

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

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DATE	19 August 1997
TO/DEST.	Co-ordinator, Transportation Committee
FROM/EXP.	Director, Infrastructure Maintenance Division
SUBJECT/OBJET	MEADOWS FOR MILLIONS - AN INITIATIVE TO PLANT DAFFODILS ON REGIONAL RIGHTS OF WAY

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Transportation Committee receive the attached proposal for information and recommend Council approve:

- 1. The establishment of a partnership with Meadows for Millions, a non-profit volunteer organization representing the Canadian Cancer Society and the Hospice of All Saints who, as part of their annual fund raising drive wish to plant Narcissus (daffodil) bulbs;**
- 2. Regional staff entering into negotiations with Meadows for Millions to address the corporate signage issue and prepare an agreement that would allow an exception under the existing sign by-law for this initiative.**

BACKGROUND

Regional staff have been approached by Meadow for Millions, a non-profit volunteer organization representing the Canadian Cancer Society and the Hospice of All Saints to discuss the feasibility of utilizing Regional rights-of-way for the planting of narcissus (daffodil) bulbs. The intent of Meadows for Millions is to manage the modification of the annual fund-raising of drives of both organizations and replace the use of cut daffodils with the sale of live bulbs. They will be planted at pre-selected locations along the Region's roadway arterials as a joint roadside beautification and fund raising effort. Although at this time the effort is being discussed on a trial basis, if successful, the program would be repeated annually to augment the number of bulbs in each bed or to add additional locations.

Target locations for use as suitable planting beds could be corners of intersections outside snow disposal areas, widened road allowances, areas difficult to maintain due to steep slopes and locations such as Regional Headquarters. Site selection for suitable locations will also have to consider the soil conditions and any underground obstructions such as utilities.

DISCUSSION

The bulbs would be planted by volunteers co-ordinated and under the control and supervision of Meadow for Millions who would also be responsible for the purchasing of the bulbs from a suitable supplier. The placement of bulbs, site selection, varieties of bulbs and all technical, logistical and horticultural decisions will be under the authority of the Regional Forester.

The planting technique to be employed by the volunteers would require them to throw the bulbs on the turf area in a random fashion and they are planted where they land approximately 20 cm deep with 2-3 bulbs per hole.

Horticulturally, the practice has been seen in the Capital for many years through the National Capital Commission's spring bulb display and the potential exists to "tap in" to the spring festival by promoting these sites. An advantage from the Region's perspective is the scope we can provide by providing planting locations in areas outside the traditional Spring Festival locales of Dow's Lake, the downtown core and the Rockcliffe Rockeries.

An outstanding issue from the perspective of the organizers, who will be seeking corporate sponsorship for the initiative, is the use of signage. The use of signs to illustrate the commitment of the sponsoring organization is seen as key to their involvement. Regional staff have informed the organization of the current policy regarding signs which would allow temporary signs, sandwich boards, erected in the vicinity of the display during the flowering season only. (mid-April to mid-May dependent upon weather conditions). As indicated in their proposal this issue has not yet been resolved.

CONSULTATION

Meadows for Millions has corresponded with several potential corporate sponsors including BDO Dunwoody and several meetings have taken place between Regional staff and both the Hospice of All Saints and the Canadian Cancer Society. Both these organizations are in support of the initiative and the Meadows for Millions' involvement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The major modification for Regional staff is that the turf areas where the bulbs are planted cannot be cut until mid-July thus allowing the bulbs sufficient time after flowering in May to go dormant. This will result in patches of long grass which will be cut mid-summer by Regional staff through the regular mowing cycle. Therefore it is anticipated that the financial effect on the Region will be the involvement of staff time for retraining and administration.

*Approved by
W.S. Beveridge, P.Eng.*

**MEADOWS FOR MILLIONS
OUR PROPOSAL**

Our Proposal

This document outlines our proposal to the Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton (RMOC). We have conducted months of research, examined numerous options, held discussions with potential corporate sponsors, and established an excellent team of volunteer professionals who are eager to start implementing the project in partnership with RMOC and BDO Dunwoody.

The ideal time for the first two planting of flowering plants and shrubs would be late October early November. We would like to meet in August 1997 so as to have an agreement to proceed by the first week of September.

This proposal is presented as a discussion paper. We would like to have the opportunity to meet with decision makers in RMOC and determine how Meadows for Millions can be implemented.

Your contacts for Meadows for Millions are:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mandate

Meadows for Millions is a non profit volunteer organization whose mission is to assist recognized charities such as the Canadian Cancer Society and the Hospice of All Saints. This will be accomplished by raising funds from corporate sponsors and the general public through the planting of perennial flowering plants and shrubs along regional right-of ways.

Other Charities

Meadows for Millions will work with other charities that also wish to undertake fundraising activities through similar activities along regional right-of-ways.

