

**Budget 2008
Presentation to Committee of the Whole
3 December 2007**

Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee (OFGAC)

OFGAC is concerned about the proposed cuts to the Forestry Programs and about the Strategic Initiatives that are in the "Not Recommended for Funding" categories – such as land acquisition for Urban and Rural Natural Areas. The fact that the Environmental Areas Acquisition Capital Fund is not being topped up is also a concern to us. These programs are crucial to the maintenance of good tree and forest health for the city, and for the preservation and renewal of our canopy cover.

Our priorities are summarized in Table 1

The option numbers are those in the 14 Nov. document submitted to Council by the City Treasurer – ACS2007-CMR-FIN-0036). The unfunded items of priority may be found in the main budget document on pages 881 and 882 and 839-841.

The trees, forests and greenspaces of Ottawa are our Green Infrastructure. As such, they should be accorded the same level of care and duty as is provided to our Grey Infrastructure. That they are not we show in Table 2.

Trees and greenspace are not frills to be funded only when budgets are flush. Simply put, planting and maintaining trees is good for business - it pays over both the long and short term. Trees provide us with oxygen, remove carbon dioxide, harmful particulate matter, sulphur dioxide and other pollutants from the air we breathe. They provide us with shade in the summer and help keep our houses cool, thereby reducing the cooling bills of those of us who have air conditioning. In the winter, they serve as windbreaks and in so doing, help reduce our heating bills. They contribute to our sense of well being.

If a mature tree (green infrastructure) dies and is removed it takes 25-75 years to for its replacement to achieve the same level of functioning; spending large amounts of money won't help. If you lose grey infrastructure, all it takes is money and it can be replaced in a month, to a year or two.

At amalgamation, the Forestry unit took on the responsibilities for the trees and forests of the entire city – but with no new resources. A number of the former municipalities had no forestry services but all had trees. To add to the burden, the call for service volume has been rising steadily.

It is therefore distressing to see that there is a proposal to not start the 5-year program that will see the Forestry staff start implementing the tree maintenance and service standards that council approved in 2006 and that there are proposals to cut maintenance to our mature trees by 20% and quite possibly by a further 50%. We don't schedule furnace maintenance only once in every 42 years but that is the current inspection interval for our trees. And there is no suggestion in this budget that the maintenance to roads, sewers and other infrastructure will be cut by similar amounts. All we are saying is treat Green Infrastructure with the same respect you give the Grey Infrastructure.

Given that forests and greenspace are a major urban and rural resource to owners, citizens and visitors, there should be a concerted effort to ensure their restoration and protection. It is less expensive to maintain a tree than to replant one.

If I may provide some insight into why we feel these proposals do not make any economic sense. One mature trees provide 4-5 times the benefits to residents than newly-planted trees. That is not to say we must substitute one for the other – the new trees are like putting money in the bank – plant now for great benefits, economic and human, in the future. Trees and greenspace produce hard economic benefits far above their costs. They raise property values and, so the city reaps economic benefits in higher taxation. They also have major amenity and pollution-reduction benefits. One acre of trees produces enough

oxygen each day for 18 people and the leaves trap and remove particles that cause asthma – the result -- lowered health costs.

We think that some of the proposed cuts fail the “Does this reduction impact public safety” test. We also think that many of the proposed cuts fail the “Does this reduction impact the City’s ability to attract people and care for the community” test.

If one uses the Works in Progress documentation found on pages 891-912 of the Supplemental Capital Information Budget (and summarized in Table 2 attached) as an indication of how the city spends, you will see that only \$38 million (i.e. 1.3%) of the \$3 billion authorized capital budget expenditures on environmentally related programs. Almost a billion dollars [\$905.4 K] **(31%)** is currently being spent on roads and combined roads-sewers-water projects. If we understand the budget documents correctly, there is an additional \$75 M from federal, provincial, tax supported and development charges to be spent on transportation services – roadways. More roads, more cars, more sprawl, more greenhouse gas emissions – we need more trees and greenspace and wetland conservation and acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands in both the urban and rural areas to counterbalance these projects.

We object strongly to the fact that The Urban Natural Areas Strategy is on the list of projects that are not recommended for funding. That Strategy was approved by Council in May 2007. We expected it to be funded at \$3.7 million annually until 2016. One Urban Natural Area that might be lost is No. 97, Navan Road at Pagé in Ward 2 – a high-ranked natural feature. Identified for potential acquisition in the 2005-Council-approved Community Design Plan, the owners rightly want to know Council’s commitment. Will it be lost forever together with your credibility with other developers who hold ecologically valuable land? Another UNA that is in serious jeopardy is Cambrian Road Woods –No 57. You saved Innes Park Woods, now let’s work on the others that are in the works. If you delay acquisition, the price of these UNAs land will go up and some will be lost as developers move to destroy the trees on the ground in order to plant houses and more roads.

Similarly, the proposal to acquire natural areas in the rural sector is also shelved. The City is obliged, as outlined in the Official Plan (Section 5.2.1), to acquire lands designated as Natural Environment Area (NEA) if requested to do so by the landowner. The City also has an interest in protecting designated Rural Natural Features (RNF) in a way that will ensure the environmental values are preserved over the long term. Deferring costs in regard to acquisition of important natural areas and protection of our natural resources is a false saving, since land costs will continue to rise and we continue to lose our natural resources as time passes. The \$350,000 that the city allocated in 2007 is not enough to meet obligations and the budget should have included the \$1.750 M for each of 2008 – 2010.

