



Staff Report

Operations – Sustainability & Solid Waste

Report To: COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services
Meeting Date: October 28, 2025
Report Number: OPS.25.043
Title: Ontario Heritage Act Designation – 152 Year Old Sugar Maple, 10th Line and Georgian Trail
Prepared by: John McMullen, Urban Forestry Coordinator

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report OPS.25.043, entitled “Ontario Heritage Act Designation – 152 Year Old Sugar Maple, 10th Line and Georgian Trail”;

AND THAT Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains states a Notice of Intention to Designate the property municipally known as Roll Number 4242000015008450000, High Bluff Lane, Plan 16M14 Block 27, under Part IV, Section 29, of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18.

B. Overview

The Town of The Blue Mountains chapter of the Tree Trust has identified a publicly owned tree at the 10th Line and the Georgian Trail and have requested designation of the property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, in order that a 152 year old Sugar Maple can be designated as a Heritage Tree under the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA).

C. Background

The Town of The Blue Mountains Chapter of the Tree Trust is a not-for-profit organization that works towards the goal of saving and protecting elder and heritage trees. The Sugar Maple located on Town property adjacent to the Georgian Trail at the 10th Line has been identified by the Tree Trust as an important tree to preserve and recognize.

The intent of this Staff Report is to initiate the designation process by requesting that Council publish a Notice of Intention to Designate (Attachment 3). A 30 day appeal period is required to expire with no objections and will be included in the notice. If no objections related to designating the property, a designation by-law will be included with a second staff report. At that time Council can choose to move forward with the designation of the tree.

D. Analysis

The designation of a tree as a Heritage Tree under the OHA requires that a designation by-law be passed and registered against the legal description of the property. The by-law includes a description of where the tree is located on the property and does not encumber the property in any other manner.

The process to designate a single Heritage Tree:

- A 'designation by-law' to designate the property under the OHA is required.
- To designate the property O.Reg. 9/16 provides 9 criteria (2 of which must be answered affirmatively to designate):
 1. *The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.*
 2. *The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.*
 3. *The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.*
 4. *The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.*
 5. *The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.*
 6. *The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.*
 7. *The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.*
 8. *The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.*
 9. *The property has contextual value because it is a landmark. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.*
- NOTE: There is no reference to natural features, or structures/dwellings for that matter, in the criteria. Only property is referenced and the municipality defines whatever is necessary to protect on that property (in this case the tree).
- Notice of Intention to Designate is published and a 30 day appeal period must pass.
- If there are no objections the designation of the property may proceed.
- With a property designated a by-law is crafted to identify the heritage features of that property (in this case the tree).

- The preservation of the tree, as described in the by-law, would be the only encumbrance on the property.

The designation bylaw must include a “Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest” outlining why the property meets one or more of the prescribed criteria for having cultural heritage value or interest to the municipality. This Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest is prepared in accordance with the [Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O 1990, c.0.18](#) and [Ontario Regulation 9/06](#) as a requirement to designate.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The 152-year-old sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) possesses significant cultural heritage value under Ontario Regulation 9/06 due to its historical, aesthetic, and contextual significance:

1. **Historical Value:** The tree, estimated to be 152 years old, is a rare and enduring example of the natural heritage of the region, predating significant settlement and development in the area. It represents a living link to the pre-settlement landscape and the ecological history of the region, reflecting the prominence of sugar maples in Ontario’s early agricultural and maple syrup production traditions.
2. **Aesthetic Value:** The sugar maple exhibits exceptional visual qualities, with its expansive canopy, vibrant seasonal foliage, and robust form, making it a striking and iconic feature in the landscape. Its aesthetic appeal enhances the scenic quality of the Georgian Trail, a significant recreational corridor.
3. **Contextual Value:** The tree serves as a prominent landmark along the Georgian Trail, a key recreational trail connecting communities and attracting visitors for its natural beauty. Its highly visible location from the public road right-of-way establishes it as a defining element of the local landscape, contributing to the area’s sense of place and community identity.

Heritage Attributes of the Sugar Maple

The following attributes embody the cultural heritage value of the sugar maple:

- Its age, approximately 152 years, as determined by measurement, visual assessment and historical photography.
- Its physical form, including its height, trunk diameter, and expansive canopy demonstrate its maturity and health.
- Its vibrant seasonal foliage, showcasing brilliant red, orange, and yellow hues characteristic of the species.
- Its specific location adjacent to the Georgian Trail and near the public road right-of-way, ensuring high visibility and accessibility.
- Its ecological role as a native species, supporting local biodiversity and reflecting the region’s natural heritage.

