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Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks 5th Floor, 777 Bay Street Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Subject: Proposal for a Community Greening and Urban Tree-Planting Initiative

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing as a concerned citizen and community volunteer in Toronto to propose a new 'Community Greening and Urban Tree-Planting Initiative' to increase green spaces and tree cover in our urban neighborhoods. This program would support and fund local tree-planting drives and the creation of community gardens in cities and towns across Ontario. As climate change leads to hotter summers and more extreme weather, expanding our urban tree canopy and green spaces is essential to improve air quality, reduce the urban heat island effect, and enhance the well-being of residents.

**Description of the Proposed Program:** The Community Greening and Urban Tree-Planting Initiative would provide grants and resources to municipalities, local community groups, and schools to plant native trees and create green spaces (such as community gardens or parkettes) in densely populated areas. The program would include an educational component, offering workshops for citizens on tree care, urban gardening, and environmental stewardship. It could be administered in partnership with conservation authorities and local environmental non-profits, ensuring that tree species are appropriate for each region and that plantings are well-maintained for long-term survival.

**Objectives:**

- Increase the urban tree canopy cover in participating municipalities to provide cooling shade, better air quality, and improved stormwater management.
- Engage community members (including students and volunteers) in hands-on environmental projects, fostering a sense of community ownership and environmental responsibility.
- Enhance urban biodiversity by creating habitats for birds and pollinators through the planting of native trees and plants.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Thousands of new trees planted in urban neighborhoods over the next 5 years, contributing to a measurable increase in tree canopy coverage and a reduction in average local temperatures during heatwaves.
- Improved air quality and reduced pollution levels in greened areas, contributing to better public health outcomes (for example, fewer heat-related illnesses and respiratory issues).
- Strong community engagement, with many residents-especially youth-participating in tree planting events and garden projects, improving community cohesion and awareness of environmental issues.

**Rationale for Government Support:** Urban forestry and greening initiatives are proven to yield significant environmental and social benefits. Our city and others in Ontario have experienced record-breaking heat in recent summers, and low-income neighborhoods often have fewer trees and parks, making them more vulnerable to heat and pollution. By funding this initiative, the Ministry will be acting on its mandate to protect Ontario's air, land and water, while also aligning with provincial climate change adaptation goals and the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan. Additionally, greener communities can reduce energy costs (through increased shade and insulation) and improve quality of life, which can attract investment and economic growth.

In conclusion, I urge the Government of Ontario to implement the Community Greening and Urban Tree-Planting Initiative. This program will create healthier, more resilient communities and demonstrate leadership in urban environmental stewardship. Thank you for considering this proposal. I am available to provide further information or assistance as needed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Alice Wong