

Item No.4.1
Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
July 6, 2023

TO: Chair and Members of Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: 

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: May 9, 2023

SUBJECT: **Analysis of Halifax Becoming a Bee City**

ORIGIN

November 3, 2022 Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee motion (Item No. 10.3.1):

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Morse

“THAT the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee request a staff report investigating Halifax Regional Municipality becoming a Bee City.”

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Administrative Order Number One, the Procedures of the Council Administrative Order:

Parks and Open Spaces

5. The Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee shall:

- (a) encourage the appropriate policy structure to address amount, use and protection of parks, forests (urban and rural) and open spaces for the use and enjoyment of the residents of the municipality.

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, SNS 2008 c 39:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to (a) provide good government; (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to apply for Bee City status within one year of hiring a naturalization coordinator.

BACKGROUND

Pollinators include birds, bats, bees, butterflies, beetles and other small mammals that pollinate plants, and are essential to plant health and reproduction (and by extension, ecosystem health). Unfortunately, pollinators face many threats, including habitat loss, pollution, pesticides, disease, and climate change¹.

Bee City Canada is a program of Pollinator Partnership Canada that seeks to “inspire cities, towns, First Nations, schools, businesses and other organizations to take action to protect pollinators”.² The first Bee City, Toronto, was established in 2016, and the program now has over 170 partners including 67 municipalities, 61 schools, 34 businesses and 17 university campuses. New Glasgow is the only municipality with Bee City status in Nova Scotia.

In November 2022, Bee City Canada staff presented to the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC) about the Bee City program, and the value of protecting bees and other pollinators³. In the following weeks, staff met with Bee City Canada to gather information about the benefits and work involved in becoming a Bee City. As part of this phase, staff met with external stakeholders to gain an understanding of pollinator issues in HRM and the fundamentals of more effective public education about pollinators.

Conservation of pollinators is highly achievable in urban areas, because they do not require very much space to thrive when compared with larger mammals. This means that small actions, like encouraging residents to plant more native flowering species, can yield large benefits.

DISCUSSION

The Bee City Application Process

The first step in applying to be a Bee City is to form a committee of external and internal stakeholders. Staff identified four external stakeholders for this committee including those with expertise in beekeeping, pollinator conservation and naturalization. After the committee is created, a municipal representative completes and submits the application (see Appendix A for a blank template). A signed Resolution must also be completed and signed by the Mayor or Council representative (see Appendix B for a blank template).

Prospective partners must agree to adopt three commitments, which must be described in detail in the application:

1. Create, maintain and/or improve pollinator habitat;
2. Educate the community about the importance of pollinators; and
3. Celebrate pollinators during National Pollinator Week (in June).

After joining the Bee City community, partners have access to the network of other participants and can learn from the best practices of the many other cities that are enrolled in the program through regular webinars and a community of practice. Municipalities are also able to connect with Bee City staff, who can

¹ <https://pollinatorpartnership.ca/en/about-pollinators>

² <https://beecitycanada.org/about-us/mission/>

³ <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/standing-committees/221103essc1031-pres.pdf>

provide expertise and resources relating to pollinator conservation. Promoting the Bee City program can also instill residents with a sense of pride in their community and inspire them to act for pollinators on their own property.

HRM's Ongoing Work to Support Pollinators

To complete a successful Bee City application, municipalities must demonstrate existing and ongoing work to support pollinators. There are several ongoing initiatives in HRM that would support a Bee City Application:

Boulevard Gardening: In 2020, the HRM passed the Administrative Order respecting Boulevard Gardening, which allows residents greater control over what they can plant in their abutting boulevard strip⁴. Residents are encouraged to plant native pollinator species. In 2022, staff delivered a pilot project on Dahlia Street in Dartmouth, which included a native plant giveaway. Boulevard strips planted with native flowering perennials increase connectivity for pollinators in an urban setting.

