

## Appendix B

# Town of Halton Hills **Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy** Background Report

**Engage**



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## 1.0 Introduction

This background report is a component of the Halton Hills Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy.

In 2019, the Town of Halton Hills joined hundreds of municipalities across Canada in declaring a climate emergency. Climate change is already impacting many aspects of life in Halton Hills, from public health to infrastructure to transportation and energy systems to biodiversity. Maintaining and enhancing a healthy tree canopy is a community-wide action to mitigate the effects of climate change and contributes to meeting the Town's target to become a net-zero community by 2030.

Approximately 83% of the Town of Halton Hills tree canopy cover is located on privately-owned lands. Individual residents, businesses, and landowners have a large stake in a shared natural asset that provides ecosystem services and well-being to the entire community. While managing the overall tree canopy is a joint effort across all Town departments, Halton Region, and Conservation Authorities working together, management of the largest component of the tree canopy relies on the actions of residents, businesses, and landowners.

This background report summarizes the community engagement activities completed to develop a made in Halton Hills Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy:

- Pop-up Engagement Sessions at Farmers Markets (September 2019);
- Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Surveys (February 2020 and November 2020);
- Community Open House and Workshop (March 2020);
- Virtual Town Council Workshops (May 2020, February 2021, July 2021), and
- Community review of the draft Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy (October 2021).



Figure 1. South Georgetown.

## 1.1 Engagement Approach

The Community engagement plan is guided by a combination of principles articulated in the Town of Halton Hills Engagement Charter, and ideas supported by research about public engagement. From the Town's Engagement Charter, the following principles, related to transparency and participation, are particularly relevant to the approach:

- To state up front, the intent, level of consultation, and process for each meeting (i.e., inform and consult);
- To include special interest groups as part of any public engagement;
- To communicate at established intervals about long-term projects;
- To respect, encourage, and value input from citizens;
- To provide meaningful opportunities for engagement for all, and
- Seek out stakeholders most impacted.



Spectrum of engagement		
	INFORM 	CONSULT 
<b>Purpose</b>	Communicate; share information to build awareness	Listen and learn; test ideas and concepts and develop recommendations
<b>Town's responsibility</b>	Provide information including advising on applicable legislation that dictates process.  Share final decision	Provide information  Provide opportunity for public to share views, values and priorities.  Consider how recommendations could be incorporated  Share final decision  Report back on final decision
<b>Public's responsibility</b>	Learn	Participate

Figure 2. Town of Halton Hills Public Engagement Charter Matrix -Spectrum of Engagement.

The engagement approach supports the development of a Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy through the refinement of values, views, and ideas into tangible management tools to protect and enhance the tree canopy. The project workplan follows a process where community feedback is provided, summarized by the project team, presented to Town Council, then shared with the community through the project website or follow-up survey hosted on Let's Talk Halton Hills to validate the feedback prior to further refining into conceptual tree management scenarios. The process is then repeated; obtain community feedback, summarize, and present to Town Council.



Then the draft Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy is posted to Let's Talk Halton Hills for community feedback. Community feedback is then incorporated into the final strategy document presented to Town Council for approval.

Question design for online community engagement opportunities were prepared through an iterative process by the project consultant and Town project team, then reviewed by the Town of Halton Hills Director of Communications prior to posting on Let's Talk Halton Hills.

## 2.0 Community Engagement

Each of the proposed tree management tools included in the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy have been generated through consultation with the community. First as views, values, and priorities, then refined into tangible programs, policies, and guidelines. Management of the privately-owned portion of the tree canopy relies on the collective actions made by individual residents, businesses, and landowners. Developing a made in Halton Hills strategy requires listening and learning to the community about what matters most and what could work best to protect and enhance the privately-owned portion of the tree canopy. It is important that the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy reflect the views, values, and ideas; reaching consensus on managing a private resource that benefits the entire community.

### 2.1 Pop-Up Engagement Sessions

The first engagement opportunities were held on September 19, 2019 at the Acton Farmers Market and September 21, 2019 at the Downtown Georgetown Farmers Market. Community engagement at the markets focused on casual conversations with local residents and guests from neighbouring communities. The goal of these engagement sessions was to introduce the project to the community and encourage participation in the public survey on Let's Talk Halton Hills, and collect names and emails of people interested in attending the Open House Workshop. These casual conversations also helped refine preliminary survey questions and gain some insights into general attitudes and values. Conversations at the markets were summarized on sticky notes displayed on boards in the booths to produce more conversation. Digital versions of the sticky papers can be found in Attachment 1.



Figure 3. Discussing trees at the Downtown Georgetown Farmers Market.

## 2.2 Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1

The second engagement opportunity, an online survey, was hosted on Let's Talk Halton Hills from February 19 to March 23, 2020. The Online Survey was advertised on the Town's website, targeted social media posts, print ads in the local newspaper, local newsletters as well as direct emails to local business, community groups, and agencies. Eighty-one persons contributed to the survey. Figure 5 below depicts the distribution of engagement participants that provided their address as part of the Online Survey.

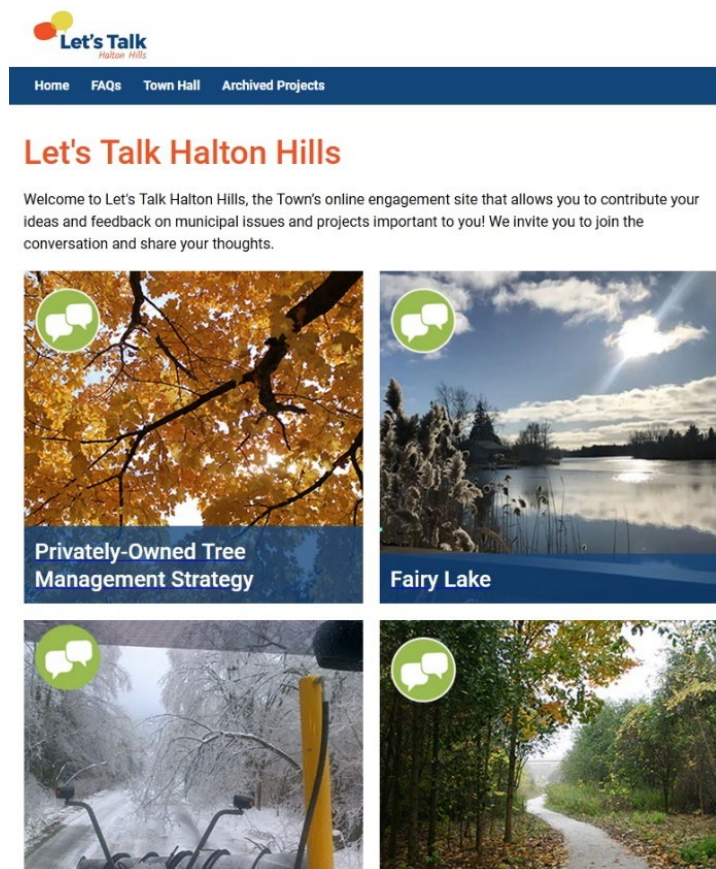


Figure 4. Let's Talk Halton Hills landing home page.

