**Digging in with Community to ‘Depave’ Keatsway Public School**

*Depave Paradise (a program of Reep Green Solutions) will lead the Keatsway Public School community in transforming an underutilized area of tarmac into green space.*

**Waterloo, ON.** On Saturday November 9th, Keatsway Public School in Waterloo, volunteers will use pry bars to literally lift up the tarmac by hand to create a naturalized green space in the school playground. The project will eventually add trees, capture rainwater and showcase a more sustainable way to manage stormwater in urban areas through a program called Depave Paradise. This Depave project is part of an exciting new trend of neighbourhood work bees that renew underutilized, hard urban spaces across Canada.

Students, teachers, parents from the school , and volunteers from the surrounding neighbourhood will gather on Saturday to tear up the asphalt. It is the first step in the process of planting shade trees and adding some green space for the students of Keatsway Public School. Grade 5-6 students from the school conducted a shade audit in the spring and used the information to come up with their own designs for the space. The students will get to see their designs come to life starting Saturday.

“Our students have already learned a lot from doing this project and are deeply invested in the outcome. We have recently lost several trees because of Emerald Ash Borer so the new trees will add some much needed shade in the playground. It will also create a contemplative space for kids to enjoy nature in the City.” Penny Miller Principal, Keatsway Public School.

“Hard surfaces, such as driveways, parking lots and buildings interrupt the natural water cycle. They also create heat islands in our urban centres. By removing pavement and replacing it with trees and native plants we are allowing water to soak in naturally, and can provide shaded spaces in our urban environment,” Patrick Gilbride of Reep Green Solutions explains. Stormwater is the rain or snow that falls on cities and towns and eventually washes into our storm drains. Along the way it picks up a host of toxic chemicals, bacteria, and contaminants like oil, grease, pet waste, litter and salt. These things mix with the water that then proceeds to flow through our drains, untreated, back into rivers and lakes. The Depave Paradise project of Reep Green Solutions seeks to rally the community around increasing green space and educating the next generation on water protection.

Funding for the project has been provided by Region of Waterloo Community Environmental Fund and Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). This is just the beginning of Depave, OTF awarded more than $120 million to some 700 projects this year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities and this project in Waterloo will encourage greener infrastructure in Waterloo Region and showcase the power of community mobilization for a greener future.

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[Reep Green Solutions](https://reepgreen.ca/mission-vision-values/our-team/) is an environmental charity based in the Waterloo Region committed to helping people live sustainably. Reep offers home energy, waste reduction, water conservation and healthy yards services. You may also contact Donnique Williams, communications@reepgreen.ca, 519-744-6583 ext. 222, for additional comments.