



# Two Billion Trees and Counting: The Legacy of Edmund Zavitz

*John Bacher*

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*Short-listed for the 2012 Speaker's Book Award*

Edmund Zavitz (1875–1968) rescued Ontario from the ravages of increasingly more powerful floods, erosion, and deadly fires. Wastelands were talking over many hectares of once-flourishing farmlands and towns. Sites like the Oak Ridges Moraine were well on their way to becoming a dust bowl and all because of extensive deforestation.

Zavitz held the positions of chief forester of Ontario, deputy minister of forests, and director of reforestation. His first pilot reforestation project was in 1905, and since then Zavitz has educated the public and politicians about the need to protect Ontario forests. By the mid-1940s, conservation authorities, provincial nurseries, forestry stations, and bylaws protecting trees were in place. Land was being restored.

Just a month before his death, the one billionth tree was planted by Premier John Robarts. Some two billion more would follow. As a result of Zavitz's work, the Niagara Escarpment, once a wasteland, is now a UNESCO World Biosphere. Recognition of the ongoing need to plant trees to protect our future continues as the legacy of Edmund Zavitz.

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