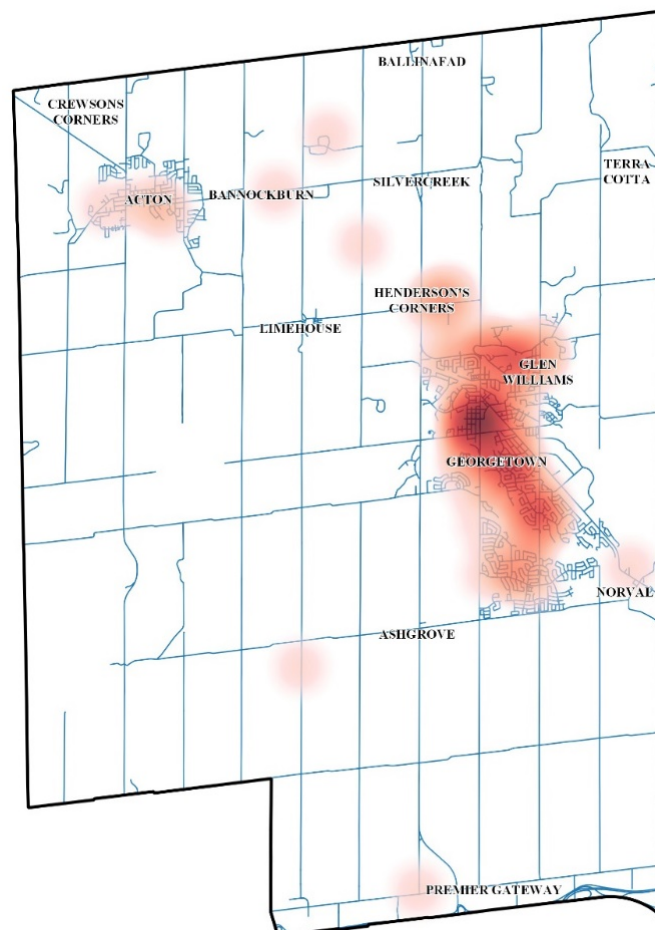


Figure 5. Location of Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1 where participants' addresses were provided.

The first online survey contained questions designed to first broadly understand views, values, and relationships with trees and tree canopy. For example, approximately 87% of all survey participants identified that managing privately-owned trees in Halton Hills is very or somewhat important.

## 12. How important is managing privately-owned trees in Halton Hills?

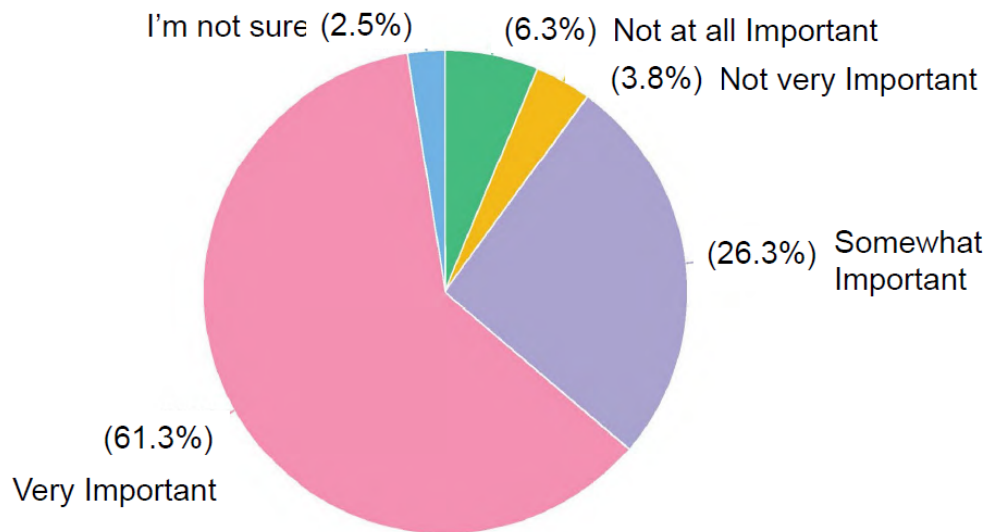


Figure 6. Typical question to establish community values - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

Second, on familiarity with existing education, incentive, and regulation tree management tools currently available to private landowners in Halton Hills (e.g., Town of Halton Hills Earth Day Tree Sale, Conservation Authority incentive and education programs, and Halton Region Tree By-law). Most survey participants were familiar with the Town's Earth Day Tree Sale and giveaways, with over half participating in the program. Conversely, only half of the survey participants were knowledgeable of the Halton Region Tree By-law or available Conservation Authority programs.

## 18. Did you know that any resident of Halton Hills may buy a tree or pick up free compost or mulch from the Town on Earth Day?

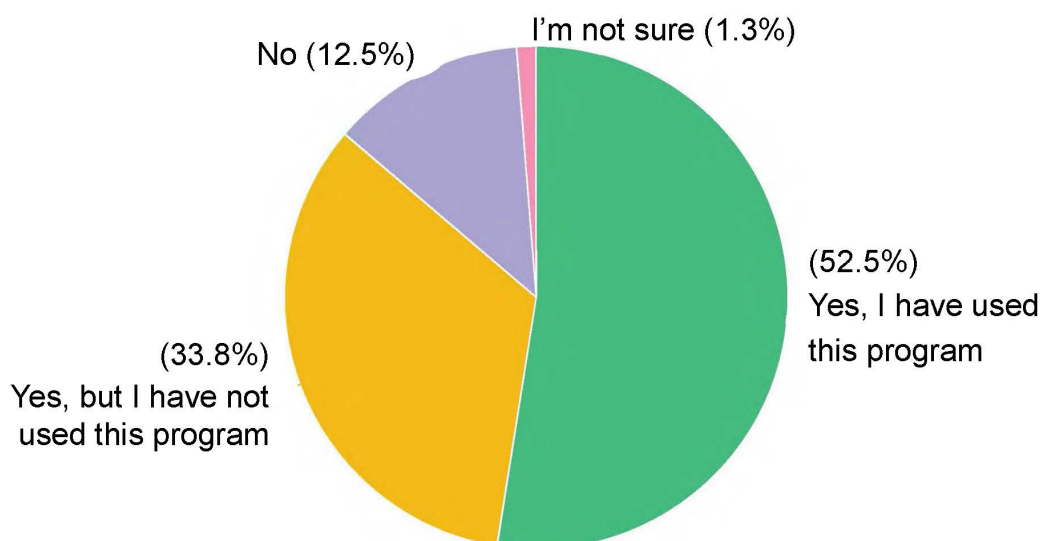


Figure 7. Typical question to establish familiarity with existing education, incentive, and regulations in Halton Hills - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.



Third, the questions directly asked how to best protect and enhance the privately-owned component of the tree canopy. Support was highest for education-based tree management programs at 70%. When the contributors selected any of the three categories, a pop-up question requiring a written response would ask “to describe or give examples of education programs you think would work best” if yes was selected. “Why do you think that education programs are not a good idea” if no was selected; or qualifying the maybe response by “expand on your answer”.

