



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Bee City Affiliation and Pollinator Protection Strategy Update

Date:	March 17, 2016
To:	City Council
From:	Chief Corporate Officer
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2016\Internal Services\E&E\Cc16004e&e (AFS #22730)

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to the request from the Parks and Environment Committee for a report on the feasibility of Toronto becoming a Bee City affiliate and provide an update on the Pollinator Protection Strategy.

A diverse and resilient pollinator community is a component of a sustainable city. The Toronto area is home to over 300 species of bees and hundreds more non-bee pollinator species, making it home to one of the most diverse pollinator populations in Canada. The City of Toronto is currently undertaking a number of programs and initiatives in support of a healthy pollinator population.

Recognizing that the conservation of pollinators is critical to the sustainability of Toronto's natural areas and urban gardens, City staff is currently working to develop a comprehensive Pollinator Protection Strategy. This strategy will build upon current activities, while creating opportunities to establish new initiatives and partnerships. This report provides an update on the progress of this work. A full report, with a proposed Pollinator Protection Strategy, will be presented to the Parks and Environment Committee in the fourth quarter of 2016. This strategy will be a component of the broader "Biodiversity Strategy" currently underway, being led by City Planning.

As a first step, in anticipation of adopting a Pollinator Protection Strategy, Toronto can show its commitment to raising awareness of the importance of pollinators by becoming the first Bee City affiliate in Canada. The opportunity to participate in the Bee City program was brought to the attention of the City by the community, who saw it as a way for Toronto to add its support to the growing movement of pollinator protection. The Bee City program endorses a set of commitments, defined in a resolution, for creating

sustainable habitats for pollinators. Communities across North America are invited to join in making these commitments and become Bee City affiliates. This report provides an overview of the Bee City program and presents the benefits of Toronto adding its support to the goals of the Bee City community.

Implementation Points

Toronto can become a Bee City affiliate through the following steps:

1. Identify a committee, City division, and staff liaison to facilitate the Bee City Program participation process.
2. Adopt a Resolution identifying Toronto as a Bee City affiliate.
3. Complete the Bee City application form.

The Pollinator Working Group, consisting of representatives from multiple City Divisions, will serve as the committee. The Environment and Energy Division has been identified as the lead Division and a staff person from that Division will act as liaison.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts related to Toronto becoming a Bee City affiliate. Toronto's participation does not result in a requirement for new resources now or in the future.

There is no cost or application fee associated with applying to the Bee City program. Toronto is asked to assign a committee to facilitate Bee City participation. This commitment can be fulfilled using existing resources by having the Pollinator Working Group, established to assist with the development of the Pollinator Protection Strategy, function as the committee for Bee City participation.

As a Bee City affiliate, Toronto is required to:

1. Celebrate Toronto's Bee City affiliation annually, with a proclamation and public awareness raising activities.

The requirement to celebrate Toronto's Bee City affiliation annually can be integrated into pre-existing Live Green Toronto events that are already planned. The annual Live Green Toronto Festival held at Yonge - Dundas Square is an ideal fit for outreach and public awareness activities related to pollinator biodiversity, food production, native plants, and habitat protection. A City of Toronto proclamation to celebrate Toronto's Bee City affiliation and/or National Pollinator Week (third week in June) can be issued utilizing existing resources.

2. Publicly acknowledge Toronto's Bee City commitments through signage and web content.

Acknowledgement of Toronto's Bee City commitments can be accomplished by displaying signage at already planned Live Green Toronto events and posting information to the City's website, making use of existing resources.

3. Renew Toronto's commitment annually by completing a renewal application form with a summary of Toronto's pollinator protection accomplishments.

There is no fee associated with the annual renewal process to maintain Bee City affiliation. The Bee City program, as currently written, does not require the City to propose new initiatives or undertake activities that would require additional resources beyond what is stated in the resolution commitments.

The financial impacts connected to the Pollinator Protection Strategy, being developed in response to MM7.11, will be explored in a separate report scheduled to be presented to Parks and Environment Committee in the fourth quarter of 2016.

The Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council on June 10, 11 and 12, 2015, adopted the following (MM7.11):

1. City Council request the City Manager to review and to report back to City Council on potential options and programs through which the City can promote and incentivize private and public landowners to work in collaboration to protect and encourage natural habitats so as to sustain and renew the populations of Monarch butterflies (Milkweed planting) and bees that are a critical part of our ecosystem.
2. City Council request the City Manager to review the City of Edmonton's backyard Bee Keeping Pilot Program and report back to City Council on its applicability to the City of Toronto.

The decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.MM7.11>

On February 25, 2016, the Parks and Environment Committee:

1. Requested the Director, Environment and Energy to report directly to City Council on the status of the City's pollinator strategy and the feasibility of the City applying for a Bee City designation at this time.

The decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PE10.3>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In June 2015, Council directed City staff to explore potential options and programs to protect and encourage the creation of natural habitats on public and private lands, with the overall goal of sustaining populations of butterflies and bees in Toronto. City staff is

currently investigating options and will be addressing this directive through a proposed Pollinator Protection Strategy. An update on this process is provided below.

More recently, in February 2016, the Parks and Environment Committee considered an item presented by the Committee Chair supporting Toronto becoming the first city in Canada to obtain Bee City affiliation. The Parks and Environment Committee requested that City staff report back on the feasibility of obtaining the Bee City designation and provide an update on the Pollinator Protection Strategy. A detailed discussion about Bee City participation and what this means for Toronto is provided below.

COMMENTS

Importance of Pollinators

Pollinators are vital to a healthy and resilient ecosystem. The conservation of pollinators is critical to the sustainability of Toronto's natural areas and urban gardens. Native plants and most flowering crops require or benefit from insects moving pollen around while foraging. Research has shown that a diverse pollinator community results in better pollination services. However, certain pollinator species are in decline due to habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use, and disease/pests.

Toronto is home to over 300 species of bees and hundreds more non-bee pollinator species, including butterflies, moths, wasps, beetles and birds. Conserving the diverse and resilient pollinator community Toronto currently has is a key component of a sustainable city.

City of Toronto Policies and Guidelines to Support Pollinator Protection

As stated in Toronto's Official Plan, the City's vision for the future is one where "ecological diversity is conserved and nurtured for future generations". Further, as specified in Chapter 3 of the Official Plan, Toronto is committed to protecting, restoring and enhancing the health of natural ecosystems and supporting biodiversity, with specific attention to habitat for native species.

In addition, the City's Parks Plan (2013-17) identified areas of priority that relate to pollinator protection. More specifically, Chapter 5 of the Parks Plan, speaks to the need to protect, restore and enhance natural area parkland and recognizes that natural areas provide many ecosystem services such as habitat and pollination.

In support of community interest in bees and to implement Toronto's Official Plan natural heritage policies, the City has recently released 'Bees of Toronto' which is a made-in-Toronto guide to what types of native and non-native bees are found in the city, when and where to look for them, which species are considered endangered, how to create habitat, threats to the bee population, how residents can help bees, and what policies are in place to protect them. The document profiles honey bee keeping in Toronto, and Toronto's (un) Official Bee – the Bicoloured Agapostemon. "Bees of Toronto" is the first book on urban native and non-native bees in the world, and was the result of a partnership between the City, researchers at York University and dedicated volunteers.

Pollinator Protection Strategy Update

City staff is currently engaged in research and consultation with experts to examine approaches (policies, strategies, programs, and incentives) used to protect, enhance and create habitat for pollinator species, and identify what actions could be taken in Toronto for the purpose of developing a viable Pollinator Protection Strategy for the City of Toronto. City staff is also currently investigating the feasibility of urban beekeeping in Toronto.

