

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: CANADA'S FOREST TRUST- UNSOLICITED SPONSORSHIP PROPOSAL

FROM:

Michael Genova, Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Emilie Alderman, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

The City of Vaughan has received an unsolicited sponsorship proposal from Canada's Forest Trust Corporation to engage Vaughan's business community to solicit monetary donations that will generate revenue, beyond the property tax base, to support the City's tree planting programs.

Report Highlights

- Canada's Forest Trust Corporation is a social enterprise that partners with individuals, businesses, and governments to take measurable climate action.
- Canada's Forest Trust Corporation has engaged the City of Vaughan to propose a partnership that would mobilize Vaughan's business community to co-fund tree planting and tree canopy expansion. This opportunity falls within the scope of Vaughan's Incoming Sponsorship and Donation policy as an unsolicited sponsorship proposal.
- Through the Let's Get Growing Program, Canada's Forest Trust would solicit and collect business contributions to support the key tree planting programs and goals of Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan.
- The Let's Get Growing Program would generate alternative, non-tax revenue that could offset a significant portion of the City's annual tree-planting budget.
- The City can enter a three-year partnership with Canada's Forest Trust to launch a Vaughan-specific Let's Get Growing campaign.

Report Highlights (continued)

- Staff recommend entering negotiations for a partnership with Canada's Forest Trust Corporation. This option positions Vaughan as a municipal leader in climate action by launching a local version of Let's Get Growing – Vaughan.
- The City of Vaughan has an opportunity to be one of the first municipalities to partner with Canada's Forest Trust as the program is scaled across the country.

Recommendations

1. That Council receives the report and unsolicited proposal presented by Canada's Forest Trust Corporation;
2. That Council authorizes staff to negotiate a sponsorship agreement with Canada Forest Trust for a term of three years with option to renew, in consultation with the Office of the City Solicitor, and in compliance with the Incoming Sponsorship and Donation Policy, as amended;
3. That the Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives, or designate, be authorized to execute the sponsorship agreement and any ancillary documents and/or related agreements or renewals, including any amendments, with Canada's Forest Trust Corporation;
4. That all agreements are in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, or designate, Deputy City Manager, Public Works, or designate, and Deputy City Manager, Strategic Initiatives, or designate; and
5. That the Let's Get Growing program be added to Appendix A of the Incoming Sponsorship and Donation Inventory List.

Background

Canada's Forest Trust Corporation is a social enterprise that partners with individuals, businesses, and governments to take measurable climate action.

Canada's Forest Trust Corporation is a leading nature-based solutions company committed to growing Smart Forests™ that sequester carbon, enhance biodiversity, and protect ecosystems. In partnership with businesses, individuals, and governments, Canada's Forest Trust directs climate action resources to support activities along the tree planting supply chain.

These tree planting projects are expected to contribute toward Canada's 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target and 2050 net zero emissions target while also expanding urban canopies, restoring habitat for species at risk and other species of interest, increasing forest resilience to climate change, and catalyzing job creation.

Canada's Forest Trust Corporation has engaged the City of Vaughan to propose a partnership that would mobilize Vaughan's business community to co-fund tree planting and tree canopy expansion. This opportunity falls within the scope of Vaughan's Incoming Sponsorship and Donation policy as an unsolicited sponsorship proposal.

Per Vaughan's Incoming Sponsorship and Donation policy, an unsolicited sponsorship proposal is defined as any mutually beneficial business proposition in which an external party ("Sponsor"), whether for-profit or otherwise, provides cash and/or in-kind products or services to the City in return for commercial benefit. These benefits may take the form of marketing, publicity, promotional consideration, merchandising opportunities, etc. The City may consider unsolicited sponsorship offers but has no obligation to accept them.

The City has received an unsolicited sponsorship proposal from Canada's Forest Trust Corporation for a partnership that would direct private sector contributions to City-led tree planting initiatives. This unsolicited proposal is related to the City's existing Green Guardians program, which engages businesses to support the City's environmental stewardship programs, including tree planting initiatives. Canada's Forest Trust Corporation's Let's Get Growing Program is a municipal- business partnership program designed to expand urban tree canopy by capturing corporate investment. Staff have met with the prospective sponsor and have collected information on the opportunity for Council's consideration.

