

## **RECOMMENDATION REGARDING TREES & FORESTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATUS & CLASSIFICATION:**

In the “Advisory Committee Review – Interim Report VI” dated May 17, 2021 and included in the May TFAC agenda package, it was reported that the City is exploring the possibility of merging a number of current advisory committees together, including TFAC, into a new “Environmental Stewardship and Action Community Engagement Panel”.

We anticipate that trying to merge forestry in with such other “environmental” topics such as water, wastewater, waste, renewable energy, green building, transportation planning, etc. will have a number of major deleterious effects, including:

- 1) **Reduced participation & interest from the forestry community:** Few forestry experts will want to sit through meetings where likely 80% of the content being covered is so outside their area of professional interest or expertise. We also note that this seems to align badly with the stated purpose of the “community engagement panels” in the same report, which was described as convening for “a purpose more closely related to engagement on *specific* matters” (emphasis added)
- 2) **Dilution of expertise:** With such a broad mandate and no requirement for technical background or expertise, the panel will likely only have one or two members on it that have a strong background in any given area. This reduces the breadth of knowledge, as well as the volunteer time, that can be brought to bear on any one issue.
- 3) **Inability to effectively support the Urban Forest Strategy & Tree Planting Strategy:** The number of action items in these two strategies are most than sufficient to keep a committee busy for many, many years. Without a dedicated team working specifically on forestry issues, elements of the current TFAC mandate, such as:
  - providing advice on the development and monitoring of London's Urban Forest Strategy
  - providing advice on City’s policies, by-laws and guidelines which effects treeswill be poorly effected and ill-served indeed.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1) Assuming that the main issues are cost and municipal staff resources, we would strongly recommend that rather than attempting to merge all “environmental” issues together in one committee – a much, much broader mandate than other committees like “animal welfare” or “accessibility” or “agriculture” have – that the City explore a forestry committee that meets bi-monthly. Bi-monthly meetings would only cost half as much to

run, reduce staff time obligations, and allow committee members to meet as working groups in the intervening months – likely dramatically increasing overall productivity as well. A bi-monthly schedule increases flexibility for participants and reduces the number of set meetings they must attend, so may also improve committee recruitment.

- 2) In order to ensure the committee has sufficient expertise to serve City goals related to the Urban Forest Strategy and municipal policy, we would recommend this modified TFAC be classified as an “Expert Panel” rather than a “Community Engagement Panel”.