The Environment and Energy Division in collaboration with the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, and City Planning, will be preparing a staff report outlining the proposed strategy and recommendations for the City of Toronto. This report will be presented to the Parks and Environment Committee in the fourth quarter of 2016. The Pollinator Protection Strategy will be a component of the broader "Biodiversity Strategy" currently underway, led by City Planning.

City staff is currently working towards the development of a proposed Pollinator Protection Strategy using the following approaches:

- a. Literature review: An examination of peer-reviewed research to gain an understanding of causes of pollinator decline and the most current approaches to pollinator protection being recommended by the academic community. A review of research to understand, with the renewed interest in honey production, the relationship between non-native honey bees on the native bee population in an urban environment.
- b. Jurisdictional review: An investigation of pollinator protection initiatives being undertaken by other cities around the world, with an emphasis on North American cities, including those that have become Bee City affiliates, for the purpose of identifying best practices for pollinator protection at a municipal level.
- c. Non-governmental organization (NGO) review: A summary of the efforts of NGOs implementing pollinator protection initiatives in Toronto, for the purpose of identifying opportunities to work together and enhance efforts already underway.
- d. Policy review: A review of current City of Toronto policies, programs and practices that support pollinator protection for the purposes of identifying opportunities to build upon current actions and implement new initiatives.

City staff is currently:

- Establishing an inter-divisional Pollinator Working Group, consisting of City staff from the Environment and Energy Division, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City Planning, Transportation Services, Toronto Water, Toronto Public Health, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.
- Establishing an external advisory committee, consisting of academic researchers, pollinator experts, non-profit organizations, and community engagement stakeholders.

- Conducting a jurisdictional review of pollinator protection initiatives in North America, including the 15 cities that have become Bee City affiliates.
- Conducting a review and preparing a summary of the current activities being undertaken by the City of Toronto to support a healthy pollinator population.
- Consulting with the City of Edmonton and other existing urban beekeeping programs.

The goal is to create a comprehensive Pollinator Protection Strategy that builds upon and expands current activities, while creating opportunities to establish new initiatives, partnerships and collaborations.

Bee City Affiliation

As a first step, and in anticipation of adopting a Pollinator Protection Strategy, Toronto can show its commitment to pollinator health by becoming the first city in Canada to become a Bee City affiliate. This is an action that can be taken now to recognize the pollinator protection activities already underway in the City and build momentum leading up to future initiatives aimed at protecting pollinator health. Participation in the Bee City program will also provide opportunities to raise public awareness on pollinators and increase public support for pollinator protection initiatives. Toronto has the opportunity to lead by example in becoming the first Canadian city to join the Bee City community.

What is the Bee City program?

The mission of the Bee City program is to "encourage city leaders to celebrate and raise awareness of the contribution bees and other pollinators make to our world." The Bee City program endorses a set of commitments, (defined a Resolution) for creating sustainable habitats for pollinators. Cities, towns and communities across North America are invited to join in making these commitments and become Bee City affiliates. Since the Bee City program was first launched in the United States in 2012, 15 U.S. cities, including Seattle, are participating in the Bee City program with the anticipation that there will be an additional 15 cities joining the community this year. The program has recently expanded, enabling Canadian cities to become involved.

What are the benefits to becoming a Bee City affiliate?

By becoming a Bee City affiliate, Toronto will become one of a growing number of cities recognizing the importance of supporting healthy pollinator populations. In doing so, Toronto will increase opportunities to collaborate with community partners, residents, and non-profit organizations in establishing pollinator protection initiatives in Toronto. Toronto's participation in the Bee City program will raise awareness about the importance of pollinator biodiversity, food production, native plants, and habitat protection. In addition, as a Bee City affiliate, Toronto will be presenting itself as a city that encourages activities that support health and habitat for pollinators and serve as an example to other municipalities and organizations.

What is Bee City USA?