## 24. Do you think that an education program is a good way to support the protection and enhancement of the privately-owned tree canopy in Halton Hills?

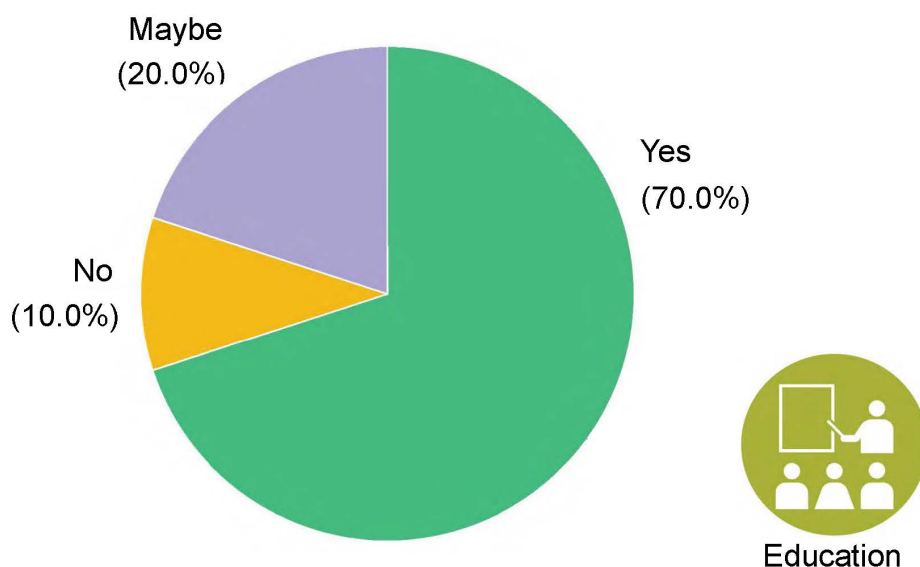


Figure 8. Community response to question asking if education is a good way to support the protection and enhancement of the privately-owned tree canopy - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

“No” written responses ranged from stating that: 1) education programs are a waste of tax dollars, 2) the government shouldn't have any oversight on private lands, 3) people that are pre-disposed to planting or removing trees on their property will do it anyway without the government's assistance and, 4) that money would be better spent on regulations.

“Maybe” written responses were qualified by stating that: 1) it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of any education program, 2) questioning if education would actually change people's decision to plant or remove trees, 3) education programs don't go far enough and if change is to happen people need boundaries and enforcement. That support would be dependent on the how any education program is managed, communicated, the cost, and how it is different from what is offered today.

“Yes” written responses, were organized into similar themes and are summarized in Figure 9.



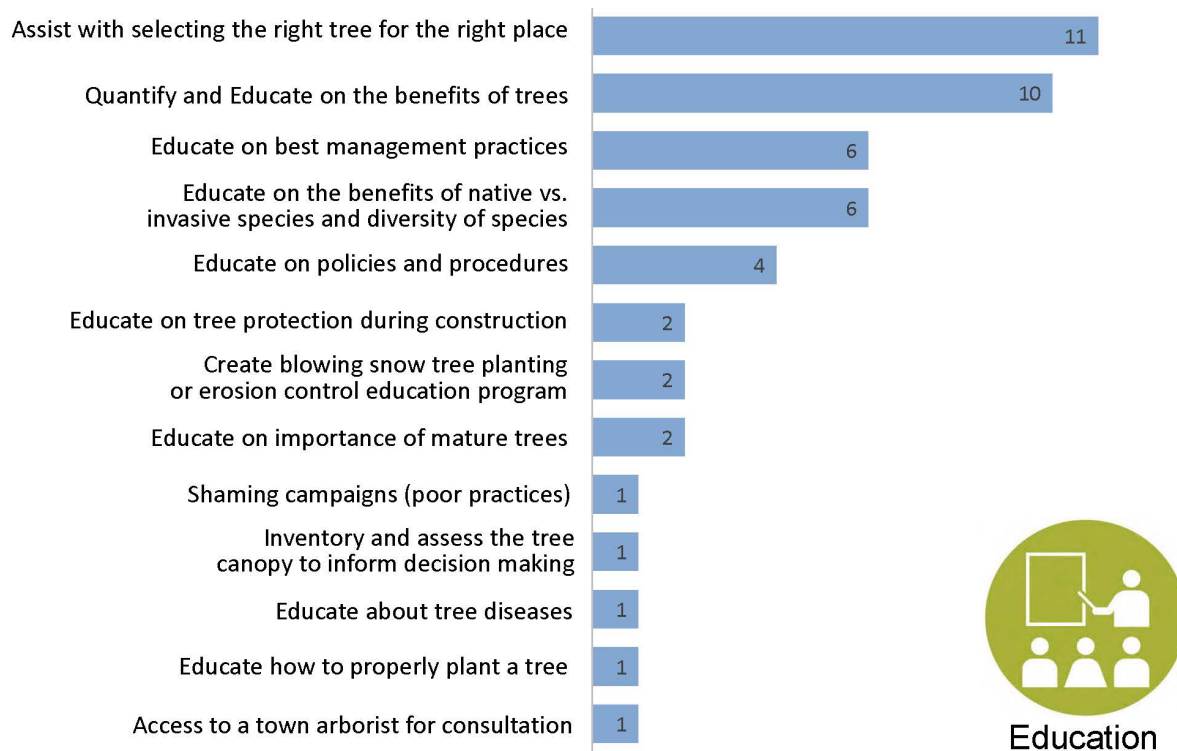


Figure 9. Summary of community values, views, and ideas to protect and enhance the tree canopy when asked to describe or give examples of education programs that would work best - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

There is a slight change in support for incentive programs at 61%. Again, all contributors qualified their responses.

**28. Do you think that providing incentives to landowners is a good way to support the protection and enhancement of the privately-owned tree canopy in Halton Hills?**

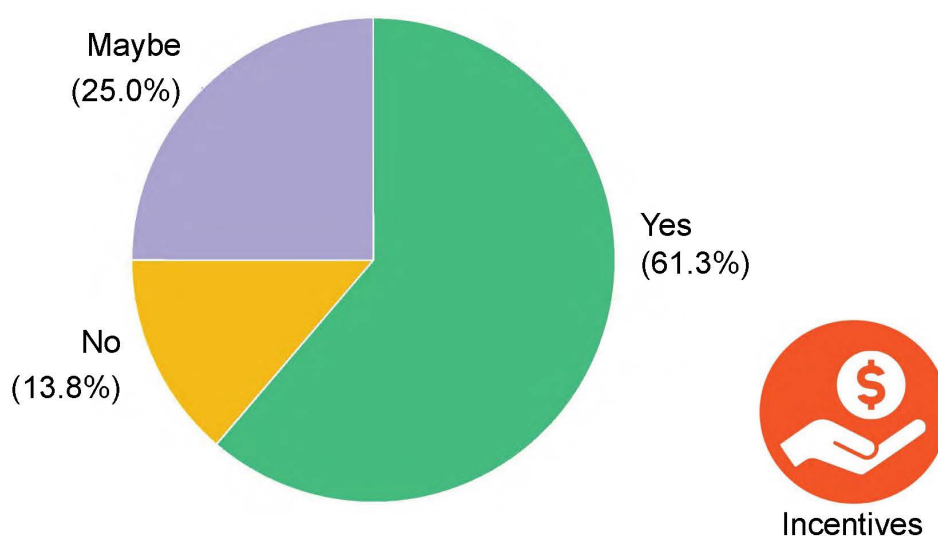


Figure 10. Community response to question asking if incentives are a good way to support the protection and enhancement of the privately-owned tree canopy - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

“No” written responses ranged from stating that: 1) the cost of any improvement on private land should be borne by the landowner not general taxpayer funds, 2) that landowners should be planting trees for more than financial gain and, 3) people shouldn’t need to be paid to protect the environment.