Naturalization Pilot Program: Parks and Recreation (P&R) staff have been working with community groups to deliver pilot-scale naturalization projects in municipal parks⁵. Naturalization is an ecologically-based approach to landscape management that seeks to enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience in the urban landscape using native or non-invasive-adapted plant species including flowering perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees. Funding to hire a Naturalization Coordinator and two seasonal positions has been approved in the 2023/2024 budget. These positions will enable P&R to create and deliver on a more fulsome Naturalization Strategy. An increase to pollinator habitat is one of many co-benefits provided by naturalized areas.

Community Gardens: The municipality encourages residents to join existing Community Gardens and provides resources for those interested in starting a new garden⁶. Community gardens, like boulevard gardens, increase connectivity and habitat for pollinators in urban areas.

Bee Keeping in HRM: In 2016, Council voted to amend By-Law A-700, *Respecting Animals and Responsible Pet Ownership*, to exempt bees owned by beekeepers registered under the *Bee Industry Act*⁷. Residents are also allowed to keep bees in every zone under Section 72 of the Regional Centre Plan⁸. These amendments have allowed more residents to keep honeybees.

Requirements of Maintaining Bee City Status

Once awarded Bee City status, the partner must complete an annual report to demonstrate advancement in the three commitments to retain Bee City status: demonstrate an effort to increase and/or improve pollinator habitat, educate the public, and participate in National Pollinator Week. After the first year, Bee City partners must also pay an annual fee to stay in the program. The fee is determined on a sliding scale based on population size; the annual fee for HRM would be \$750/year⁹.

Implementation and delivery of a Naturalization Strategy for HRM will be critical in maintaining Bee City status. The delivery of the Naturalization Strategy is dependent on hiring a fulltime Naturalization Coordinator in the Parks and Recreation department. This staff member would be well positioned to coordinate a Bee City program in HRM. It is therefore recommended that staff not apply for Bee City status at this time, as this position is yet to be created and filled. It is important to note that the presence or absence

⁴ <https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/energy-environment/boulevard-gardening>

⁵ <https://www.halifax.ca/parks-recreation/parks-trails-gardens/naturalization>

⁶ See the [Community Garden Handbook](#).

⁷ <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/160719rc1419.pdf>

⁸ https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/about-the-city/regional-community-planning/RegionalCentreLUB-Eff-21Nov27_0.pdf

⁹ This is the fee for populations of 250,001 – 500,000. The next category up is 500,001 – 1,000,000, and the fee is \$1,000.

of Bee City status will not impact HRM's ability to move forward on existing actions that benefit pollinators, including the Naturalization Strategy and other actions listed above.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation of this report.

If/when Halifax wishes to participate in the Bee City program, it requires a financial commitment of \$750/year based on current population and after the first year, in addition to the staff and other resources noted above.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Consultation with external stakeholders is a requirement of applying for the Bee City program. While scoping the feasibility of applying for Bee City status, staff reached out to local experts in the fields of beekeeping, naturalization and pollinator ecology. An introductory meeting was held with representatives from the Nova Scotia Bee Keepers Association, local beekeepers and pollinator conservation experts, as well as staff from Bee City Canada. Regardless of whether Council recommends applying for Bee City Status, staff can still connect with this group of external expert stakeholders to inform policy relating to pollinator health and connectivity.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Investing in pollinator habitat restoration would provide several ecosystem services and benefits to residents, including pollination of garden plants, beautification of municipal parks, boulevards and right of ways through an increase in flowering native species over lawns, and potentially an increase in productivity in nearby agricultural areas. Increased pollinator abundance also benefits other wildlife, particularly birds, who rely on insects as a source of food. Healthy bird populations provide opportunity for recreation through bird watching.

