

EXCHANGE

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.../Morning Post

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Environment

Pilot project brings shade to homes in Waterloo and Kitchener

Waterloo - This fall, a new pilot project will provide the residents of Kitchener and Waterloo with an exclusive chance to save money, conserve energy and help the environment all at the same time. Modeled after a program that has brought over 13,000 residential trees to the Greater Toronto Area since 1996, the project invites homeowners to visit local nurseries, where they will receive a rebate on purchases of Southern Ontario's beautiful native trees and shrubs.

The project, aptly named the "Cool Communities Residential Shade Tree Planting Program", is aimed at encouraging homeowners to plant trees for energy conservation. Cooling homes through shading has significant long-term potential to reduce peak energy demand in Ontario. Shade trees planted on the southern and western sides of a home can save 25-40%, and reduce peak energy demand in summer by up to 30%, according to a study by the University of California Berkeley. By planting a tree, homeowners also improve their neighbourhoods by cleaning the air, decreasing pollution, attracting pollinators, and increasing biodiversity.

The project is being launched as a pilot by Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), an award-winning, Toronto-based urban forest non-profit organization well known for its successful Backyard Tree Planting Program. LEAF has been working in close co-operation with local municipalities and green organizations to get the project off the ground.

According to Michelle Bourdeau, LEAF's Manager of Residential Planting Programs, Kitchener and Waterloo were chosen specifically because of their positive track record in taking on new environmentally-conscious initiatives. "Residents here tend to have a good understanding of environmental issues, and we want to assist them in greening their communities. We're offering financial incentives for residents who want to plant native trees and shrubs and increase Waterloo's and Kitchener's tree canopy."

The project is funded by the Ontario Power Authority's Conservation Fund which funds conservation pilot projects that encourage homeowners to make cost-effective energy conservation decisions. For more energy conservation initiatives, visit www.everykilowattcounts.ca. For more information on the Cool Communities project, including a list of participating nurseries, visit www.yourleaf.org/coolcommunities.

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