

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

**FROM:** Beverley King, Manager of Community and Adult Services

**DATE:** May 1, 2018

**MEMORANDUM NO.:** LIB-2018-0004

**RE:** Halton Hills Public Library's Seed Library Program

### **PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:**

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise Community and Corporate Affairs on the launch of the Seed Library program at the Halton Hills Public Library in partnership with the Georgetown Farmers' Market, the Town of Halton Hills Office of Sustainability, and the Acton Community Garden.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Town of Halton Hills and its citizens place a high value on sustainability, environmental stewardship, and community involvement. A partnership between the Town of Halton Hills and numerous community stakeholders resulted in the March 2013 Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy – Imagine Halton Hills, with the aim of “achieving cultural vibrancy, economic prosperity, environmental health, and social equity in our community.”

Many grass roots community groups and municipal organizations are actively involved in sustainability activities throughout the Halton Region, and are eager to embrace innovative and dynamic projects that foster community sustainability goals. The Halton Hills Public Library's Seed Library initiative embraces the values shared by these groups, and has received tremendous community support throughout the consultation process.

## **COMMENTS:**

### **What is a Seed Library?**

Seed libraries are public library-led initiatives in which seeds are borrowed by community members, free of charge, from a shared repository. Seed libraries also encourage the return or donations of seeds harvested from plants grown from borrowed seeds in order to promote sustainability, improve local biodiversity, and foster a sense of shared community.

Seed libraries in Ontario public libraries follow a similar set of criteria. Each library creates a set of guidelines to be followed by patrons and staff as well as promotional materials that provide information about seed saving. Most libraries partner with local environmental organizations, horticultural societies, personal and business donors to fund the initial seed collection. There are currently over 35 seed libraries in Ontario.

### **What are the benefits?**

Seed Libraries provide many physical, emotional, and financial benefits for communities and their citizens. They encourage food security and diversity; self-reliance; sustainability; economic responsibility; and a holistic sense of community and purpose. The Seed Library initiative allows the Halton Hills Public Library (HHPL) to expand its services, resources, and programs further into the community and create meaningful partnerships with key community organizations. Library staff have partnered with the Georgetown Farmers' Market, the Town of Halton Hills' Office of Sustainability, and the Acton Community Garden to secure the necessary start-up equipment for the seed libraries to be implemented in both the Georgetown and Acton branches.

The Seed Library aligns with the Georgetown Farmers' Market's mission to connect with the local community, support local farmers, and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. As the Georgetown Farmer's Market is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> year in 2018, this is an excellent opportunity to celebrate Downtown Georgetown and HHPL as a community hub and innovation centre.

It also aligns with the Town of Halton Hills Office of Sustainability's four pillars: cultural vibrancy, economic prosperity, environmental health, and social well-being. The Library's partnership with the Office of Sustainability has allowed us to implement the Seed Library in our Acton branch, and collaborate with the Acton Community Garden to provide a space for their organization to share knowledge.

**RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The Seed Library aligns with the Halton Hills Public Library's Strategic Plan goal to raise residents' awareness of the Library's many non-traditional, innovative programs and services.

The Seed Library initiative directly aligns with one of the Town's top eight strategic priorities: sustainability. This new service is designed to enhance our ability to collaborate with community partners, encourage social sustainability, and maintain and support the Town Sustainability Implementation Committee. It also aligns with the Town's strategic goals to foster a healthy community and to foster a prosperous economy.

**CONSULTATION:**

Staff consulted with other Library systems that have launched similar services including the Halifax Public Library, Toronto Public Library, Idea Exchange, Burlington Public Library, Oxford County Library, Grimsby Public Library and Orangeville Public Library. Staff also consulted with community organizations including the Georgetown Horticultural Society, Acton Horticultural Society, Friends of the Old Seed House Garden, Town of Halton Hills Office of Sustainability, and the Acton Community Garden.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The Seed Library will launch at the Georgetown Branch in conjunction with the first Georgetown Farmer's Market of the season on Saturday June 2, 2018. The Seed Library at the Acton Branch will launch on Wednesday June 13, 2018 at the Town of Halton Hills Office of Sustainability BBQ. The Seed Library is free to all community members, and will be available at both branches of the Halton Hills Public Library, year-round. Programming plans are underway for the summer and include:

- participation with the Georgetown Farmer's Market from June to October, 2018
- participation with the Town of Halton Hills Office of Sustainability events
- partnering with the staff sustainability group at the Town Hall Garden, and the volunteers at the Acton Community Garden to invite community members to assist with the planning, planting, and maintenance of new and existing on- and off-site community gardens
- seed saving and gardening workshops
- lectures on biodiversity (pollination; local/invasive plants; GMOs)
- youth programming on planting seeds and maintaining gardens
- participation in National Seed Swap Days and annual Seedy Saturday's
- accessibility and enabling gardens

## CONCLUSION:

By facilitating free access to Seed Libraries for all residents of the Town of Halton Hills, the Library continues to support the community's sustainability initiatives, environmental stewardship efforts, and overall well-being. Accessibility to community Seed Libraries in both branches enhances the library's compliment of non-traditional, innovative resources, programs, and services.

Through partnerships with local organizations and community groups, the Seed Library initiative will have a significant impact for all residents seeking to live in a sustainable, conscientious, and caring community.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Cannon', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Geoff Cannon, Director of Library Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Marshall', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Brent Marshall, CAO