“Maybe” written responses were qualified by stating that: 1) the funding source has an impact on community support for any financial based incentive and, 2) money is better spent on education because most people want to do the right thing anyway.

“Yes” written responses, were organized into similar themes and are summarized in Figure 11.

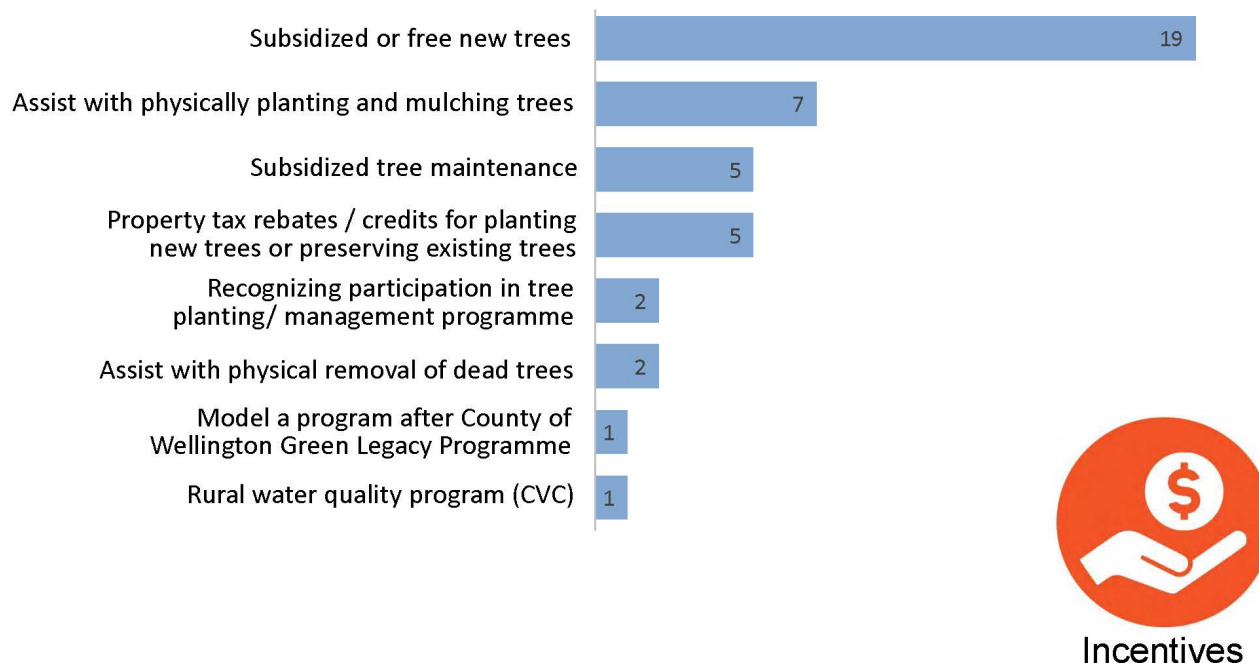


Figure 11. Summary of community values, views, and ideas to protect and enhance the tree canopy when asked to describe or give examples of incentive programs that would work best - Let’s Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

The support for regulation is divided amongst contributors. Insight into the written responses helps interpret this division.

**32. Do you think that regulations are a good way to help protect and enhance the privately-owned tree canopy in Halton Hills?**

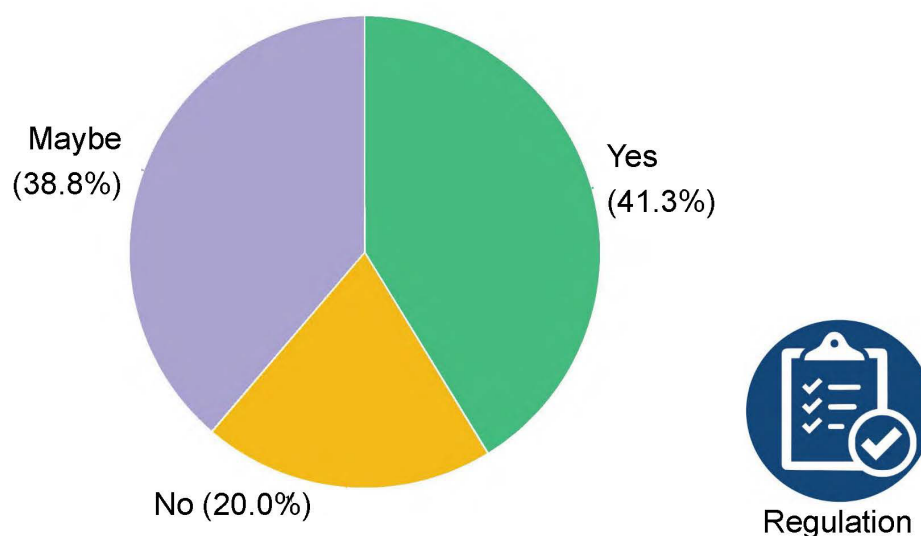


Figure 12. Community response to question asking if regulation is a good way to support the protection and enhancement of the privately-owned tree canopy - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

“No” written responses ranged from stating that: 1) administering regulations are a waste of tax dollars, 2) by-laws don't work, 3) there is no need to overcomplicate or overregulate, 4) that the town does not need to follow in the footsteps of larger adjacent municipalities and, 5) property owners right of self-determination should be respected.

“Maybe” written responses were qualified by stating that: 1) enforcement of any regulation is challenging, 2) monitoring and measuring is important to ensure that goals are being met, 3) any regulation needs a well thought out education component for community buy-in, 4) that any by-law needs be simple, applied fairly to developers and homeowners, part of a balanced approach and, 5) community support is highly dependent on the details of any regulation.

“Yes” written responses, were organized into similar themes and are summarized in Figure 13.

