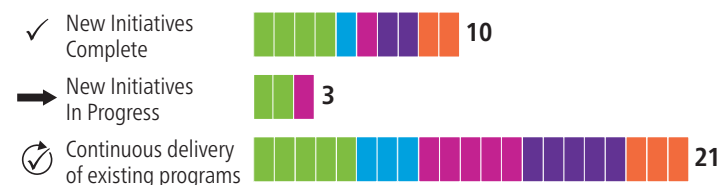
Short Term Actions (2017 to 2019) | 2019 STATUS



ACTION STATUS



ACTION STATUS BY GOAL



GOAL 1 | Canopy Cover and Woodland Cover

STATUS

Develop a prioritized planting plan by analyzing current planting opportunities.	➡
Continue to assess tree planting opportunities on Regional-owned properties.	✓
Prepare a summary report of urban forest studies, including results of integrated monitoring.	✓
Continue to optimize existing tree planting partnerships (e.g. school boards).	✓
Implement 'Grow Your Legacy' large-scale private land tree planting campaign.	✓
Continue to actively support others in the development of urban Forest Management Plans.	✓
Continue to collaborate with York Region departments, local municipalities, agencies and partners to share information and exchange ideas.	✓
Monitor to ensure that the York Region Forest Management Plan is followed, reports on results are prepared and activities achieve desired results.	✓
Complete the update of York Region's Street Tree and Forest Preservation and Compensation Guidelines.	✓
Update York Region's Street Tree Planting Design Guidelines and share with local municipalities.	➡
Assess the alignment of the Forest Management Plan with Provincial Plans and York Region's Official Plan.	✓

GOAL 2 | Climate Change and Sustainability

STATUS

Continue to undertake assisted migration trial plantings to adapt to climate change.	✓
Continue to collaborate with organizations including the Invasive Species Council, Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Canadian Forest Service to quickly detect and respond to threats.	✓
Continue to collaborate with partners to explore science-based biological control opportunities.	✓
Look into innovative low-impact development practices that emphasize conservation and use of green infrastructure to manage storm water quantity and quality.	✓



GOAL 3 | Awareness and Education

STATUS

- Produce and distribute a 'State of the Forest' report summarizing the results of urban forest studies. ✓
- Educate York Region residents about the ecosystem functions and services provided by trees and woodlands. ➡
- Continue to deliver York Region forest festivals and events and education programs. ✓
- Continue to expand partnerships with York Region Public Health. ✓
- Participate in and contribute to legislation and policy reviews that recognize connections of trees and public health. ✓
- Support and participate in local community events that promote the benefits of trees. ✓
- Update website to post educational materials; promote events and solicit public feedback. ✓

GOAL 4 | Stewardship and Taking Action

STATUS

- Continue to explore environmental partnerships with the agricultural community to protect farmland and improve canopy cover. ✓
- Document use of agricultural easements and shared benefits, practices in collaboration with the Ontario Farmland Trust. ✓
- Continue to coordinate the Emerald Ash Borer Technical Working Group. ✓
- Continue to manage the York Regional Forest to meet the Forest Stewardship Council certification requirements. ✓
- NEW!** Prepare York Regional Forest 20 Year Forest Management Plan for 2019-2038 period. ✓
- Share best practices on urban tree planting and maintenance through forums and events. ✓
- Strengthen relationships among the Region, local municipalities, Ontario Woodlot Association, Forests Ontario and others to encourage good forestry practices on private land. ✓

GOAL 5 | Governance, Innovation, Research and Development

STATUS

- Continue to review emerging science-based arboriculture practices and integrate into tree planting and maintenance specifications. ✓
- Continue to review science-based silvicultural practices to inform management of the York Regional Forest and implementation of the Forest Conservation Bylaw. ✓
- Complete a green infrastructure asset management plan for Regional assets, including street trees. ✓
- Promote green infrastructure asset management as a best practice to the province, municipalities and other organizations. ✓
- Continue to provide input to provincial and federal legislation through coordinated reviews within and between departments. ✓