

REINSTATE A SHELTERBELT PROGRAM

WHEREAS: The Government of Canada cancelled the Prairie Shelterbelt Program in 2013, a program which ran successfully from 1901-2013;

WHEREAS: Shelterbelts provide many direct benefits to landowners, including snow trapping, reducing soil erosion from wind, and acting as visual screens;

WHEREAS: Shelterbelts provide indirect benefits to all Canadians by providing ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and pollinator habitat;

WHEREAS: Weather conditions and high levels of pest pressure has taken its toll on existing shelterbelts;

WHEREAS: Municipalities bear the extra cost of road maintenance (snow clearing, dust control) when shelterbelts start to die;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST

that Alberta Agriculture and Forestry implement a shelterbelt program

SPONSORED BY: Brazeau County

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: _____

DEFEATED: _____

STATUS: Provincial

DEPARTMENT: _____

BACKGROUND

Previously, the Government of Alberta provided trees and shrubs to Alberta farmers for shelterbelts. Various government departments managed the program over the years, but starting in 1951, the Department of Agriculture took over. In 1997 the nursery was privatised. It is estimated that over 60 million trees and shrubs were planted through the lifetime of the Alberta Shelterbelt Program.

The federal government also provided free tree seedlings to farmers from 1901-2013. The year the program was disbanded, it still distributed more than three million trees per year to 7000 clients. From 2000-2013 the federal program distributed 14.5 million trees and shrubs to Alberta's farmers. It is estimated that over the lifetime of the program they distributed over 600 million trees to prairie farmers.

While farming practises have improved and decreased soil erosion across the prairies, shelterbelts are not just for preventing the loss of soil. While traditionally thought of as rows of trees adjacent to a yard site or field, shelterbelts can be planted in many areas to attain different goals. Shelterbelts can be planted adjacent to riparian areas, livestock facilities, and dugouts.

Benefits of shelterbelts

- Carbon sequestration
- Reduction of soils erosion by wind
- Protects adjacent buildings, assisting in the reduction of energy consumption
- Increased soil moisture adjacent to the shelterbelt
- Wildlife habitat and shelter
- Pollinator habitat and shelter
- Snow trapping
- Improved soil moisture
- Improved winter safety and reduced cost of snow removal on adjacent roadways
- Rural landscape beautification
- Screens for odours and dust from farm operations
- Screens dust from road traffic into rural residences
- Increase bank stability in riparian areas
- Water filtration in run off areas

Many shelterbelts are reaching the end of their lifespan or are over mature. The former program provided incentive to plant new shelterbelts or replace dying ones. With government concerns over the climate and carbon capture, the prairie shelterbelt program would assist in those goals. While farmer's received direct benefits from the program, Canadians as a whole receive many indirect benefits from shelterbelts.