

June 23, 2022

To Infrastructure and Environment Committee Chair and Members:

Re: Next Steps to Make Toronto Safer for Birds

Birds are vanishing at an alarming rate. Across North America, approximately 3 billion fewer birds grace our skies and forests today than 50 years ago. Collisions with glass are one of the most significant sources of human-caused mortality for birds. Birds hit windows anywhere there is glass, and glass is everywhere. Birds can see through glass and the reflections of trees and sky on the glass, but they cannot see the glass itself. In Canada alone, glass claims the lives of around 25 million birds every year.

Toronto is located on the confluence of two major migratory bird pathways, and the shoreline of Lake Ontario provides critically important resting areas for migrating birds during the spring and fall. This high amount of bird traffic, coupled with copious amounts of glass on built structures, makes the city a hotspot for bird-window collisions.

FLAP Canada bird rescue volunteers have monitored Toronto buildings since 1993 and have recovered tens of thousands of birds from dozens of species, including Species at Risk like the Canada Warbler, Wood Thrush, Barn Swallow and Chimney Swift.

Toronto quickly recognized this issue and became the first city in the world to publish and adopt Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines. Since then, a multitude of other cities across North America and abroad have followed suit. The City of Toronto has also been designated by Nature Canada as a 'Bird-Friendly City' for its bird protection efforts.

However, there is still much work to be done.

Existing city-owned structures, including transit shelters and subway platforms, constructed before the introduction of mandatory bird-friendly guidelines, continue to endanger numerous birds every year and many of these structures are in urgent need of bird-safe retrofits.

Recommendation:

Infrastructure and Environment Committee request the Executive Director, Environment and Energy and the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the Executive Director, Corporate Real Estate Management, and Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Transit Commission, and other relevant staff to report to a meeting of Infrastructure and Environment

Councillor
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Committee in 2023 on efforts to ensure all structures on City of Toronto properties are compliant with the City's Bird Friendly guidelines.

Thank you,

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