
To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: January 11, 2024
From: David Szeptycki
Acting Commissioner of Public Works
Re: **York Regional Forest 100th Year Celebration**

This memorandum informs Council of the upcoming 100th year anniversary celebration of the York Regional Forest in 2024. This milestone demonstrates York Region’s strong commitment to protecting and restoring the natural environment and providing access to greenspace for residents. To increase awareness and encourage public participation, a series of activities, events and promotions are planned to mark this significant centennial achievement.

York Regional Forest restored from barren sands to woodlands

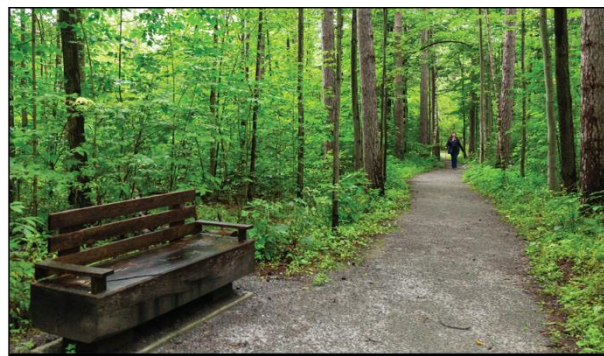
The York Regional Forest was established in 1924 with the purchase and reforestation of the Hollidge Tract. At the time, there was growing concern over wide-scale deforestation across Southern Ontario, which resulted in sandy wastelands unsuitable for farming. By the late 1940s, benefits of reforestation efforts could be seen. The barren lands once again became healthy forests providing homes for wildlife and wood for the forest industry. Reforestation prevented soil erosion, conserved water resources, and provided recreational use opportunities for the public.

Figure 1

York Regional Forest 100 Years of Restoration



Sand blown out from under pine stumps



Hollidge Tract

After a century of restoration efforts, and now guided by [It's in Our Nature: Management Plan for the York Regional Forest](#), today's forest is over 2,500 hectares and is made up of 25 forest tracts located in different parts of the Region, contributing to 6% of the Region's total woodland cover. It is increasingly biodiverse with a rich mix of over 50 different tree species and is home to a wide variety of native wildlife. Residents take advantage of over 150 kilometres of recreational trails for hiking, dog walking, mountain biking, horseback riding, nature appreciation and educational programming.

Celebrating 100 years of innovation, leadership and connecting with nature

The 100-year celebration of the York Regional Forest reflects the Region's century-long journey of collaborative environmental stewardship. While more residents are seeking physical and mental health benefits the forest offers, the York Regional Forest is also a site of many innovative and industry-leading initiatives, including those highlighted in Figure 2.

Figure 2

York Regional Forest 100 Years of Innovation

INNOVATIVE AND INDUSTRY-LEADING INITIATIVES:

 <p>THE YORK REGIONAL FOREST A GROWING LEGACY EST. 1924</p>	<p>First public forest in Canada to be Forest Stewardship Council certified.</p> 	<p>First building in Canada to be fully Living Building Challenge certified.</p> 	<p>Four accessible trails totaling 4.5 kilometres that support inclusive public use.</p> 
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The celebration highlights ongoing efforts that support [Greening Strategy](#) action areas to preserve natural areas, enhance the natural environment, and foster community stewardship and education through hands-on programs and engagement. The Greening Strategy action areas are vital to supporting efforts to combat impacts of climate change by helping to sequester carbon and mitigate extreme heat through tree planting.

Recently acquired Regional Forest property to be called “Centennial Tract”

To commemorate the 100th anniversary, the 142-hectare property acquired in 2021 at McCowan Road and Queensville Sideroad in the Town of East Gwillimbury will be called the “Centennial Tract”. Calling the recently acquired property “Centennial Tract” will provide an enduring commemoration to the 100th anniversary. As part of the celebrations, a community tree planting event will be held at this tract in 2024.

Events and activities planned throughout 2024 to engage residents, including tree planting at the new Centennial York Regional Forest tract

Activities and events will be held throughout 2024 to celebrate the 100th anniversary milestone and raise awareness of the history and ecological significance of the Forest. These include:

- Forest walks and events
- Exhibits at Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre, and York Region Administrative Centre
- An informational video posted to social media
- An Adventure Challenge to visit and learn about York Regional Forest tracts
- A photo contest

Indigenous history, culture and language has been integrated into elements of the celebration with support and input from Indigenous partners and community members.

A communications plan has been developed to raise awareness of the celebration, promote events and share commemorative items with the public. To increase reach and accessibility, some promotional content will be translated into the Region's top five languages (Cantonese, Farsi, Italian, Mandarin and Russian) and the Region will work with Anishinaabe community contacts to incorporate Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) translations into materials.

For more information on this memo, please contact Lindsay Milne, Director (Acting), Waste Management and Forestry at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75714. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



David Szeptycki
Acting Commissioner of Public Works



Erin Mahoney
Chief Administrative Officer

December 7, 2023
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