A map of the property location is included as Attachment 1 and photos of the tree as Attachment 2. Staff have reviewed the request and evaluated the property against the prescribed criteria set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act with the conclusion that the property merits designation in order to designate the tree as a Heritage Tree.

Should Council agree with the designation of this property a Notice of Intention to Designate (NOID, included as Attachment 3), the property is required, initiating a 30 day appeal period. With Notice of Intention to Designate, staff will issue the required legislated notices and the prescribed process will ensue, including preparation of the designation by-law for future enactment if no appeals are received.

Once the by-law is registered on the property the tree is designated a Heritage Tree and the protections identified in the by-law are put in place. The designation by-law puts in place restrictions related to harming or removing the tree. Those restrictions relate only to the natural heritage feature.

Standard restrictions to be put in place by the designation of a Heritage Tree:

- Prohibition on removal: Heritage trees cannot be removed without a permit from a local authority, unless the tree is deemed hazardous, diseased, or irreparably damaged after a peer reviewed arborist assessment confirms the necessity of removal.
- Limits on pruning or trimming: Significant pruning, topping, or any alteration that could harm the tree's health or structure is restricted in order to preserve the tree's form and canopy.
- Protection from root disturbance or damage: Activities like excavation, soil compaction, or construction within the tree's root zone are prohibited.
- Enforcement and penalties: Heritage Trees can carry penalties for unauthorized damage due to their cultural or historical value.

Interpretive Signage Potential

The preservation of this tree is being tended to by the TBM Tree Trust who recently celebrated its 5th Anniversary. Significant effort has gone into determining and executing the appropriate forestry and arboricultural techniques to extend the life span of the tree and preserve its ecological role as a native species in supporting local biodiversity.

Saplings sourced from various local sources including local landowners have been planted close enough to the parent tree that the root systems of the young trees will eventually integrate into the existing mycorrhizal fungal network. This network shares resources like sugars, nutrients, and water from the older tree to the saplings helping them to thrive under the mature tree's support and is a fascinating part of the ecology unfolding in this location.

Interpretive signage located at this site would be beneficial for providing the above noted information and could be used to tell the story of the TBM Tree Trust, the Heritage Tree designation, the saplings, and the invisible underground network of roots forming.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

Enhanced Biodiversity and Habitat Support: Protection of large healthy trees protect keystone ecological features. Large trees offer habitats for wildlife, insects, and birds, and boost local biodiversity.

Improved Air Quality and Carbon Sequestration: Older trees filter pollutants more effectively than smaller/younger trees and store significantly more carbon, contributing to climate mitigation.

Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation: Extensive root systems stabilize soil, reduce erosion, regulate water flow, and improve water quality by filtering runoff, acting as natural buffers against extreme weather.

G. Financial Impacts

The Tree Trust has committed to the long-term care and maintenance of this tree and no additional financial resources are required from the Town. As part of the designation process the Town will formalize the maintenance responsibilities and provide an easement for access to TBM Tree Trust and their agents.

If it is determined that interpretive signage was well suited to this location the cost for a 24"x 48" signboard mounted as a tabletop display would be approximately \$2,200 including manufacture and installation.

H. In Consultation With

Jeffery Fletcher, Manager of Sustainability and Solid Waste

Betty Muise, TBM Tree Trust

Alessia Farris, Curator - Craigleith Heritage Depot

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to John McMullen, Urban Forestry Coordinator jmcmullen@thebluemountains.ca

J. Attached

1. Attachment 1 Site Location
2. Attachment 2 Photos
3. Attachment 3 Notice of Intention to Designate

Respectfully submitted,

John McMullen,
Urban Forestry Coordinator

Jeffery Fletcher
Manager of Sustainability and Solid Waste

Alan Pacheco,
Director of Operations

For more information, please contact:
John McMullen, Urban Forestry Coordinator
jmcmullen@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131, extension 267

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	OPS.25.43 Ontario Heritage Act Designation - 152 Year Old Maple 10th Line and Georgian Trail.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 Site Location.pdf - Attachment 2 Photos.pdf - Attachment 3 Notice of Intention to Designate.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 9, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Jeff Fletcher - Oct 7, 2025 - 10:32 AM

Alan Pacheco - Oct 9, 2025 - 8:51 AM