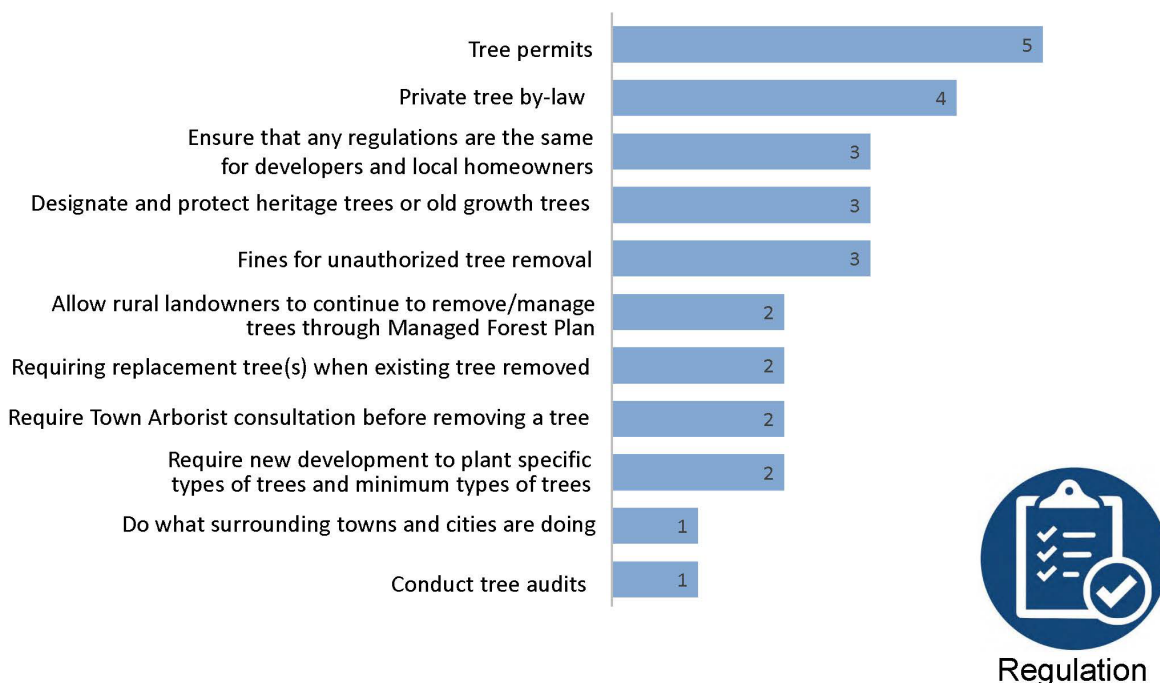


Figure 13. Summary of community values, views, and ideas to protect and enhance the tree canopy when asked to describe or give examples of regulation programs that would work best - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

The four examples from online survey written responses in Figure 14 range from strong statements to protect and regulate all trees; conversely, strong statements were also made prioritizing property rights over government oversight. Some contributors stated that the community has been managing the tree canopy just fine and others provided nuanced statements identifying the opportunities and constraints for different types of management tools.



Figure 14. Range of written community responses - Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1.

The complete results of the first Online Survey, including all written responses can be viewed in Attachment 2.



## 2.3 Community Open House and Workshop

The next engagement opportunity was held on March 3, 2021 at Town Hall. The Open House and Workshop were advertised on the Town’s website, targeted social media posts, print ads in the local newspaper, local newsletters as well as direct emails to local business, community groups, and agencies. Members of the community were asked to pre-register for the Open House and Workshop. Any community members that did not pre-register were still admitted to participate.



Figure 15. Community Open House and Workshop.

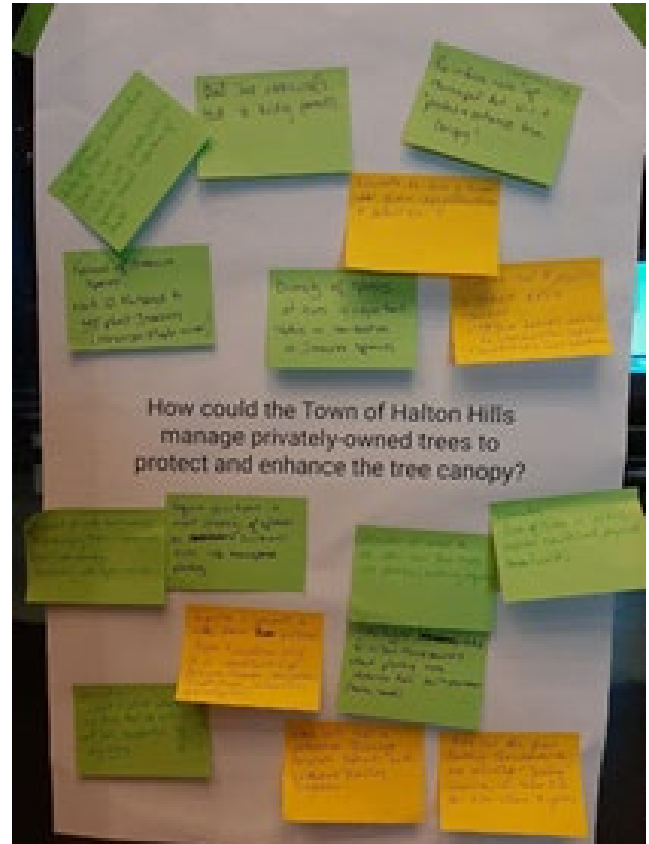


Figure 16. An example of a breakout group sticky paper views, values, and ideas poster from the Community Open House and Workshop.

Poster boards with tree canopy cover mapping and analysis were available to browse. A presentation highlighting enabling legislation and tree canopy cover data provided context for the breakout sessions where groups of four or five people shared their values, views, and specific ideas with a facilitator who recorded the conversations on sticky notes. Conversations were guided by the question, “How could the Town of Halton Hills manage privately-owned trees to protect and enhance the tree canopy?” The Open House was attended by 27 people, including members of Town Council, local residents, builders, business owners, and conservation authority staff.

In-person attendance at the Open House may have been impacted by COVID-19 prior to being declared a pandemic. On March 17, 2020 the province declared a state of emergency and by the end of March 2020, the closure of all non-essential businesses and a shutdown of all outdoor amenities. From March 2020 forward, all community engagement opportunities were completed virtually to comply with provincial orders, local public health guidelines, and municipal COVID-19 policies and procedures.

Content presented at the Open House and on Workshop boards can be viewed in Attachments 3 and 4. Digital versions of each breakout group's sticky paper poster can be viewed in Attachment 5.

## 2.4 Virtual Town Council Workshop 1

On May 4, 2020, a Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy Virtual Workshop was held for Town Council to update, inform, review, and identify support for preferred tree management tools to be further refined.

Council viewed a presentation that summarized the community engagement to-date and then completed a Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy Survey on Let's Talk Halton Hills to identify and prioritize preferred tree management tools. Each of the education, incentive, and regulation management tool options in the survey were generated entirely through community engagement from the responses collected on the public survey on Let's Talk and the Open House/Workshop held on March 3, 2020, at Town Hall.

### Education-Based Tree Management Tools

The frequency of education-based management tools preferred by Town Council and frequency of tools identified during community engagement are generally aligned. The only discrepancy is Town Council's preference to evaluate providing access to a Town arborist for consultation.

