



Growing a Sustainable Future:

A Proposal for Land Disposition & Investment

Municipality of North Grenville Council

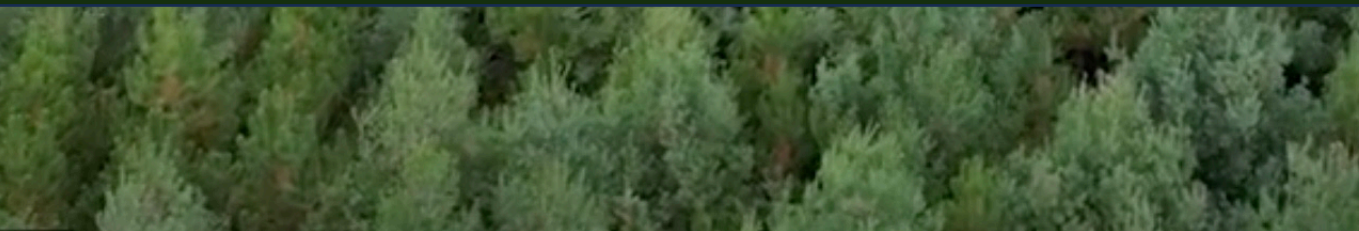
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The Centre and Our Community



In its many years of operation, the tree nursery has produced hundreds of millions of seedlings, contributing to extensive reforestation while providing ongoing local employment.



- Created as a tree nursery in 1945, operated by the Government of Ontario until 1995
 - By 1997, through efforts of many local volunteers, organizations and townships, the Centre was saved
 - Has operated as a non-profit corporation since 2000 on leased municipal lands
- Has provided the community with the Ferguson Tree Nursery, land stewardship, conservation and expanded to include many free recreational opportunities for over 20 years
- Through the land lease with the Municipality of North Grenville, has repaid the land purchase price of \$500,000, and more
- Provides employment for local residents as well as additional seasonal employment (18 employees and 5-7 temporary workers)
- Currently operates with a business-focused management approach, while incorporating community interests into its operations

The Community and Our Commitment


- Eastern Ontario's largest nursery producing native and proven non-invasive trees and shrubs (~2 million trees annually)
- 22+ km of public trails
- 18-hole disc golf course
- Dog park
- Toboggan hill
- Arboretum
- Giving Garden
- Park, picnic space and water access
- Indigenous space (in progress)



A community with intentional green space and active recreational activities available to everyone, is an active, healthy community. We are committed to continuing to fulfill our mission in support of these goals.

Preparing for a Long-Term, Sustainable Future

- Nursery sales have decreased as a result of Provincial funding changes, while operating costs and challenges have increased
- Opportunities include Federal funding, with a contract secured to 2031; client feedback that this is the nursery of choice if quality can be maintained; and increasing social desire and pressure for reforestation/afforestation and community green spaces
 - Diversification of products, to reduce reliance on government funded programs is continuing (shifting from bareroot stock to potted stock, shrubs and perennials, with broader markets)
- The Nursery does not have the finances to address the necessities of the required modernization and cannot access traditional financial institutions
 - Nursery does not own land and its assets are depreciating or have depreciated, with limited access to government grants
 - Without investment, will be compelled to operate in a diminished and increasingly precarious capacity in the short term and may be forced to cease operations in the longer term
 - If the Nursery's revenue growth is limited, the amount of investment into community recreational spaces will also remain limited
- Challenges include damaging levels of sodium in the groundwater; aging infrastructure; and labour market challenges, requiring modernization of equipment. (Examples contained in Appendix A)



The major challenges facing the organization require substantial financial investment in specialized engineering, technology and equipment solutions

Consultation and Decision Making

This proposal is based on necessity, arising from thorough examination of options, careful consideration of impact and discussion with various groups

- Board of Directors of the Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation, which provides oversight to the Ferguson Tree Nursery
- Highly experienced and knowledgeable Nursery staff, who are intimately familiar with the subject lands and the challenges facing the Nursery
- Individuals and groups consulted include long-term nursery supporters; former and present management staff; Friends of the Ferguson Forest Centre, other community members and current clients
- Consultation also included our key stakeholder, the Municipality of North Grenville
- None of the current community groups, activities or recreational opportunities will be impacted by our proposal, as we envision it
 - All current activities and spaces used by the public will remain untouched as a result of this proposal
 - No significant existing tree cover should be impacted by this proposal, other than windbreak tree lines

Funding Option – Land Disposition Proposal

The Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation respectfully requests that the Municipality of North Grenville:

- Consider selling a parcel of 5.3 hectares (13 acres) of vacant non-prime agricultural, limited capacity land, that is municipally owned and currently leased by the Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation; and
- Provide funds generated from the sale (after the Municipality has recovered its costs), to the Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation for the purposes of implementing the necessary capital plan and to support enhancement of recreational and conservation opportunities in the Ferguson Forest Centre.

