

**HARDCOPY HEADLINE:** *Flashbacks to a time when trees were an abnormality*  
*'Artic baby' was in awe when she arrived in Hamilton*

**ONLINE HEADLINE:** *Hamilton and Burlington named world tree cities*

*All of this excitement gave me a flashback to my childhood and my very first encounter with Hamilton's world-famous tree canopy, writes Lyla Miklos.*

**By Lyla Miklos**

**The Hamilton Spectator**

**Wednesday, March 27, 2024**



*Lyla Miklos's mother kisses a tree before heading off for the barrens of Baffin Island. Lyla has grown to appreciate the wonders of trees, though maybe not as much as her mother.*

(Photo Courtesy of Lyla Miklos)

I was delighted when I heard the happy news that the cities of Hamilton and Burlington were both named Tree Cities of The World by the [Arbor Day Foundation](#), a program of the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#).

This designation was first given out to cities across the globe in 2019. Cities named to this list demonstrate leadership in the management of their urban trees. This is the second year in a row that [Burlington](#) and [Hamilton](#) have received this honour.

The Arbor Day Foundation's website states that some of the benefits of having more trees are clean water, clean air, stormwater management, lower urban temperatures, better mental health and crime reduction.

All of this excitement gave me a flashback to my childhood and my very first encounter with Hamilton's world-famous tree canopy.

I remember when my three younger brothers and I came to visit our grandparents "down south" in Hamilton from then Frobisher Bay, N.W.T. As our Nordair jet descended and approached the Hamilton airport and we looked out of the windows, a unique culture shock hit us.

My siblings and I blurted out, "Oh my God! Look at all those trees! It's a jungle down there!" The flight attendants all had a good giggle at our expense shaking their heads over this kooky bunch of Arctic babies' reaction to seeing trees. En masse. In real life.

Growing up above the tree line in Canada's Arctic, the only "trees" we ever saw were plastic Christmas trees brought out for the holidays.

Our mother originally moved "up north" to work as a journalist for the CBC. She also waitressed at my grandparents' hotel, The Frobisher Inn, where she eventually met our father.

She knew that moving to a place without trees would be a major loss for her and she took a picture of herself kissing a tree goodbye before she went off on her new life adventures on Baffin Island.

My relationship with trees is a little different than my mother's, especially after taking an allergy test almost two decades ago that said I was allergic to them. I guess that's another curse of being an Arctic baby.

According to the City of Hamilton's draft [Urban Forest Strategy](#) maintaining our tree canopy aligns with the city's strategic plan "to be the best place to raise a child and age successfully." It

goes on to say that “exposure to nature, is good for the well-being of residents at all ages. Hamilton’s urban forest contributes to the city’s vision of a healthy community.”

[Tree Canada](#) is the only national non-profit organization dedicated to planting and nurturing trees in rural and urban environments, in every province across the country. On its website they share a long list of the benefits of trees including these mind-blowing facts:

- One large tree can provide a day’s oxygen for up to four people;
- You need about 500 full-sized trees to absorb the carbon dioxide produced by a typical car driven 20,000 kilometres a year;
- One large tree can lift up to 378.5 litres (100 gallons) of water out of the ground and discharge it into the air in one day.

In the District of North Vancouver, B.C., their [Urban Tree Canopy Project](#) includes giving free trees to homeowners, and plants or shrubs to people living in apartments and condos.

Although my formative years living in the Arctic didn’t give me the same romantic attachment to trees as my mother had, my many decades living in the “jungles” of Hamilton have given me a deep and mature appreciation for their many wonders.

It is interesting to note that our country’s national symbol is a red leaf from a maple tree. Lucy Maud Montgomery’s "Anne of Green Gables" — whose [ecstatic encounters with nature](#) I can strongly identify with — observed, “Maples are such sociable trees. They’re always rustling and whispering to you.”

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