**Graph 1 - Top Four Education Tools Selected by Town Council**

Management Tool	Respondents											Frequency
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Assist with selecting the right tree for the right place												6
Quantify and Educate on the benefits of trees												5 (tie)
Educate on best management practices												7 (tie)
Educate on the benefits of native vs. invasive species and diversity of species												4
Educate on policies and procedures												5 (tie)
Educate on tree protection during construction												3
Create blowing snow tree planting or erosion control education program												1
Educate on importance of mature trees												4
Shaming campaigns (poor practices)												0
Inventory and assess the tree canopy to inform decision making												2
Educate about tree diseases												0
Access to Town Arborist for consultation												7 (tie)

Figure 17. Education management tools selected as preferred during Virtual Town Council Workshop 1.

## Incentive-Based Tree Management Tools

Results have shown a strong frequency of support for subsidized or free new tree incentive-based management tool by community engagement and Town Council. In addition, Town Council preferred participation in tree planting/management programs tool most often. The remaining frequencies of incentive-based tools selected by Town Council were inverse to the frequency identified during community engagement.

**Graph 2- Top Four Incentive Tools Selected by Town Council**

Management Tool	Respondents											Frequency
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Subsidized or free new trees												8
Assist with physically planting and mulching trees												3
Subsidized tree maintenance												3
Property tax rebates /credits for planting new trees or preserving existing trees												4 (tie)
Recognizing participation in tree planting/management programme												9
Assist with physical removal of dead trees												4 (tie)
Model a program after County of Wellington Green Legacy Programme												7
Rural water quality program (CVC)												4 (tie)

Figure 18. Incentive mangagement tools selected as preferred during Virtual Town Council Workshop 1.

## Regulation-Based Tree Management Tools

The frequency of preferred regulation-based management tools selected by Town Council is spread evenly across potential tools identified during community engagement, without a strong indication of one preferred tool. Conspicuously absent from the collective preferred tools selected by Town Council are Tree Permits and a Private Tree By-law, the top two tools identified during community engagement. However, a draft Private Tree By-law was to be one of the key deliverables defined in the terms of reference for the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy.

Following a July 27, 2020 special council meeting where Town Council was provided with an update on the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy, it was determined by the Office of the CAO that the strategy should continue to explore a Private Tree By-law and permitting processes as part of the strategy.

**Graph 3 - Top Four Regulation Tools Selected by Town Council**

Management Tool	Respondents											Frequency
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Tree permits												2
Private tree by-law												3
Ensure that any regulations are the for developers and local homeowners												6
Designate and protect heritage trees or old growth trees												5 (tie)
Fines for unauthorized tree removal												5 (tie)
Allow rural landowners to continue to remove/manage trees through Managed Forest Plan												4
Requiring replacement tree(s) when existing tree removed												5 (tie)
Require Town Arborist consultation before removing a tree												5 (tie)
Require new development to plant specific types of trees and minimum types of trees												7
Do what other surrounding towns and cities are doing												0
Conduct tree audits												0

Figure 19. Incentive mangagement tools selected as preferred during Virtual Town Council Workshop

1. Content presented at the Virtual Town Council Workshop can be viewed in Attachment 6.

## 2.5 Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2

A second online survey was hosted on Let's Talk Halton Hills from November 3 to December 3, 2020. The Online Survey was advertised on the Town's website, targeted social media posts, print ads in the local newspaper, local newsletters as well as direct emails to local business, community groups, and agencies. 49 persons contributed to the survey, Figure 20 depicts the distribution of engagement participants that provided their address as part of the Online Survey.



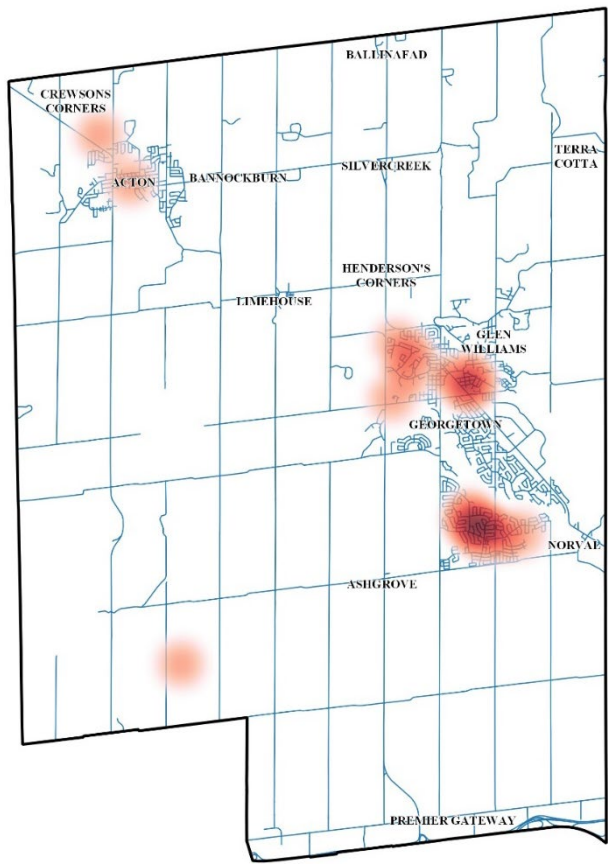


Figure 20. Location of Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2 participants where addresses were provided.

From September 2019 to March 2020, the community provided input on how privately-owned trees could be managed in Halton Hills. This feedback was collected through face-to face consultation at farmers' markets in Acton and Georgetown, a public workshop at Town Hall, and a survey on Let's Talk. 31 community ideas were collected and broadly categorized into education, incentive, and regulation management tools.

In May 2020, Town Council participated in a workshop to review the community generated ideas and narrowed down to 17 preferred tools that would work to best protect and enhance the tree canopy and vegetation in Halton Hills.

The project team evaluated all preferred ideas and developed 13 education, incentive, and regulation-based scenarios that describe potential ways that the Town could manage privately-owned trees together with potential costs involved to implement. Each scenario states a desired outcome, proposes a solution to meet that outcome, then begins to describe some of the key details in that solution. Figure 21 is an example of a typical scenario included in the Online Survey.



**Recognition Program \$**

It would be nice to reward positive behaviour that inspires others. I think we should celebrate the individuals and organizations in our community that have a sustained record of protecting and enhancing trees in Halton Hills. This could take the form of an awards program promoted by the Town.

This recognition program would require setting up a committee comprised of members of Town Council and community representatives, a nomination and evaluation process, communications program, and an award ceremony format. Alternatives to traditional certificates could be awards crafted by local artists or a tree planting dedication ceremony.

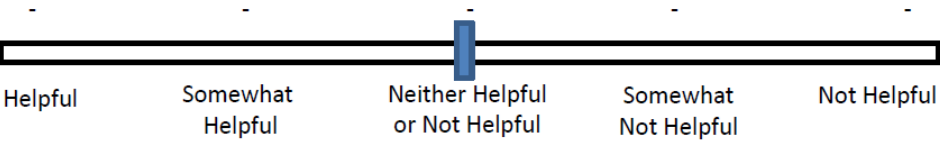


Figure 21. Typical scenario in Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2.