Bee City USA was initiated and developed by members of a Beekeeping Association in North Carolina in response to pollinator decline in 2012. The Bee City USA program is a completely volunteer-led initiative and received non-profit status in 2015. The program has grown to include more than 200 nation-wide volunteers and will be forming a national steering committee of representatives from each of the founding Bee City affiliates in 2016. Bee City USA functions under the oversight of a Board of Directors. Review and recommendation of approval of Bee City affiliate applications is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board, Phyllis Stiles. Bee City USA was created to bring awareness to the issue of pollinator decline, and is not an accreditation organization. They do not certify or provide credentials to participating cities.

More information about Bee City USA can be found at <http://www.beecityusa.org/>

What is Bee City Canada?

Bee City Canada is a new organization modelled after Bee City USA. At this time, Bee City Canada is adhering to the goals, objectives and application process as established by Bee City USA. Bee City Canada has a steering committee consisting of pollinator experts, community stakeholders, non-profit organizations and concerned citizens.

Bee City Canada Steering Committee Members:

- Shelly Candel, Chair
- Kimberley Fellows, Pollination Canada
- Jode Roberts, David Suzuki Foundation
- Gillian Leitch, Toronto Beekeepers Co-operative
- Sheila Colla, Wildlife Preservation Canada

More information about Bee City Canada can be found at <http://www.beecityusa.org/bee-city-canada.html>

Who approves Toronto's participation in the Bee City program?

As the first applicant in Canada, Toronto's application will be reviewed by the established Bee City USA in conjunction with the newly formed Bee City Canada.

Will the City of Toronto be responsible for managing the Bee City Canada program?

Toronto will have no role or responsibility for managing the Bee City Canada program. Bee City USA and Bee City Canada are responsible for determining the Bee City Program structure and managing which cities participate through an application process. Other North American cities interested in achieving Bee City affiliation must follow the process as currently described by Bee City USA.

The City of Toronto is responsible only for meeting the commitments as outlined in the Resolution.

What are the requirements for participation in the Bee City program?

Toronto can become a Bee City affiliate through the following steps:

1. Identify a committee, City division, and staff liaison to facilitate the Bee City participation process.
2. Adopt a Resolution identifying Toronto as a Bee City affiliate.
3. Complete the Bee City application form.

The Pollinator Working Group, consisting of representatives from multiple City Divisions, will serve as the committee. The Environment and Energy Division has been identified as the City Division and a staff person from that Division will act as the staff liaison.

What is the purpose of the Resolution?

The Resolution identifying Toronto as a Bee City affiliate, is a public pronouncement that City Council cares about protecting Toronto's diverse pollinator population and is dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of pollinator protection.

The Resolution identifying City of Toronto as a Bee City affiliate:

- Identifies the goals of Bee City affiliation;
- Recognizes that pollinators are in decline;
- Acknowledges that cities and their residents have the opportunity to support pollinators on both public and private land;
- Recognizes the benefits of pollinator protection;
- Summarizes the City of Toronto's current programs and initiatives supporting pollinator biodiversity;
- Describes ideal pollinator-friendly habitat; and
- Outlines Toronto's commitments in becoming a Bee City affiliate.

The proposed language in the Resolution is based on a model provided by Bee City USA to all municipalities interested in participating in the Bee City program.

Staff undertook a detailed review of the proposed language and sought input from other City divisions including the Environment and Energy Division, Parks, Forestry & Recreation and Toronto Public Health. City staff have consulted with City Legal Services on the proposed language and such language does not appear to expose the City to any additional legal risk.

What are Toronto's commitments as a Bee City affiliate?

As a Bee City affiliate, Toronto is required to:

1. Celebrate Toronto's Bee City participation annually, with a proclamation and public awareness raising activities.
2. Publicly acknowledge Toronto's commitment through signage and web content.
3. Renew Toronto's commitment annually by completing a renewal application form with a summary of Toronto's pollinator protection accomplishments.

How will Toronto meet its commitments?

The Environment and Energy Division will submit the Bee City application and oversee the annual renewal process. Public awareness raising activities and annual events will be coordinated through the City's Live Green Toronto program, managed by the Environment and Energy Division.

