



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Ferguson Tree Nursery Transition

Background

The Municipality of North Grenville and the Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation (FFCC) have agreed on a transition that will see responsibility for the Ferguson Tree Nursery transferred to the Municipality.

After many years of dedicated leadership by the FFCC's volunteer Board, the Nursery has reached a scale and complexity that requires a new governance and operating model. As the key stakeholder in the Ferguson Forest Centre, the Municipality is well positioned to develop a new model of operation that can provide the administrative capacity, financial oversight, and long-term planning needed for its next chapter.

The transition is intended to maintain operations while establishing a stronger, more sustainable foundation for the Nursery's future.

FAQs

Q: Why is the Ferguson Tree Nursery being transferred to the Municipality?

The Nursery has evolved into a complex operation with significant administrative, financial and operational requirements. The FFCC's volunteer Board has provided many years of dedicated stewardship, but both organizations agree that a new operating model is now needed.

Municipal capacity provides an opportunity to strengthen the Nursery and position it for long-term success.

Q: Is the Ferguson Tree Nursery closing?

No. The goal of this transition is to preserve the Ferguson Tree Nursery and continue its operations under a municipally developed model.

Q: What does this announcement mean?

The Municipality and FFCC have agreed on a path forward that will transfer responsibility for the Nursery to the Municipality once the necessary legal, financial, and operational arrangements are completed.

Q: What is the Municipality's plan for the Nursery?

The immediate focus is on stabilizing operations and developing a sustainable long-term business model.

The Municipality plans to undertake a feasibility and business-planning process to assess operations, sales opportunities, capital needs, and the future operating model. This work intends to identify paths toward fiscal sustainability and opportunities for future growth.

Q: How will the transition be funded?

The Municipality has, in recent weeks, already committed to needed bridge financing to maintain operational stability, to help meet current sales commitments, to capitalize on future sales opportunities, and to address priority capital investments.

Longer-term financing options will be identified through the feasibility and business-planning process and could include innovative approaches such as a community bond initiative, subject to due diligence and Council approval.

Q: Will community spaces at Ferguson Forest Centre be affected?

No. Community amenities and natural spaces will remain available, including:

- Veteran's Way Memorial Park
- Ferguson Forest Dog Park
- The Arboretum
- Anniversary Park
- Kinderwood
- Mino-jichaag Mitigwaaki (Good Spirit Forest)
- Forest trails and natural areas throughout the property

Q: Will the Municipality own and operate the Nursery?

The restructuring will transfer responsibility for the Nursery to the Municipality. Details concerning ownership, governance and the longer-term operating structure are being finalized.

Q: What role will the Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation play after the transition?

FFCC's role extends beyond operating the Nursery. As transition arrangements are finalized, its Board will consider how the Corporation can best continue to support conservation, recreation and education at Ferguson Forest Centre in a financially sustainable way. Specific responsibilities and future arrangements with the Municipality remain to be confirmed.

The Municipality recognizes the significant contribution of FFCC and its volunteer Board in sustaining the Nursery and caring for Ferguson Forest Centre over many years.

Q: How will this affect Nursery staff?

The Municipality and FFCC recognize that the transition may create uncertainty for employees. Both organizations are committed to providing as much continuity and clarity as possible, with employees kept informed as decisions are made.

Q: Will day-to-day operations continue during the transition?

Yes. Maintaining continuity of operations and minimizing disruption are immediate priorities.

Q: Will customers still be able to order seedlings?

Yes. Nursery operations are intended to continue, and customers will be kept informed of any operational updates.

Q: Will existing contracts and commitments be honoured?

The Municipality and FFCC are working through transition details and will communicate directly with customers and partners regarding existing agreements and commitments.

Q: Will there be changes to products or services?

There are no immediate changes to announce. Future opportunities will be considered through the feasibility and business-planning process.

Q: What is the Ferguson Tree Nursery?

The Ferguson Tree Nursery is the business operation of the Ferguson Forest Centre. It grows and ships more than two million tree seedlings annually across Ontario. Traditionally, revenue generated by the Nursery helps support other Ferguson Forest Centre activities.

Q: Why is the Nursery important to North Grenville?

The Nursery is an important local employer, environmental resource and longstanding part of North Grenville's history and identity. It also plays an important role in supporting tree planting and reforestation efforts across Ontario.

Q: What will happen to the Ferguson Forest Centre?

The Ferguson Forest Centre will continue to be an important community destination. This transition specifically relates to the Nursery operation.

Q: What are the next steps?

The Municipality and FFCC will:

- Maintain continuity of Nursery operations.
- Complete the legal, financial and administrative transition process.
- Undertake feasibility and business planning, to:
 - Develop a path toward long-term fiscal sustainability.
 - Identify opportunities to strengthen sales and future growth.
 - Assess and adjust needed bridge financing.
 - Prioritize capital investments.
 - Explore longer-term financing options, potentially including community bonds.
- Keep employees, customers, partners and residents informed.

Q: When will the transition be completed?

A specific timeline has not yet been finalized. Updates will be provided as transition arrangements are completed.

Q: Where can I find updates?

Updates will be shared through municipal and Ferguson Forest Centre communication channels as information becomes available.

Q: Who can media contact for more information?

Ferguson Forest Centre Corporation:

- Wes Herring / Board Chair / wesherring49@gmail.com / 613-722-2922
- Carl Doucette / Executive Committee / carl@ffccboard.ca /
- Steve Slack / Executive Committee / stevendslack83@gmail.com /

Municipality of North Grenville:

- Nancy Peckford / Mayor / npeckford@northgreville.on.ca / 613-875-3971
- Karen Dunlop / CAO / kdunlop@northgreville.on.ca / 613-258-9569
- John Barclay / Deputy Mayor / jbarclay@northgreville.on.ca / 613-322-8132

Key Messages

- The Ferguson Tree Nursery is not closing.
- The Municipality and FFCC have agreed on a transition that will preserve Nursery operations.
- After many years of dedicated volunteer stewardship, the scale and complexity of the Nursery now require a new governance and operating model.
- The Municipality will focus on operational stability, fiscal sustainability, future sales opportunities and strategic capital investment.
- A feasibility and business-planning process will help determine the Nursery's long-term operating and financial model.
- Community amenities and natural spaces at the Ferguson Forest Centre are not affected.
- Employees, customers, and partners will be kept informed throughout the transition.