



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Growing a Sustainable Future: Ferguson Forest Centre Proposes Land Sale to Ensure Long Term Viability**

North Grenville, Ontario, April 12, 2024

The Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation (FFCC) will be presenting to the Municipality of North Grenville on April 16, 2024, a proposal requesting the sale of approximately 5.3 hectares (13.1 acres) of under-utilized land to fund a future sustainable capital investment plan. The land is located along the northern side of County Road 43 between St. Michael's Catholic High School and Anniversary Way. Leased from the Municipality of North Grenville, the parcel of land is within the Kemptville urban service area and is of lower quality than other lands used by the Ferguson Tree Nursery and is not required for tree growing purposes. The land is not classified as prime agricultural land within the Canada Land Inventory and has required continuous supplementation to grow nursery stock of acceptable quality.

The Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation operates as a social enterprise non-profit organization that owns and provides oversight to the Ferguson Tree Nursery. Profits from the Nursery are invested into sustaining the Nursery and maintaining and enhancing the recreational trails and amenities, as well as conservation of the green spaces.

“In recent years, the Ferguson Tree Nursery has diversified product offerings and has implemented improvements in how they operate with their current resources. The reality is that the Nursery is operating with equipment and infrastructure much of which was in place when the province operated the facility in the 1990s, and those assets are reaching end of life,” stated FFCC President, Carl Doucette. “The Nursery can no longer operate as a small farm, so a carefully planned sustainable capital investment strategy has been developed that will position the Nursery to grow and strengthen its competitive advantage and, in doing so, will ensure the long-term viability of the organization.”

The Ferguson Tree Nursery produces millions of native and naturalized non-invasive species annually. Under the Federally funded Two Billion Tree program, the Ferguson Tree Nursery has secured a contract to 2031 for the provision of bareroot seedlings. As well, the product diversification initiative towards potted stock of perennials and shrubs is proving very successful. This bodes well for a positive outlook for the future. That future, however, depends upon securing funding for the capital investment program. “We have explored private sector partnerships and government grants and funding but were not able to identify feasible funding options through those avenues. As a non-profit organization with depreciated assets and without ownership of the land on which the Nursery operates, funding through traditional financial institutions is also not an option,” Doucette explained. “This proposal and capital investment strategy is necessary for

the continued viability and long-term sustainability of both the Ferguson Tree Nursery and the recreational and conservation green space that has been under our stewardship for more than 20 years.” No public recreation spaces, trails or community groups would be impacted by the release of this land. Once in stronger financial position, the Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation can continue to enhance recreational and conservation activities.

The Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation presents their proposal as an opportunity to protect the long-term viability of the Nursery and the Centre, while giving the Municipality the opportunity to address social pressures of concern in the community through appropriate designation and future use of the land. This could include, in addition to commercial uses, affordable and accessible housing along a main thoroughfare with a future active transportation corridor, all located within the designated urban boundary with access to substantive existing and planned infrastructure.

Lynne Tyler, Chair of the Friends of Ferguson Forest advised, “Given the reality of what the nursery operation is facing, we support the proposed solution.” She further noted “We would like to thank the staff and board members for their hard work and diligence in pursuing every possible avenue to avoid having to make this difficult decision. By pursuing this solution, the Ferguson Forest Centre will be able to maintain both the nursery operations and the forest that are so important to this community.”

## **KEY FACTS**

- The Ferguson Forest Centre is located on 1100 acres of multi-use green space in the Municipality of North Grenville, on the doorstep of downtown Kemptville, a short drive south of Ottawa, Canada.
- Ferguson Forest Centre is governed by the not-for-profit Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation, which has operated a 300-acre forest tree nursery on leased municipal land since 2000.
- The Ferguson Forest Centre employs 18 full time and 5-7 part-time seasonal workers.
- This includes managing and maintaining the 740-acre Ferguson Forest and it’s 22 plus kilometres of public-use recreational trails through an agreement with the provincial government, and also manage and maintain a smaller recreational green space which houses an arboretum, an 18-hole disc golf course, dog park, toboggan hill, Giving Garden, Indigenous space (in progress), parklands, picnic shelter and water access.
- The Ferguson Tree Nursery has produced hundreds of millions of seedlings in its history.

For additional information including a detailed presentation and questions and answers, please visit <https://www.fergusonforestcentre.ca/news>

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