Cooperation With RMOC

Meadows for Millions, in close cooperation with the Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton (RMOC) would identify planting locations and coordinate public and corporate activities.

Meadows for Millions would like to be the official coordinating organization between RMOC and other charities wishing to plant along regional roadways.

Significant Benefits

This undertaking will provide significant benefits:

- RMOC will save operating and maintenance costs by not having to tend the grass in the meadows planted by Meadows for Millions;
- RMOC will be able to reduce the amount of flowing plants and shrubs they plant as Meadows for Millions increases the number of hectares they plant;
- The increased beautification of the region through the planting of large portions of the regional right-of-ways; and Funds will be generated for charities through public and corporate participation. By the fifth year we anticipate that a minimum of 20 sites would be planted with perennial flowering plants and shrubs, generating in 2003 about \$225,000 annually for the charities.

Note: Meadows for Millions would have the capacity to manage the planting of more than 50 sites by the year 2003. However, we have based projected revenues upon 20 sites and not 50 which would be a maximum.

Corporate Sponsor Requirements

The project is dependent upon corporate sponsors. We have met with a number of potential sponsors and the key to success is the ability to place signage at the site where the perennials will be planted. The signage requirement is not for billboards, but rather a low linear sign that blends into the landscape.

Corporate Partners

Meadows for Millions is seeking two corporate partners:

- RMOG - we would work hand in hand with RMOG which is offered a seat on Meadows for Millions Board of Directors; and
- BDO Dunwoody has been approached to be Meadows for Millions auditor and corporate advisor. BDO Dunwoody has attended a number of Meadows for Millions with the Canadian Cancer Society and the Hospice for All Saints.

Long Term Maintenance

The long term maintenance of the sites will be assured through corporate revenues as the firm will have to pay an initial fee for the site and then an ongoing 'maintenance fee' during subsequent years.

All revenues generated through public participation will go directly to the charities. A portion of the revenues generated by the corporate sponsors be used to repair frost and water damage to the planted areas.

SECTION ONE OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT

Background

There is a history of planting perennial flowering plants and shrubs within the National Capital Region. The photo on the cover of this proposal is one such site along the Ottawa river. These plants thrive in our region, providing beautiful drifts of colour alongside our roads and parks.

Through the synergy of energetic individuals, with their experience in agronomy, fundraising, municipal affairs, charities and project coordination, coupled with their knowledge of somewhat similar ideas being put into practice in other areas, came the idea and mission statement:

Mission Statement

Assist recognized charities such as the Canadian Cancer Society and the Hospice of All Saints. This will be accomplished by raising funds from corporate sponsors and the general public through the planting of perennial flowering plants and shrubs along regional right-of ways.

From this nucleus of concerned individuals came the idea to start Meadows for Millions and to implement the mission statement.

Initial Charities

The Canadian Society and Ottawa's Hospice for All Saints were involved from the inception of the idea. They agreed with the mission statement, the need to establish Meadows for Millions, and to establish a working relationship with RMOC.

Meadows for Millions has established a relationship with these two charitable organizations.

Note: Additional charities would be encouraged to participate, starting in the second or third year of operations, after the operational bugs have been worked out.

SECTION TWO RMOC CORPORATE PARTNER

Working In Partnership

Our objective is to establish a partnership with RMOC. Meadows for Millions would like to be RMOC's preferred partner with Meadows for Millions being the organization responsible for coordinating all planting activities on RMOC right-of-ways.

Partnership Agreement

Some of the elements of the partnership agreement between RMOC and Meadows for Millions would include:

- How the sites would be selected for planting;
- RMOC's role in coordinating municipal responsibilities for the overseeing of planting by Meadows for Millions;
- RMOC's requirements to ensure that bylaws and public safety are respected;
- Joint development of programs for site preparation;
- RMOC's participation in media and communications plans;
- Meadows for Millions responsibilities for planting of the perennial flowering plants and shrubs and their replacement due to frost and water damage;
- Meadows for Millions' role in coordinating the charities and their planting projects;
- RMOC's participation in Meadows for Millions' Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board; and
- All other items which the two organizations see as necessary to establishing a good working relationship.

SECTION THREE

CORPORATE SPONSORS AND SIGNAGE

Introduction

RMOC and BDO Dunwoody are defined as corporate partners. Corporate sponsors are firms that provide financial and other assistance.

Corporate Sponsor Benefits

The corporate sponsors seek three benefits from their involvement:

- Public recognition through the media coverage that will be organized around the planting and other activities;
- A sign that provides long term recognition of their corporate sponsorship; and
- Involvement of their employees in community activities and charitable causes.

Corporate Sponsorship

The corporate sponsors would be paying for the costs of:

- The bulbs and shrubs for planting at the selected sites;
- The sign that provides long term recognition of their corporate sponsorship;
-
- Assistance in planting the bulbs and shrubs; and
-
- A financial contribution to the charities involved.

