

From: Sommer Foster
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2015 3:30 PM
To: City of London, Mayor
Subject: Urban Forest Strategy in London's Budget

Mayor Matt Brown
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January 14, 2015

Dear Mayor Brown:

I am writing to you in askance for your support to include the Urban Forest Strategy (London Planning Division 2014) in the next budget cycle. We met during the summer at Alex Lau's prior to the election. We discussed about the importance of taking care of our urban forest. The urban forest provides many benefits to the residents of London, and these benefits can make up the costs invested into management. As a representative of the London community, your support and engagement will become invaluable as we move towards a greener Forest City.

The urban forest provides many social and economic services to humans, in addition to the benefits instilled upon other organisms in the non-human world. A healthy urban forest helps to reduce the heat island effect typical of cities through leaf transpiration (Styers et al. 2011; Manning 2008). Economically, this translates into savings on energy costs relating to cooling buildings. Moreover, trees play a crucial role in purifying the air of polluting gases (Soares et al. 2011; Manning 2008; Takano et al. 2002), thus reducing the rate of respiratory problems and the impact of greenhouse gases on the climate. Roots, the often inconspicuous parts of trees, can retain soil and absorb water. Sewer systems are less likely to become overloaded with storm water runoff, which consequently reduces water pollution (Manning 2008; Takano et al. 2002). Exposure to nature has been shown to have positive psycho-physiological impacts on human health such as improved mood, reduced stress and improved physical health (Pauleit 2003; Takano et al. 2002). These oft-intangible values may be captured monetarily based on the positive influence on the sales price of property located in greener, more densely vegetated neighbourhoods (McPherson et al. 2011; Quigley 2004). Greener neighbourhoods have also been found to have lower crime rates (Kuo & Sullivan 2001).

London is very fortunate to be the home of a beautiful and plentiful tree population on public and private lands. However, without the proper management efforts to protect it, the population of large, long-lived trees of the Forest City risks going into decline over time, eventually resulting in a shift towards a forest supporting only smaller, shorter-lived pioneer or invasive species (Orsega-Smith et al. 2004). The urban setting instills many challenges upon any forest that lives therein. Sealed and impermeable surfaces, small planting pits and soil compaction that limit root growth, warmer climates and increased pollution and mechanical stress can all contribute towards reduced growth rates and size of city trees (Rao et al. 2014; Payton et al. 2008; Takano et al. 2002). Thankfully, the benefits accrued by a healthy urban forest can make up for the cost of investments incurred through management.

As a recent graduate of the Master of Forest Conservation program from the University of Toronto, I value a healthy urban forest. I have also come to learn about the importance of trees, especially in an urban setting. I have also come to understand that a successful urban forest management plan should dually focus on protecting the trees, while also aiming to nurture a general awareness among the citizens of the many benefits provided by trees. The first step is for the City Council to acknowledge the importance of a healthy urban forest by including its management in the budget.

Your attention to this issue would be extremely valuable, as the Mayor and as a stakeholder of the London community. I hope to receive your support on this critical budgeting issue. I hope that our efforts will benefit the environment, improve the aesthetics of London, but most importantly, nurture richer lives for all citizens of the Forest City.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

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