



May 24, 2024

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Amit Gandha, Director, Park Operations

SUBJECT : **Tree Planting Direction – Update – Board Briefing Memo**

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Dear Commissioners,

The following Urban Forestry update is in consideration of the [Tree Planting](#) Motion approved by the Board on April 24, 2023. The motion directed staff to coordinate with City Council to plant 100,000 new trees by 2026. This memo provides a high-level overview of our current planting capacity, funding, and the high-level requirements to move this direction forward.

### **Tree Inventory**

Currently, Urban Forestry oversees approximately 150,000 street trees, 38,000 trees in parks and golf courses and over 1-million trees in forest areas across the City of Vancouver.

### **Discussion**

Since the motion was adopted, staff have been advancing the update to the [Urban Forest Strategy \(2018\)](#), expected to be presented to the Board for adoption in Fall 2024. The strategy will reflect an updated forest canopy cover target of 30% by the year 2050 [as adopted by Park Board on December 7, 2020](#). The urban forest canopy cover in Vancouver is currently 25% as of the latest LiDAR fly-over conducted in 2022. Canopy cover is the primary metric utilized by staff to measure progress towards the many benefits that come from additional tree planting.

Achieving an additional 5% in canopy cover in the next 26-years will require approximately 115,000 new, stand-alone trees that each achieve an average of 50m<sup>2</sup> in canopy area. An additional 50,000 trees will also need to be planted to account for attrition of existing trees on public land which averages 2,000 trees removed annually from age, pests, pathogens, drought, storms, and other reasons. As such, approximately 165,000 trees will need to be planted to hit our canopy cover target by 2050. This does not account for tree losses on private land resulting from development-related activities.

Current staff capacity allows planting 3,000-4,000 trees on public land annually (50-75% are replacement trees). Tree planting efforts are funded through the \$7.5M allocated to Urban Forestry in the 2023 - 2026 Capital Plan.

Planting 100,000 trees by 2026 necessitates a substantial lift in resourcing – both in staffing and funding; roughly 50,000 trees would require planting in each of 2025 and 2026, this represents an almost 13x increase to current capacities. Consideration will also need to be given to the current resources that are prioritized towards the Stanley Park Looper Moth Outbreak.

Tree planting in 'urban heat spots' and Equity Initiative Zones will cost at least \$1500 per tree (including labour and materials) plus \$500/tree for watering in two subsequent years. The contracting cost to plant 10,000 trees in grass boulevards could exceed \$16M, making the City of Vancouver's 50% portion at least \$8 Million. Subsequently, operating funds will be necessary to



support the long-term stewardship of the additional trees. Annual operational costs for 10,000 trees requires additional funding of \$650K per year.

For consideration, local nurseries have inventory and production limitations that may necessitate sourcing trees from outside the Lower Mainland resulting in added costs.

25,000 trees were planted in Stanley Park to address the hemlock looper outbreak, with plans for nearly 75,000 more trees over the next 3-4 years, requiring careful post-planting management.

### **Funding Opportunities**

The Federal 2-Billion Trees Program offers additional funding through grant opportunities. Eligibility requirements necessitate cities must plant at least 10,000 trees in a single year above and beyond current planting efforts and fund 50% of the project costs. Urban Forestry staff have utilized GIS to identify new tree planting spots in low canopy neighbourhoods to meet the 10,000 tree/year requirement. Updates to the program may reduce the minimum number of trees required to be eligible, however funding needs to be confirmed for the City of Vancouver's 50% share.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will be reporting back in Fall 2024 with an update on the Urban Forest Strategy. As noted, the funding requirements to deliver on this motion are substantial and will require consideration as part of the annual budget process.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amit Gandha', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Amit Gandha  
Director Park Operations, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

jm/ag/vt

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team  
PB Communications