As the participants completed the survey, they were asked to keep in mind:

- 1) Think about how helpful each tool could be in protecting and enhancing trees on their property.
- 2) Then consider which education, incentive, and regulation scenario could be the most effective in protecting and enhancing privately-owned trees in Halton Hills.
- 3) Elaborate on each response in writing.

Figures 22, 23, and 24 summarize the responses to the question of “which scenario could be the most effective in protecting and enhancing privately-owned trees” for education, incentive, and regulation-based scenarios.

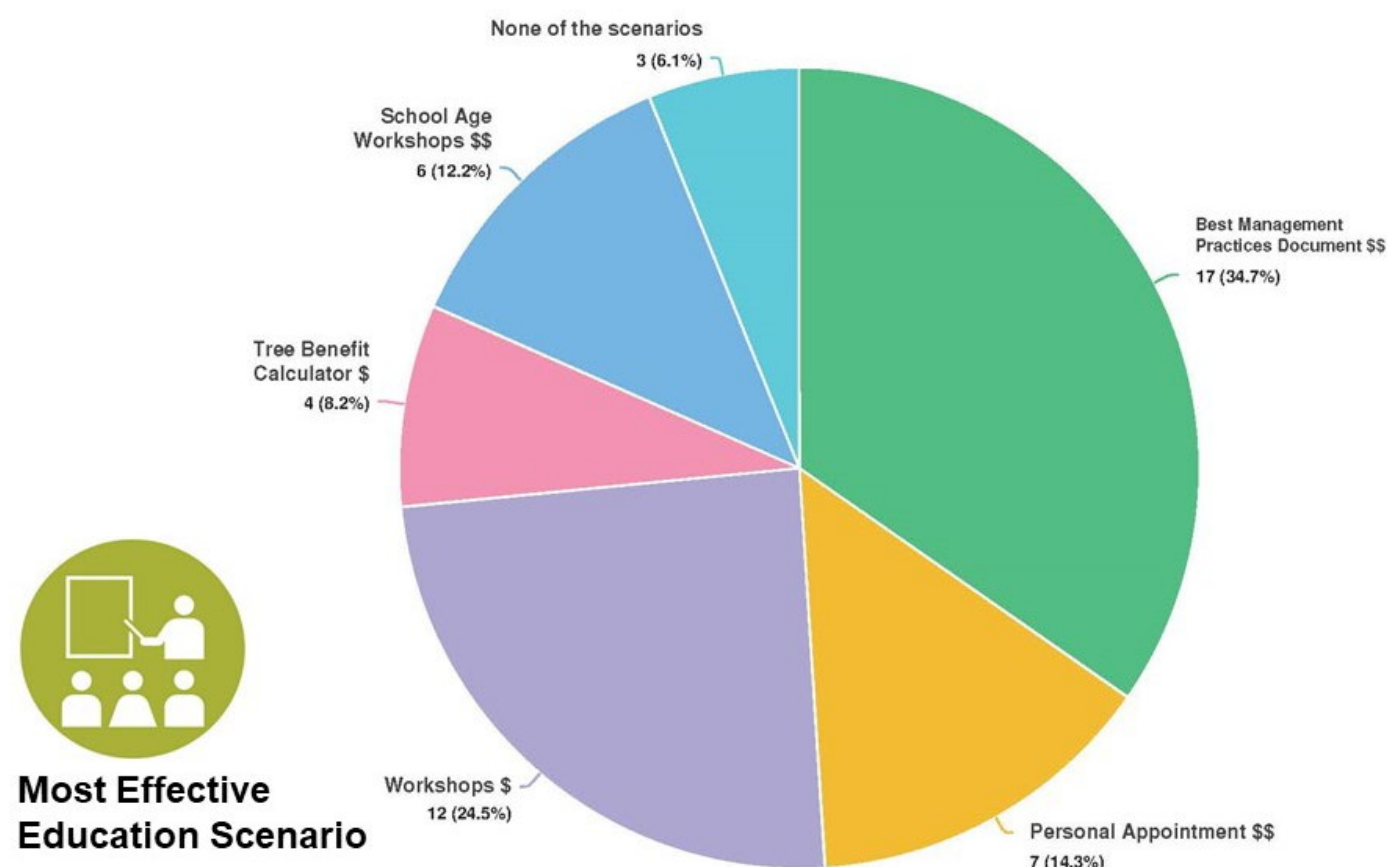


Figure 22. Summary of community responses to the question of “which education scenario could be the most effective in protecting and enhancing privately-owned trees in Halton Hills” - Let’s Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2.

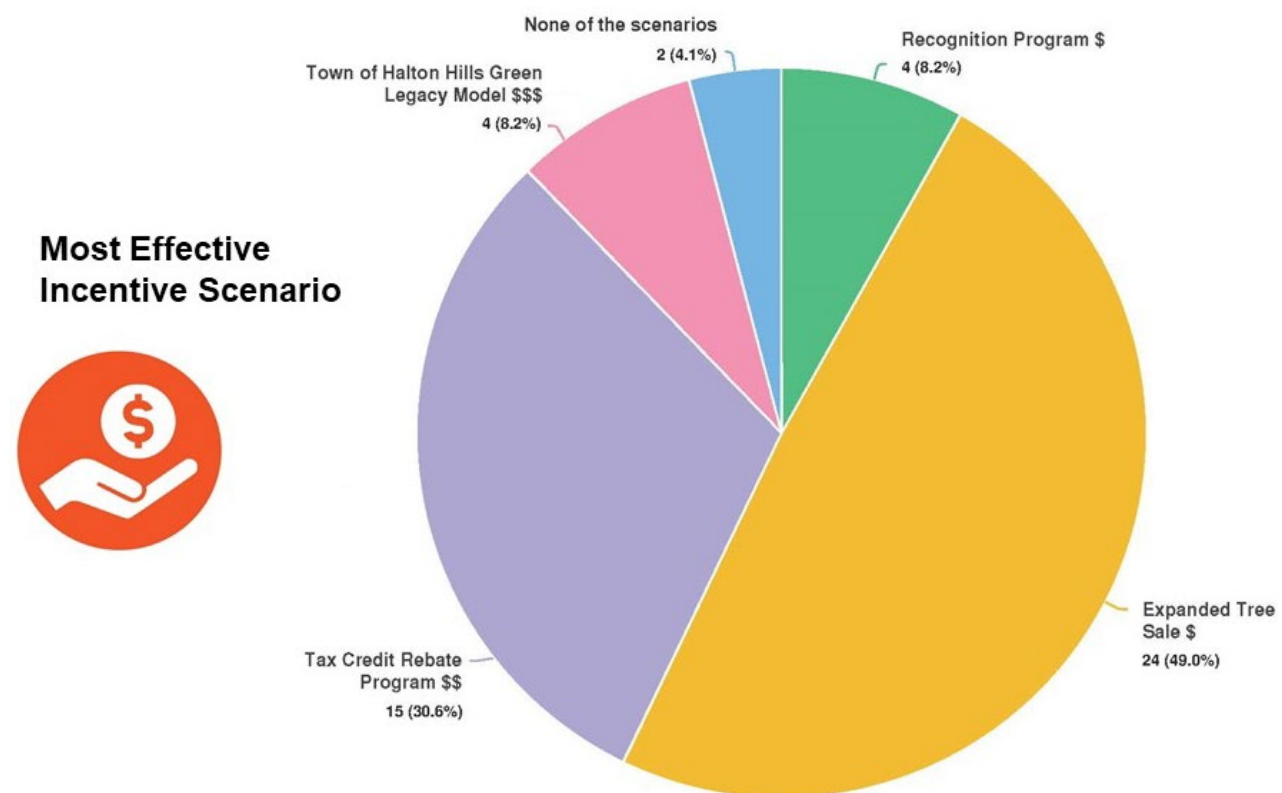


Figure 23. Summary of community responses to the question of “which incentive scenario could be the most effective in protecting and enhancing privately-owned trees in Halton Hills” - Let’s Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2.

