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For Immediate Release

York Region's urban forest benefits from new watering technology

Gator bags increase watering efficiency and help keep trees healthy

NEWMARKET – The Regional Municipality of York has adopted a new Gator bag slow-drip irrigation system for trees along Regional roadways in an effort to promote healthy tree growth in York Region's urban forest.

As part of our Streetscaping program, York Region plants 2,000 new street trees in the spring and fall to increase tree cover along roadways. Currently, York Region's urban forest comprises more than 27,000 trees along 1,700 kilometres of Regional roads, including 79 different species.

Street trees face many challenges that trees in forests do not, including damage from winter road salt, disturbance from construction and increased stress during periods of drought.

In 2006, York Region completed a street tree health assessment of the urban forest and determined that post planting maintenance practices, including watering, was one of the largest factors in tree survival rates.

Following the assessment, York Region improved our tree watering program which includes the adoption of the slow-drip Treegator or Gator bag irrigation system, to help ensure the survival of street trees. The Gator bag wraps around the tree and holds 75 litres of water, which is released through perforations at the bottom of the bag over a period of five to nine hours.

While this summer will likely be one of the wettest on record, having these bags in place will allow for a quick response should watering be required.



The gator bag has several advantages, including:

- More efficient use of watering by directly applying water to the roots to limit wasteful runoff
- Reducing evaporation of water
- Protecting the base of the tree from foreign contaminants or damage from lawn mowers
- Saves time since they can be filled quickly relative to traditional deep root watering

It is expected that Gator bags will stay on the trees for two or three years and remain in place over the winter.

Using this new technology to water will help ensure that street trees in our urban forest continue to produce environmental and community benefits for years to come.

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

- 30 -

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