Land Summary



Subject lands front County Road 43 between St. Michael School and Anniversay Way and are denoted in red

The parcel of land is solely used for limited nursery purposes.

No public trails, gardens or recreational spaces are contained within the subject lands.

Land Inventory Classes & Limitations

<u>Classes</u>	<u>Description</u>
Class 1	Soils in this class have no significant limitations in use for crops.
Class 2	Soils in this class have moderate limitations that restrict the range of crops or require moderate conservation practices.
Class 3	Soils in this class have moderately severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices.
Class 4	Soils in this class have severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices.
Class 5	Soils in this class have very severe limitations that restrict their capability in producing perennial forage crops, and improvement practices are feasible.



1 - <https://sis.agr.gc.ca/cansis/nsdb/cli/index.html>

Subject lands have not been productive for nursery purposes

The land is considered non-prime agricultural land, as it is classes 4 and 5 as per the Canada Land Inventory¹

- To make this land viable for the quality and quantity of commercial product output required, it has previously, required and would continue to require, significant investment
- Alternative under-utilized land of more suitable quality is available for agricultural purposes within the existing leased area

Rationale

- The Ferguson Tree Nursery has developed a modernization strategy requiring in excess of \$2,000,000 to be implemented over a number of years
- Subject lands are adjacent to existing commercial and residential development within the existing defined urban boundary and urban service area
 - Repurposing this specific parcel of land as a mixed commercial/residential use will maximize return on existing public investment in the road, water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure
 - The location of this parcel of land will yield the highest monetary return and assessment value for the municipality, and it is not currently required for the Nursery's commercial purposes
- Disposition of the land would present the Municipality of North Grenville the opportunity to address community needs such as affordable, accessible housing which could be accessed via active transportation following the County Road 43 improvements
- If the land sale is approved, the Municipality of North Grenville is bound by applicable by-laws, regulations and acts to ensure that future land use strictly adheres to environmental requirements
 - No meaningful tree cover would be lost through this proposal, rather, the Nursery will be positioned to make better use of other green spaces, and will continue planting trees throughout the Centre

Realistic, Sustainable Financial Plan and Assurances

- The Ferguson Tree Nursery has developed a future focused financial plan, which included examination of market pressures, risks to the viability of the organization and with a view to targeting critical capital investment items
 - Focus will be on targeted replacement of aging equipment and infrastructure; investing in ‘smart-farm’ solutions; and future-proofing fundamental operations
- Through pre-consultation, the Municipality has been provided with information about how the funds would be spent
- The Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation will commit to annually reporting and detailing to the Municipality of North Grenville how the funds have been used towards the intended purposes.
 - Municipal Council has a seat on the Corporation Board of Directors with voting privileges and is invited to Board meetings where detailed financials are reviewed
 - The lease agreement allows the Municipality to access the Corporation’s audited financial statements

Fulfilling Our Commitment to the Community

- With capital investment, the Nursery can increase revenue, and once in a position to do so, will reinvest profit into the Centre, for the benefit of the community
 - This is part of our mission, and commitment to the community
 - Forecast capital investments for the Ferguson Tree Nursery are estimated to be less than the estimated revenue from the sale, which would provide additional funds for enhancements of recreational and conservation areas
- With improved equipment, and the ability to sustain staffing, the Nursery will be better positioned with respect to maintenance within the Centre
- The Centre is a draw for tourists, including repeat visitors and sports enthusiasts, as well as for local residents, which has broader economic benefit to the small businesses in our community

Growing a Sustainable Future

Ultimately, this is an investment to remain relevant and viable through the sale of lands that does not diminish our ability to grow trees, while enhancing the potential for increased community benefits



Resources and Additional Information

Further detailed information about this proposal
can be found on the Ferguson Forest Centre
Corporation website

<https://www.fergusonforestcentre.ca/news>

Summary Fact Sheet 🌿 Questions & Answers 🌿 Media Statement

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Discussion & Questions

Appendix A: Examples of Capital Investment Requirements

- Much of the equipment and all the infrastructure in operation today, was purchased and implemented in the last century when the Provincial government operated the nursery.
- Examples of capital investments required for long-term success include:
 - Engineering solutions to the unacceptable levels of sodium in the well water
 - Upgrades and repairs of greenhouses (new air compressors, new computer boards for water walkers, new AC fans, replace lower walls greenhouses, new greenhouse controllers, upgrading corrugated plastic)
 - Engineering solution acceptable to the Ministry of Labour for gutter connect greenhouse roof accessibility
 - Generators for east greenhouses and seed freezers
 - New equipment for seed processing (fanning mill, kiln/cone conditioning room) and field operations (laser weeder, fertilizer drop spreader, six row furrow machine)