Through the Let's Get Growing Program, Canada's Forest Trust would solicit and collect business contributions to support the key tree planting programs and goals of Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan.

In collaboration with Canada's Forest Trust, businesses would be able to contribute to the City's tree-planting goals in exchange for recognition, marketing assets, and access to the Canada's Forest Trust Corporation's Smart Forest™ Hub. This sponsorship opportunity enables businesses to contribute to verified tree planting projects in their communities and meaningfully measure their leadership in climate action. To date, Canada's Forest Trust has partnered with organizations including InterRent Real Estate Investment Trust, Canadian Club Toronto, Smart Living Properties, Scouts Canada, Landsby, and Queen's University.

Digital tracking through the Smart Forest™ Hub allows partners to quantify, showcase, and grow their environmental contributions over time. Using the portal, partners can see the location, tree health, biodiversity value, and unique ecological benefits of the projects they support. The Vaughan Let's Get Growing campaign would target medium-

and large-sized businesses in Vaughan with significant corporate social responsibility mandates, and staff would work with Canada's Forest Trust to avoid targeting businesses already engaged with City-driven campaigns, such as Grow with Vaughan.

The proposal that the City received from Canada's Forest Trust includes marketing, branding, and a complete corporate recognition program that encourages businesses to participate and amplifies Vaughan's climate leadership. In addition to marketing, the program includes corporate employee, customer, and community engagement opportunities to increase local awareness and support for Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan.

The Let's Get Growing Program would generate alternative, non-tax revenue that could offset a significant portion of the City's annual tree-planting budget.

As a municipal partner with Canada's Forest Trust, the City of Vaughan will have access to third-party data, corporate partnerships and marketing resources to deliver on key priorities of the Urban Forest Management Plan. Canada's Forest Trust will solicit contributions from Vaughan's businesses, with particular focus on those businesses with identified climate goals and corporate social responsibility mandates. Local Vaughan businesses will enter into sponsorship agreements with Canada's Forest Trust, and the City will receive a percentage of that revenue to deliver tree-planting initiatives identified in the Urban Forest Management Plan. In addition to the annual revenue, the City will also have access to all of the data collected by Canada's Forest Trust related to planting activity in the City and will be able to leverage the program across existing marketing channels.

Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan identifies expanding partnerships as a critical strategy to increase urban forest management capacity and achieve the City's adopted canopy cover target of 25 per cent by 2051. Tree planting is the most capital-intensive component of the City's urban forestry program, requiring significant upfront investment for procurement, planting, and early establishment. While Vaughan has successfully accelerated net new tree planting through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Growing Canada's Community Canopies grant, this funding is time-limited and scheduled to conclude at the end of 2026, creating a risk to the City's ability to continue planting net new trees without additional funding sources.

The City of Vaughan has an opportunity to be one of the first municipalities to partner with Canada's Forest Trust as the program is scaled across the country.

The City of Ottawa was the first municipality to partner with Canada's Forest Trust and has demonstrated the feasibility and scalability of the partnership model. The partnership between the City of Ottawa and Canada's Forest Trust was announced in September 2025.

Canada's Forest Trust is expanding to invite other Canadian municipalities to partner on campaigns in their communities. The City of Vaughan would be the first municipality in York Region and the Greater Toronto Area to formally partner on a campaign.

Previous Reports/Authority

[INCOMING SPONSORSHIP AND DONATION POLICY, February 21, 2024, Council \(Item 12, Report No. 5\)](#)

Analysis and Options

The City can enter a three-year partnership with Canada's Forest Trust to launch a Vaughan-specific Let's Get Growing campaign.

Partnering with Canada's Forest Trust would further position Vaughan as a municipal leader in climate action and bolster the financial sustainability of the City's tree-planting initiatives by harnessing additional non-tax funding.

The proposed partnership would be a three-year agreement with options to renew. Through the partnership, Canada's Forest Trust would engage directly with corporations interested in investing in community-driven climate change solutions. The participating businesses would enter into agreements directly with Canada's Forest Trust, outlining the level of participation and the allocation of their contributions to Vaughan-based initiatives.

