

WELLINGTON COUNTY GREEN LEGACY PROGRAMME



ROBERT LANG | PHOTOGRAPHY

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The County of Wellington; Green Legacy Programme In 2004, the County of Wellington developed a simple plan to plant 150,000 trees to celebrate the County's 150th anniversary. Almost a decade later, that simple idea has grown into not only a thriving local brand shared and implemented by the community, but also the backbone to planting over one million trees and, which has caught the attention of the United Nations as the largest municipal tree planting programme in North America! Energy Digital sat down with Andrea Ravensdale (Communications Manager for the County of Wellington), Rob Johnson (Green Legacy Tree Nursery Manager for the County of Wellington) and **Paul Sapounzi (Partner at +VG Architects Ltd.)** to discuss the initiative. Can you discuss the details of the Green Legacy Programme (GLP) and the environmental and community benefits it has?

ROB: A lot of the County's trees go toward reforestation, and we only use native trees to Ontario. By doing so these trees help provide habitat for insects, animals and birds. The County has decided to take a leadership role when it comes

to improving the environment and hopes to be an example to municipalities across North America with its "from the ground up" approach. The County has built two community tree nurseries where the majority of the trees used in the GLP are grown from locally collected seed. By involving our community partners in every aspect of growing and planting trees, they become the energy behind making positive environmental changes. GLP partners include: school children, service clubs, residents, local municipalities, conservation authorities, the University of Guelph and several other community organizations. The GLP is a community driven programme and its success would not be possible without the help of our numerous volunteers. Over 3,500 volunteers contribute over 16,000 hours at our nurseries annually.

ANDREA: One of the main reasons the GLP resonates so positively with the community is the invaluable educational component the programme offers local students. The County has developed excellent partnerships with the Upper Grand District School Board and the Wellington Catholic District School Board. The GLP has been adopted into the board's curriculum and children in kindergarten through grade eight participate in the programme. Over 12,000 students participate each year. The kindergarten to grade three students start the



tree seedlings in their classrooms and care for the trees during the school year. The grade 4 to 6 students come out to one of the County's two tree nurseries and transplant the seedlings and participate in a curriculum based nature hike. The grade 7 and 8 students are bussed Wellington County 306 Nursery 308 Wellington County to various planting sites across the County to plant the trees. Many of these students have been involved in the GLP since its inception nine years ago so they've really seen their hard work and dedication grow over the years. To date, over 1.4 million trees have been planted under the GLP and the County has plans to plant millions more.

Can you tell us about the Green Legacy Building Standards?

PAUL: The +VG firm is connected to the GLP and inspired by it. In addition to the County's tree planting programme, they have also created their own green building standards similar to LEED certification. We've designed a number of projects with the County, and early on, every time we started a project there was discussion on whether we should be looking for LEED certification on these projects.

The County has a great desire to develop buildings that are sustainable and responsible in terms of their carbon footprint. The issue, however, has been finding the funds to deal with the administration and the due diligence costs related to actual LEED certification of projects. The idea was proposed to the County that we look at a number of standards and develop a hybrid standard customized to County parameters in the types of buildings they're developing.

As a result, we held a meeting where a number of people from the County with different areas of expertise and responsibilities, roles and levels, alongside representatives from the City of Guelph and University of Guelph, to establish priorities for sustainability and helped us craft the County's Green Legacy Building Standards.

Every building the County builds or renovates is constructed using the Green Legacy Building Standards and meets the highest level of certification, emerald status.

ANDREA: The County of Wellington is committed to environmental excellence. The GLP and the Green Legacy Building Standards are excellent examples of successes that can be achieved when you have a forward thinking Council, have passionate staff working on these initiatives and develop strong community partnerships.



Andrea



Rob