



# Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy

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Section: Administration and Public Works  
Subject: Tree Canopy and Vegetation

Council Resolution No.: 55-25  
Date: February 11, 2025

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## Policy Statement:

It is the intent that this policy shall constitute the Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy for the Municipality of Shuniah. Nothing in this policy is intended to conflict with existing standards or policies of the Municipality and this policy does not take priority over any by-laws, Official Plans, resolution or agreements passed by Council pursuant to the Municipal Act or Planning Act.

The Municipality of Shuniah recognizes the importance that trees hold in the Municipality and strives towards maintaining a healthy tree population for the positive natural benefits provided by trees, and for the enjoyment of existing and future generations.

This policy can be used as a resource of guiding principles for residential, commercial and public purposes and applies to all properties and developments on public and private lands in the Municipality of Shuniah.

## Background

Section 270(1) Subsection 7 of the *Municipal Act, 2001, S.O.2001, c.25* requires that a municipality adopt and maintain a policy regarding the manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality.

This policy will recognize:

- The benefits to the Municipality from protecting and enhancing its tree canopy and natural vegetation.
- It will promote an understanding and appreciation of the Municipality's tree canopy and natural vegetation.
- To support a robust tree canopy and high-quality natural vegetation in the Municipality and their contribution to sustainable development.
- To promote biodiversity within the Municipality.
- To reflect and promote awareness of current and future environmental qualities, issues and benefits.

Unless authorized by the Municipality of Shuniah, a person shall not do, cause or permit to be done, any of the following to a tree located on lands owned by the Municipality:

- a) Remove or cut down a tree or any part of a tree.
- b) Mark, cut, break, debark, deface, damage or in any manner injure or destroy a tree, or any part of a tree.
- c) Chemically spray, fertilize, prune, trim, disturb, or alter a tree or any part of a tree.
- d) Alter or change the soil levels in the vicinity of any tree in a manner likely to cause injury to the tree.

The Municipality supports and encourages property owners to plant trees that are native to the area and that are placed away from impedances such as utilities and structures that may limit the longevity of the tree.

Further the Municipality commits to preserving, replacing and planting trees that are on Municipality owned property. Where replacement of trees may not be possible or desired on the same location, the Municipality will relocate the planting to a similar benefiting location as determined by the Municipality.

### Benefits to a Tree Canopy:

- A mature urban tree canopy creates shade, which in turn lowers energy consumption for a community. This is accomplished by shading households and commercial properties by lowering the impact of heat through direct sunlight. Trees act as a natural shield against wind and snow and can insulate a building in the winter to reduce heat loss.
- Trees and natural vegetation create an ecosystem to provide habitats for birds, mammals and insects.
- Reduces air pollution.
- Carbon sequestration as trees can mitigate carbon emissions and help fight climate change.
- trees and vegetation provide a natural barrier that obstruct views and dampen sound between properties.
- Improves public parks and usability.
- Improves aesthetics of properties.
- Assists in storm water management as trees and natural vegetation alter and slow the path of rainfall, recharge ground water, and reduce surface contaminants.

### Shoreline Vegetation

Trees and natural vegetation along or adjacent to a shoreline help to stabilize shorelines and protect water quality. For instance, the roots of trees prevent erosion by keeping soil in place, while natural vegetation slows the velocity of rainfall resulting in reduced off-site movement of soil particles. Further, shoreline vegetation traps sediments and pollution, which helps to keep water clean and prevent algal blooms, excessive weed growth and loss of fish habitat.

Where the land use adjacent to a waterbody is residential, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry recommends a minimum shoreline buffer width of 15 metres for water quality protection around lakes and rivers supporting warm water aquatic species and a minimum shoreline buffer width of 30 metres where the waterbody supports cold water aquatic species.

Studies have shown that a range of buffer widths can be effective in promoting buffer functions such as removing sediments, nutrients and metals. Generally speaking the consensus in these studies is that under most conditions, buffer widths should be a minimum of 15 to 30 metres and variable width buffers may be more effective at addressing site-specific conditions.

### Acknowledgement and Agreement

The policy shall be reviewed once per term of Council or as required due to legislative changes.