In turn, the City of Vaughan would promote the sponsor, Canada's Forest Trust, and the Vaughan Let's Get Growing campaign through City marketing and communications channels (i.e., website, social media, digital signage). At the end of each year, the campaign contributions allocated to Vaughan tree planting initiatives would be transferred from Canada's Forest Trust to the City as sponsorship.

Revenue generation:

- Corporate investment tiers would range from \$1,500 to \$1,000,000, allowing businesses of varying sizes to participate.

- Even modest program uptake could offset a significant portion of the City's tree-planting budget.

Additional benefits include:

- The sponsorship funding would support canopy expansion, stewardship, and community engagement goals through the Urban Forest Management Program.
- The program provides Vaughan-based businesses with opportunities to take measurable and local climate action, access marketing assets, and receive recognition.
- Canada's Forest Trust would manage program delivery, reporting, marketing, and technology, alleviating a portion of the City's administrative burden related to the Urban Forest Management Program.
- Smart Forest™ Hub provides measurable, trackable results and supports public transparency regarding tree-planting initiatives and climate action.

Financial Impact

The proposed partnership with Canada's Forest Trust Corporation provides an opportunity to shift a portion of the City's canopy expansion costs from the tax base to the private sector, helping to sustain momentum beyond any given grant period. The partnership would also advance the Urban Forest Management Plan objectives related to canopy growth, stewardship, and community engagement. Over the initial three-year term, this model could support net new municipal tree planting, naturalization and woodland restoration initiatives, and targeted planting in priority areas, while also enhancing public awareness and stewardship through community programs, such as Green Guardians.

By generating dedicated revenue for tree planting and long-term stewardship, this partnership is expected to help alleviate ongoing budget pressures associated with capital tree planting, allowing tax-supported resources to be focused on maintenance, risk management, and asset care. This approach supports a more financially sustainable urban forestry program and positions Vaughan to continue planting trees while strengthening climate resilience and delivering long-term community benefits.

Operational Impact

The Economic Development Department, in partnership with Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations, are presenting this opportunity to Council for consideration. If approved, other departments, such as the Office of the City Solicitor, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Financial Planning and Development Finance, and Communications, Marketing, and Engagement, will be consulted to inform program implementation.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

As one of the first municipalities in Canada to explore a partnership with Canada's Forest Trust, Vaughan could help set a precedent-setting model for alternative revenue generation and urban forest expansion, replicable nationwide. The program's initial deployment in Ottawa in 2025 has demonstrated both feasibility and strong market interest, positioning Vaughan to be an early adopter as the model scales across the country. By moving forward, Vaughan would become one of only a few municipalities, and the first in York Region, to implement this innovative approach to mobilizing private-sector investment in climate action. This leadership role not only strengthens Vaughan's regional profile but also contributes to broader municipal learning and the development of best practices in sustainable funding mechanisms, corporate engagement, and urban forest management.

Conclusion

In summary, the unsolicited sponsorship proposal from Canada's Forest Trust presents Vaughan with a timely and strategically aligned opportunity to accelerate delivery of the Urban Forest Management Plan while reducing reliance on tax-funded tree-planting resources. By leveraging private-sector investment, third-party expertise, and transparent Smart Forest™ Hub reporting, the partnership model offers a scalable, low-administration approach that strengthens community engagement and positions Vaughan as a national leader in municipal climate action. Entering into this partnership would not only advance canopy expansion and climate resilience goals but also establish Vaughan as an early adopter of an innovative funding model with the potential to shape best practices across the country.

For more information, please contact: Raphael Costa, Director Economic Development, Raphael.costa@vaughan.ca or Shanon Kalra-Ramjoo, Director Parks Forestry Horticulture Operations, Shanon.kalraramjoo@vaughan.ca.

Attachments

1. Let's Get Growing Vaughan, Canada Forest Trust, November 26, 2025

Prepared by

Cristina Prinzo, Program Manager, Municipal Partnerships and Corporate Initiatives
Julie Flesch, Manager, Strategic Economic Initiatives
Miles Peart, Manager, Urban Forestry