Executive Summary

Canada is experiencing a trend of increasing urbanization and development pressures. The associated competition for land in urban areas presents challenges to the management and maintenance of green spaces. A number of municipalities across the country are responding to these challenges by developing long-range plans to expand and better manage their urban forests. This report explores how urban forest planning is being carried out within municipalities in the province of Ontario, Canada through a comparative case study of the Town of Oakville's 2008 *Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan* and the City Kingston's 2011 *Urban Forest Management Plan*.

This report addresses two research questions:

1. What strengths, weaknesses, and best practices can be identified from recent Ontario urban forest management plans and planning processes?
2. What can other Canadian municipalities learn from Oakville and Kingston's experiences in developing urban forest management plans?

A literature review of international best practices and principles of urban forest planning revealed a set of 12 key urban forest plan components. These key plan components were organized into four general categories as follows:

A) Context and Goal-setting Process
   1. Definition of "urban forest"
   2. Scope of the plan
   3. Plan goals/targets

B) Incorporation of Ecological Principles
   4. Tree inventory
   5. Identification of plantable space
   6. Identification of threats and disaster management

C) Stakeholder Involvement
   7. Inclusion of public input
   8. Collaborative efforts
   9. Public education and ongoing participation

D) Implementation Strategies
   10. Adaptive management techniques
   11. Group responsible for implementation
   12. Regulatory instruments

The two Ontario urban forest plans were then analyzed against the key plan components, with telephone interviews with key informants involved in the planning processes supplementing the document analysis.

Overall, both of the Ontario plans use techniques that are consistent with academic literature and international best practices in urban forest planning. The majority of the 12 plan components were apparent within each of the plans in some form. Kingston had a more in-depth public consultation process and its establishment of a Tree Advisory Board as the predominant group responsible for implementation made the goals and objectives of the plan seem more feasible. Oakville's plan had a strong base of scientific and technological knowledge, highly organized techniques to facilitate adaptive management, and significant detail regarding regulatory tools for urban forest management.

From the document analysis and results of interviews with key informants, a set of six recommendations was derived for other municipalities in Ontario and across Canada in developing successful urban forest plans:

1. Keep the scope of the plan manageable and realistic
2. Develop a set of clear, detailed and manageable goals and objectives
3. Incorporate advanced scientific and technological knowledge
4. Encourage public involvement and facilitate public input
5. Develop a meaningful message for Council and the public
6. Support provincial urban forest planning initiatives

With concerns for the effects of climate change and increased development pressures in Canadian cities, the creation of urban forest management plans is becoming more popular. As urban forest planning becomes a more standard practice in Canada, municipalities can look to these lessons from Oakville and Kingston to work towards successful urban forest management.