We acknowledge the sentiment for fiscal restraint but if we are to have the kind of city that our citizens really want – one that is clean, green, safe and economically viable and attracts appropriate new business investment, we need to invest in our city because business owners are increasingly looking for green amenities when choosing to relocate.

Table 1 – Cuts that should not be made and strategic initiatives that should be funded

<i>Appendix Code</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Option No/Page</i>	<i>\$ 000 proposed to be cut</i>	<i>Why save the program</i>
B –New Operating Needs	PWS/Forestry	14	973	Eliminating enhancements to the Trees and Forests Maintenance Program. This important start of a 5-year program approved by Council is crucial if the overall health of the City's trees and forests are to be maintained, according to the service standards adopted by Council in 2006. Any delay in implementing this program will affect the City's ability to achieve the approved arboricultural practices recommended by the Auditor General in 2007.
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PWS/Forestry	43	130	Reduction of tree pruning and trimming service by 20% and by a further 50%. Adoption of one (or worse, both) of these options would essentially eliminate all except emergency tree trimming and pruning, and would quickly result in a rapid decline in the health of city trees, something which could not be overcome by actions in subsequent years; trees are living infrastructure, and if not maintained properly they will die, not just look unsightly.
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PWS/Forestry	45	395	
Strategic Initiative Not Recommended for Funding	PTE	Page 881	11.124 over 10 years	No UNA Strategy funding to acquire 19 natural areas of ecological value. We need to acquire these environmentally sensitive areas now before prices skyrocket
Strategic Initiative Not Recommended for Funding	PTE	Pg 881	1.750	No Rural Natural Areas or NEA acquisition. We need to acquire these environmentally sensitive areas now before prices skyrocket.
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PWS/Forestry	40	50	Community Forests Maintenance Program This program has been put into effect only in the last few years, after considerable effort by the city to establish partnerships with interested users of Community Forests. The considerable good will and liaisons with community groups and other supporting partners such as Ducks Unlimited, Trail riders, hikers will be lost if this program is abandoned.
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PWS/Forestry	41	10	Eliminate promotional material for Forestry Programs: These educational brochures are the primary means of communicating with homeowners and the general public about the importance of the city's trees and forest and greenspace, and how to care for trees on their property. Removal would likely greatly increase enquiries directly to city staff on forestry matters. OFGAC makes extensive use of these materials in its promotion of city trees, forests and greenspace. New tree owners need information on how to care for

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				newly-planted trees so that they do not die within the first 2 years of life.
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PSW/Forestry	42	150	Tree stump removal on city property Eliminating this could lead to increased complaints and possible legal action if stumps caused damage to equipment, etc.- can't plant another tree if not removed
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PWS/Forestry	44	50	Extended timelines for wood hauling and pickup. Extending the pickup period for 2-4 weeks will anger the public because large logs and branches left on a front lawn are unsightly and will lead to complaints to the Councillor's office.
Capital Reserve	PTE	839-841		Environmental Areas Acquisition Fund not topped up is at \$66 K. A source of funds to purchase environmentally important land. Once lost to development, the land is gone.
E – Program /Service Reductions -- Existing	PWS	46, 50, 51	200, 175, 700	Shrub maintenance in parks; and along roads;, and roadside grass cutting. Shrubs contribute 1/3 of our O ₂ production and CO ₂ removal and are an important component of greenspace, providing benefits as do trees. Council listened to the public in 2005 and restored funding after a one-year hiatus. Parks and the trees in them will be vandalized. These three services are important to the clean and green nature of Ottawa and there is a substantial (1/3) contribution to the health and other benefits that trees and greenspace provide. Their elimination would not create damage to the city's green infrastructure in the short term but would have longer term impacts.
Strategic Initiative Not Recommended for Funding		Pg 881	0.3	Management Plans for natural areas so the public can use within stated guidelines

Table 2: Summary of Works in Progress – an indicator of how Ottawa allocates funding (taken from pages 891 - 912 in Supplemental Capital Information budget (Authorized, does not reflect amount spent or amount left to spend)

Organized by \$ value	\$ 000s
Transit Services	710.1
Rate Projects (incl. subwatershed planning)	627.5
Transportation Services, Roadway (19.7% of authorized capital budget)	578.3
Integrated Roads, Sewers & Water Program (11.2% of authorized capital budget)	327.1
Parks & Recreation	120.3
Information Technology	78.9
Fleet Services	71.7
Emergency Measures (Paramedics)	62.5
Solid Wastes Services	49.9
Fire Services	47.6
Environment (1.3% of authorized capital budget)	37.7
Cultural Services and Community Funding	32.9
Social Housing	22.9
Ottawa Public Library	17.6
Child Care	16.6
Planning & Development	12.2
Employment & Financial Assistance	4.5
Office of Emergency Management	2.9
Long Term Care	2.7
Bylaw Services	2.6
Employee Services	2.2
Financial Services	1.7
Competitive Business Planning	0.6
Client Services & Public Info	0.9
General Government	0.3
Total	2,928.9

The bottom-line is that citizens and the City derive a multitude of benefits and value from a continued investment in forests and greenspace and we ask for your support of the priorities identified. We are asking you again to begin to view trees and greenspace as Green Infrastructure and give it an increasing level of funding – one that puts it on a more level playing field with street lights, roads, sewers and buildings. Money spent to maintain our watersheds and the urban and rural forest canopy and to acquire ecologically significant land in both the rural and urban sector will be repaid many times over. The benefits I mentioned earlier produce real savings to all of us.

Iola Price, Chair
 Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee
 3 December 2007