
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 24, 2003
File No.: 6300-03
To: Ron Born, City Manager
From: Joe Creron, Parks Manager
Subject: Kelowna Tree ReLeaf Program
Prepared by: Ian Wilson, Urban Forestry Supervisor

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse a new tree planting program as part of our fire rehabilitation efforts, called Kelowna Tree ReLeaf.

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the Okanagan Mountain Fire, the Parks Division was contacted by a number of groups and individuals who would like to assist our City, particularly in re-greening parks and affected neighbourhoods. Two of the major groups include the Tree Canada Foundation, and members of Communities in Bloom.

Tree Canada is a non-profit organization which supports efforts to plant trees for their environmental benefits as well as to offset harmful emissions of carbon dioxide. After the ice storms in eastern Canada in 1998, Tree Canada (with the assistance of Shell Canada) initiated a major program to assist municipalities and private property owners to re-tree the affected areas. Tree Canada is proposing to enlist sponsors for a similar 'Fire ReLeaf' program for Kelowna, and other southern interior communities impacted by forest fires this summer. Some of the aspects of the program might include:

- Funding to assist the City, Regional District, and private property owners in the area in purchasing and planting trees and shrubs in natural areas;
- Coupons for affected homeowners to receive free or subsidized trees / shrubs from local nurseries;
- Possible tree seedling program to assist larger private land owners with reforestation of lost canopy cover and wildlife habitat areas. This might be done by working in cooperation with HRDC through some type of job training program for youth and post-secondary students; and
- Funding assistance for lost trees along municipal boulevards.

Council is familiar with Communities in Bloom (CIB), which is dedicated to beautification of Canadian communities. Members of CIB have offered to assist Kelowna. It also appears that citizens from across the country would like to get involved.

Parks staff is very grateful for the many offers of support but feel that it is important to focus and coordinate these efforts. While the effects of this fire were particularly devastating within our City, the extent of the fire's impacts and the damage on the trestles and surrounding forests is quite enormous and will take many years to recover from. Therefore, Parks is proposing a program, 'Kelowna Tree ReLeaf' that would not only help to re-green our community but also help to unite us and other communities in a positive effort on a larger scale across Canada.

Under the larger umbrella of 'Kelowna Tree ReLeaf' program, a challenge would be issued to our community and other communities across Canada to help replace some of the forest and urban forest that has been lost. A goal might be to challenge our community and others, to "plant a tree for every citizen". As an example, before the recent Salt Lake City Olympics and the upcoming Games in Athens, similar tree planting challenges were issued to help get communities involved and to help offset the environmental costs of these events.

Some of the additional partners in this program might include:

- Businesses
- Individuals
- Volunteer groups
- Nurseries (who could also assist in keeping track of numbers of trees sold in the community)
- Media sponsors, etc.

Education would also be an important part of this program. Fire smart landscaping principles would be employed to minimize future fire hazard in areas that are replanted, e.g. the use of deciduous and fire-resistant species, as well as silvicultural techniques such as pruning or spacing.

There is more work to be done to focus some of these ideas, but it is hoped that this program would serve as one positive way to rebuild, for people to get involved, and for Kelowna to recognize some of the outpouring of support that has been seen from across Canada.

Tree Canada is proposing a joint public announcement of the ReLeaf Program in Kelowna to make residents and Canadian citizens aware of the initiative. This could be done some time in late October. The Foundation will also provide opportunities for Canadians to contribute to the program through its website.

The Parks Division's goal is to plant a tree, seedling or shrub equal to our population, approximately 100,000, in time for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

Joe Creron, Parks Manager

c.c. Director of Parks and Leisure Services
 Urban Forestry Supervisor
 Parks Maintenance Supervisor