The Pollinator Working Group, consisting of representatives from multiple City Divisions, will serve as the committee for facilitation of Bee City participation. Facilitation responsibilities of the Pollinator Working group include:

- Ensuring that the City hosts at least one public education and/or habitat establishment or restoration activity each year.
- Annually re-applying for Bee City affiliation and summarizing the previous year's activities to raise awareness and keep the momentum going.

What are the benefits of re-applying annually to maintain the Bee City affiliation?

Renewing Toronto's commitment annually gives Toronto the opportunity to summarize the accomplishments from the previous year and propose new activities if so desired. Annual renewal encourages Toronto to implement new initiatives that align with the Bee City program commitments.

Does participation in the Bee City program require a longer term financial commitment?

Participation in the Bee City program does not result in a requirement for new resources now or in the future. All requirements for Bee City affiliation can be accomplished utilizing existing resources.

As a Bee City affiliate, Toronto is required to:

1. Celebrate Toronto's Bee City affiliation annually, with a proclamation and public awareness raising activities.

The requirement to celebrate Toronto's Bee City affiliation annually can be integrated into pre-existing Live Green Toronto events that are already planned. The annual Live Green Toronto Festival held at Yonge - Dundas Square is an ideal fit for outreach and public awareness activities related to pollinator biodiversity, food production, native plants, and habitat protection. A City of Toronto proclamation to celebrate Toronto's Bee City affiliation and/or National Pollinator Week (third week in June) can be issued utilizing existing resources.

2. Publicly acknowledge Toronto's Bee City commitments through signage and web content.

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3. Renew Toronto's commitment annually by completing a renewal application form with a summary of Toronto's pollinator protection accomplishments.

There is no fee associated with the annual renewal process to maintain Bee City affiliation. The Bee City program, as currently written, does not require the City to propose new initiatives or undertake activities that would require additional resources beyond what is stated in the resolution commitments.

What is the City of Toronto currently doing to support a healthy pollinator population?

The City of Toronto is currently undertaking a number of programs and initiatives to support pollinator protection (summarized in Appendix A). A more detailed discussion of these initiatives will be provided as part of the report presenting a proposed Pollinator Protection Strategy.

It's important to note that the City of Toronto is not acting alone, the work of researchers at York University and the University of Toronto and non-profit organizations such as the David Suzuki Foundation, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Ontario Nature, Master Gardeners and others is essential to protecting Toronto's diverse pollinator community.

The Province of Ontario has recently developed a draft Pollinator Health Action Plan demonstrating their commitment to sustaining pollinator health.

Should the City be seeking Bee City affiliation at this time?

The City of Toronto has a long history of pollinator protection initiatives and is currently undertaking numerous activities (Appendix A) to support a healthy pollinator population in Toronto. These activities will be recognized through participation in the Bee City program and will act as a foundation as the City moves forward with the development of a more comprehensive Pollinator Protection Strategy. The City can seek to obtain Bee City affiliation in advance of adopting a Pollinator Protection Strategy. It is anticipated that the commitments made in the Bee City Resolution will complement and align with the proposed Pollinator Protection Strategy scheduled to be presented later this year. The opportunity to raise public awareness and public support for pollinator protection initiatives is a benefit of seeking Bee City affiliation at this time.

CONCLUSION

As a first step, and in anticipation of adopting a Pollinator Protection Strategy later this year, Toronto can show its commitment to pollinator health by becoming a Bee City affiliate. The goals of the Bee City program are consistent with current City policy and Council's direction on the development of a Pollinator Protection Strategy. Participation in the Bee City program raises awareness of pollinator protection activities and encourages Toronto and other municipalities to take action to support healthy pollinator populations. As Canada's largest city, Toronto has the opportunity to be a leader in raising the profile of the pollinator protection movement by adding its support to the goals of the Bee City community. There are no new financial obligations associated with Bee City affiliation.

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SIGNATURE

Josie Scioli, Chief Corporate Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Current City of Toronto activities to support healthy pollinator populations