The Sign

The signs are key to corporate participation. Without a sign there would likely be no corporate sponsorship sufficient to cover the costs of planting etc.

Corporate sponsors interviewed were aware of RMOC concerns about signage along right-of-ways. They generally agreed that billboards would never be accepted by RMOC. On the other hand, small temporary signs would not be acceptable to the corporate sponsors.

After some discussion, low long signs carefully designed to blend into the landscape would be their acceptable compromise. Lighting the sign at night was not an essential requirement.

However the sign must also be visible in the winter, designed to avoid it from becoming snow covered.

We believe that RMOC and Meadows for Millions can come up with a tasteful solution to the signage issue.

Contribution In Subsequent Years

Corporate sponsorship (payment) would be required during the years following the initial planting of the site. This continued sponsorship would:

- Ensure the ongoing replacement of frost and water damaged plants; and
- Since the sign and major costs are paid for during the **first** year, a substantial portion of the corporate sponsorship will go to the charities.

Change of Corporate Sponsors at an Existing Site

A corporate sponsor may decide to stop sponsoring a specific site. If this were to happen, a new sponsor would be sought to replace the previous sponsor.

SECTION FOUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Introduction

We are very aware of the problems that charities and non profit organizations face with respect to accountability to the general public. We have taken concrete steps to prevent potential problems.

BDO Dunwoody

Meadows for Millions has met with the managing partner of BDO Dunwoody, one of Canada's most reputable accounting and audit firms.

BDO Dunwoody has attended a number of our directors' meetings. Upon Meadows for Millions getting an agreement with RMOC, BDO Dunwoody will probably agree to become Meadows for Millions auditor and to provide some initial funding assistance.

Board of Directors

Meadows for Millions is establishing a board of directors composed of professionals who have previously volunteered their time to other charities and non for profit organizations.

This team is experienced in the issues related to public accountability.

Note: RMOC is invited to be a member of Meadows for Millions board of directors so that they can see first hand the decisions being made.

Recognized Charities

The Canadian Cancer Society is one of the most respected and professional charities in Canada. They, along with Ottawa's Hospice of All Saints are part of Meadows for Millions board of directors.

Advisory Board

An advisory board will be established to provide technical and professional guidance to Meadows for Millions. Included would be specialists in:

- Agronomy and urban landscape architecture... RMOC would be part of this professional group;
- Media and communications specialists to ensure that mission statement and public activities are correctly presented;

- Special interest groups such as horticultural societies and environmental protection groups;
- Professionals such as lawyers, engineers and accountants; and
- Community groups and other municipal organizations that are interested in the beautification of the region.

SECTION FIVE OPERATIONAL AND CONTINGENCY PLANS

Basic Start-up Principle

The concept may seem simple but the implementation requires careful planning and coordination. Many things can go right, but a few critical points have the potential to go wrong. Our plan is as follows:

During the first year:

- Undertake a maximum of planting at two sites;
- Emphasis will be placed on working with the corporate partners and sponsors to get the bulbs and shrubs planted... micro-managing the process to get things right;
- Working with the media to explain the launch of Meadows for Millions; and
- Getting a minimal public participation. Public awareness and not public participation will be the focus for the first year;

During the second year;

- Identify lessons learned;
- Increase planting to two or three additional sites;
- Create a focal site for continuing media work and recognition of partners, sponsors and the general public;
- Increase public participation and public awareness;

During year three;

- Add an additional three to five new sites;
- Add charities to the list of charities Meadows for Millions will be working with;
- Focus on getting public participation; and
- Work to tie Meadows for Millions into other major community activities, much in the same way that the tulip festival has succeeded, but at a substantially smaller commercial scale.

By year five we hope to have at least 20 sites planted, and to be raising at least \$225,000 per year for charities.

Contingency Plans

In addition to contingency planning for the major annual events such as planting etc., it is also important to plan for major problems such as a loss of a portion of the bulbs due to frost and water damage.

A portion of the money received from the corporate sponsors will be placed within a reserve to pay for damaged sites and other potential problems.

Note: 100% of the funds received from the general public will go directly to the charities. None of this money will be used to create the reserve.

SECTION SIX SELECTION OF CHARITIES

Initial Charities

The two initial charities are the Canadian Cancer Society and Ottawa's Hospice for All Saints. These are the "founding charities" and they will continue to receive Meadows for Millions support and recognition.

Other Charities

Meadows for Millions recognizes that the success of this initiative will create a demand by other charities to conduct their "plantings".

We propose that:

- Meadows for Millions become their contact point, and we will coordinate activities with RMOC;
- That RMOC and Meadows for Millions review the charities' requests to participate; and
- That new charities be accepted during the third year, once the start-up problems have been resolved and we are ready for growth.