

As Ontario 50 Million Tree Program approaches the halfway mark, the economic benefits are reported

(March 20, 2019, Queens Park) Today, Forests Ontario released *The Economic Value of Tree Planting in Southern Ontario*, a new report by Guelph-based consulting firm Green Analytics. Committed to re-greening Ontario through tree planting, education and awareness efforts, Forests Ontario is the not-for-profit charity that delivers the Government of Ontario's 50 Million Tree Program (50MTP).

At the Ontario Legislature, Rob Keen, Registered Professional Forester and Forests Ontario CEO along with Peter Emon, long standing County of Renfrew Councilor and Reeve of Renfrew, described how the province has benefited from ten planting seasons of the 50MTP. Since 2008, the Program has facilitated the planting of more than 24 million trees over 14,800 hectares, an area equivalent to one-quarter the size of Lake Simcoe. These plantings sequester 19,000 tonnes of carbon each year – the same amount of carbon emitted from driving more than 80 million kilometres.

Reeve Emon observed that in addition to obvious environmental benefits, “Tree planting leads to jobs and economic gains, as nurseries, landowners, municipalities and forestry consultants engage in tree planting activities.” The County of Renfrew, Ontario's largest county, is located one hour west of Ottawa in the Ottawa Valley – an area well-known for its history of forestry, where families have taken excellent care of the region's forest resources for more than six decades. Through the 50MTP, more than one million trees have been planted in the County of Renfrew.

The 50MTP plants 2.3 million trees each year. According to the report, these plantings create a direct annual expenditure stimulus of \$7.2 million per year and result in a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stimulus of \$12.7 million annually.

“The employment generated by the 50MTP is equivalent to 103 full time jobs per year, or more than 300 full-time seasonal jobs,” explains Mr. Keen. This does not even begin to consider the jobs supported by the extra 180,000 trees planted annually though other programs leveraged by Forests Ontario.

Mr. Keen shared more good news by referring to the report's calculations of the ecosystem service benefits derived from tree planting. Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human well-being, and can include carbon sequestration, recreation opportunities, gas regulation, water supply regulation, and nutrient and waste regulation.

Using standardized techniques for calculating ecosystem services, Green Analytics demonstrated that the trees planted through Forests Ontario's efforts are conservatively valued at \$82.7 million annually. For every \$1.80 that the

Government of Ontario provides Forests Ontario to support tree planting, no less than \$19.85 in ecosystem service value is derived; this translates to an 11:1 return on investment. “The value of the ecosystem services will increase over time as planted trees mature and new trees continue to be planted,” notes Mr. Keen.

Table 1. Economic Impact of Tree Planting through the 50 Million Tree Program

Average Trees Planted/Year	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	Direct Economic Stimulus	Jobs Supported	Ecosystem Services Value
2,300,000	\$12,700,000.00	\$7,200,000.00	311.4	\$82,700,000.00

From Reeve Emon’s perspective as an elected municipal representative for 30 years, he wishes that there were more programs that provide this kind of value, both in terms of cost efficiency, and economic, environmental and societal benefits. “This report is important, because it speaks to all three of these ‘legs of the stool,’” explains Emon, who went on to say, “Renfrew County landowners know trees; they believe planting trees is important for the environment and economy. This makes the 50MTP a good use of taxpayer dollars. When I talk with other politicians across the province, nobody ever says I want fewer trees.”

Keen concludes, “Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Yakabuski can tell his cabinet colleagues that even before the ecosystem services are calculated, he is realizing a 3:1 return on his investment in the 50MTP.”

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The Value of Tree Planting in Southern Ontario is online at www.forestsontario.ca/reports

About Forests Ontario

Forests Ontario is the voice for our forests and delivery agent of the Ontario Government’s 50 Million Tree Program, a program designed to reduce landowner tree planting costs and provide technical assistance for large-scale plantings.

Working to promote a future of healthy forests sustaining healthy people, Forests Ontario is committed to the re-greening of Ontario through tree planting efforts on rural lands and in urban areas, as well as the renewal and stewardship of Ontario’s forests through restoration, education and awareness. Visit www.forestsontario.ca or follow us [@Forests Ontario](https://twitter.com/ForestsOntario).