



## Results of the OUFC Fall Workshop

### Natural Monuments: How to Recognize and Protect Heritage Trees in our Communities

Protection of heritage trees in Ontario is critical. Trees tend to be taken for granted and are seen as a renewable resource. Yet heritage trees have a character and a history that makes them unique and are as important to communities as are our ancient buildings. The protection of these "living natural monuments" needs to be part of the agenda of local municipalities so all future citizens can enjoy those that are left.

There is no explicit provincial protection of heritage trees, either by the Ontario Heritage Act or other legislation, including municipal bylaws. However many citizens are concerned about finding ways to identify and protect these trees. Therefore the Ontario Urban Forest Council (OUFC) has decided to help communities develop the tools needed to take action.

OUFC sponsored two community workshops, the most recent on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The richness of this session was reflected in the variety of participants representing many different interests yet sharing the common goal of heritage tree protection. Greg Ward from Surrey B.C. and Joanna Dean from Ottawa described their approaches to tree hunts; Heather Thomson and Paul King from the Ministry of Culture clarified current provincial legislation and suggested how to use these laws; Bill Morsink, an urban forester, did a "talk and walk" on the Milne Creek heritage tree hunt (Edwards Gardens) to explore possible heritage tree candidates; and Leslie Coates from the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation presented the new 2005 calendar "Toronto Tree Portraits". Barbara Heidenreich, Natural Heritage Coordinator at the Ontario Heritage Foundation presented a proposal to recognize Ontario's heritage trees. Participants provided valuable input through a discussion session.

Based on this input a steering committee is being formed to design a project to help communities (including municipalities) to develop tools to identify and protect heritage trees. An application for funding has been submitted to the Ministry of Culture. The first phase of the proposal is to develop a toolkit which would include a "how-to" guide on community outreach for a local project, selection criteria for identifying heritage trees and strategies for setting up a local registry. Subsequent phases would include monitoring and verification of heritage tree selection; a selection process for developing a provincial heritage tree inventory using local findings; promotion of the inventory; strategies for inventory maintenance; development of a model municipal heritage tree protection bylaw; and strategies for ensuring provincial heritage tree protection.

A valuable outcome of this process has been OUFC's partnership with Community Heritage Ontario (CHO). This not-for-profit organization is mandated to encourage the development of municipal heritage advisory committees. It works with all levels of government to further the identification, conservation, interpretation and wise use of community heritage resources. OUFC is committed to building strategic partnerships such as this, in order to strengthen our efforts and expand our reach.