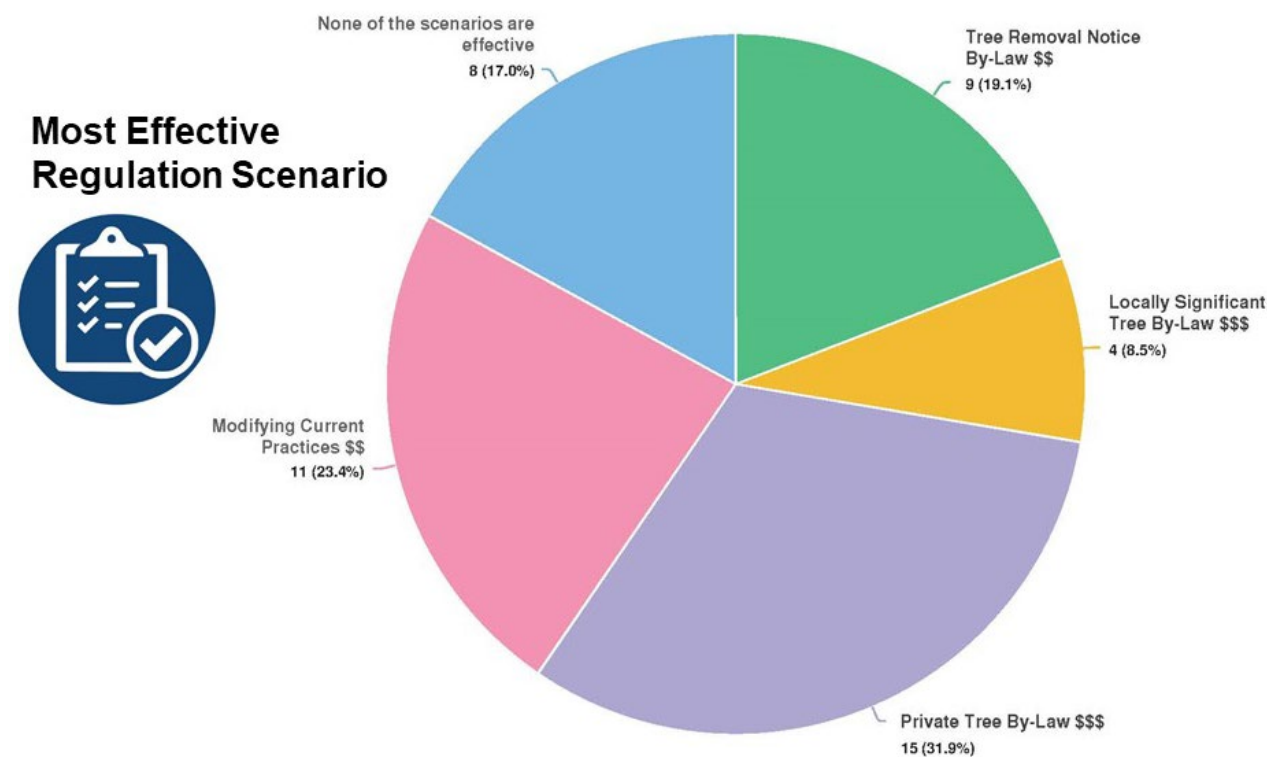


Figure 24. Summary of community responses to the question of “which regulation scenario could be the most effective in protecting and enhancing privately-owned trees in Halton Hills” - Let’s Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2.

Community responses to the scenarios have informed the tree management tools included in this strategy and the recommended timelines to implement each tool. Results of the second online survey hosted on Let's Talk Halton Hills can be viewed in Attachment 8.

## **2.6 Virtual Town Council Workshop 2**

The second Virtual Town Council Workshop was held on February 8, 2021. The project team updated Town Council on project status and the results of the second Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey. A Town Council did not provide specific direction on which tree management tools to be included in the draft strategy. General feedback provided during the discussion period has been incorporated into the strategy. In addition, Town Council requested the project team to provide additional information for the by-law regulation management tool scenarios presented.

Content presented at the Second Virtual Town Council Workshop can be viewed in Attachment 9.

## **2.7 Virtual Town Council Workshop 3**

A review of recent Private Tree By-law implementation in communities across Ontario found that these by-laws are often the most debated management tool. For example, the City of Burlington adopted a Private Tree By-law 10 years following the initial recommendation in the Urban Forest Management Plan. The City of St. Catharines has brought the intent to adopt a Private Tree By-law in 2014 and 2019 to the community. In both situations, the Private Tree By-law was not supported based on community feedback. Finally, the City of Peterborough had adopted a Private Tree By-law in 2017 that was repealed in 2019 due to resident and local arborist concerns.

The project team presented a comparative analysis of Private Tree By-laws in other municipalities in Ontario, the recommended by-law framework, and the recommended key attributes, such as tree size, regulation area, and permit application process, to incorporate in a made in Halton Hills Private Tree By-law.

Content presented at the third Virtual Town Council Workshop can be viewed in Attachment 10.

## **2.8 Community Review Draft Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy**

The draft strategy and background reports were available on Let's Talk Halton Hills for two weeks at the end of November 2021 for community review and comment. No comments were provided.



# Attachment 1

## Pop-Up Engagement Sessions **Community Response Summary**

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## Attachment 2

# Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 1 **Community Response Summary**

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## **Attachment 3**

# **Community Open House and Workshop Presentation**

**Engage**



## **Attachment 4**

# **Community Open House and Workshop Display Boards**

**Engage**





## **Attachment 5**

# **Community Open House and Workshop Community Response Summary**

**Engage**



# **Attachment 6**

## **Virtual Town Council Workshop 1 Presentation**

**Engage**



# **Attachment 7**

## **Virtual Town Council Workshop 1 Town Council Response Summary**

**Engage**



## Attachment 8

# Let's Talk Halton Hills Online Survey 2 **Community Response Summary**

**Engage**



# **Attachment 9**

## **Virtual Town Council Workshop 2 Presentation**

**Engage**





# **Attachment 10**

## **Virtual Town Council Workshop 3 Presentation**

**Engage**



# **Attachment 11**

## **Virtual Town Council Workshop 3 Town Council Responses**

**Engage**



## **Attachment 12**

# **Community Review Draft Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy Community Response Summary**

**Engage**