ALTERNATIVES

Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee may:

1. recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to apply for Bee City status immediately. This is not recommended in the absence of a Naturalization Coordinator.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Bee City Application template
Appendix B: Bee City Resolution template

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Emma Bocking, Environment Specialist, Environment & Climate Change,
Property, Fleet & Environment, 782.641.1790



Connecting People,
Pollinators and Places

Bee City Canada Application

A) City or Community Information

Municipality/First Nation _____

Province/Territory _____

Mayor, Chief or Chair of Commission

Name & Title _____

Name of Applicant & Title _____

Organization or Department _____

Address _____

City/First Nation _____ Province/Territory _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Bee City Liaison & Title (if not Applicant) _____

Organization or Department _____

Address _____

City/First Nation _____ Province/Territory _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Please list the members of your **Bee City Pollinator Team**. This group will oversee the Bee City program. (Expand or reduce table as required)

Name	Affiliation	Email

B) Yearly Renewal Fees

There are no fees on the initial application. The fees below apply on the yearly renewal.

Less than 5000 population	FREE
5000 – 10,000 population	\$150
10,001 – 25,000 population	\$200
25,001 – 50,000 population	\$300
50,0001 – 100,000 population	\$400
100,001 – 250,000 population	\$500
250,001 – 500,000 population	\$750
500,001 – 1,000,000 population	\$1000
+ 1,000,000 – population	\$1500

C) Commitments and Actions

I/we, the undersigned, understand that the Bee City Canada program consists of three commitments, and we will take the indicated actions to support those commitments:

- 1. Creating Biodiversity in Pollinator Habitats:** Describe your plans to create, improve and maintain pollinator habitat, while reducing or eliminating pesticide use.

D) Other Requirements

I/we, the undersigned agree to:

1. Publicly display Bee City Canada designation through signs, city/region/community website and other means.
2. To annually report to Bee City Canada. A renewal form and an invoice for applicable fees will be emailed one month prior to renewal date.

E) Requested Attachments

With your completed application, please provide:

1. Your city, region or First Nation logo (png format) and any usage guidelines.
2. Any photos you would like us to share on social media. This could include pollinator gardens, public events, etc.

F) Signatures

Applicant

Signature

Print Name

Title

Date

Bee City Canada Liaison (if not Applicant)

Signature

Print Name

Title

Date

G) Next Steps

1. (Applicant) Email completed application and resolution (in PDF format) with requested attachments to applications@beecitycanada.org with “APPLICATION” in the subject line.
2. (Bee City Canada) Your application will be reviewed within three business days. We will notify you as soon as your application has been approved or promptly request any clarification, if necessary.

H) Bee City Canada’s Commitment

Bee City Canada is committed to publicizing your designation as a Bee City through our website, social media and other channels. In addition, our “Bee City Welcome Package” will be sent to you and will include an official Declaration, recognizing your city or First Nation as a Bee City.

Bee City Canada is grateful for your commitment to take positive actions to help pollinators and for being a role model for other communities across Canada.



Draft Resolution for

(Municipality or First Nation)

of

(Province or Territory)

for approval by
City Council, Band Council
or Appropriate Official.

Present this document to City/Band Council for approval. Send signed document, along with completed Bee City Canada Application form, to applications@beecitycanada.org for review and to receive official Bee City designation. If you have any questions about this process, please call Shelly Candel (+1 647-402-0133).

Bee City Canada Resolution

WHEREAS the goal of Bee City Canada designation is to promote healthy, sustainable habitats and communities for pollinators;

THAT bees and other pollinators around the globe have experienced dramatic declines due to land fragmentation, habitat loss, use of pesticides, industrialized agriculture, climate change and the spread of pests and diseases, with serious implications for the future health of flora and fauna; and

THAT cities/townships/First Nation communities and their residents have the opportunity to support bees and other pollinators on both public and private land; and

THAT supporting pollinators fosters environmental awareness and sustainability, and increases interactions and engagement among community stewards; and

THAT by becoming a Bee City, the City/Township/First Nation can highlight initiatives already in place and further engage local communities in an environment of creativity and innovation which will promote a healthier life for our community;

THAT staff be authorized to submit the Bee City Canada Application to designate (City/Township/First Nation) as a Bee City; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT (City/Township/First Nation) accepts the designation and commits to the standards of the Bee City Canada Program.

Read, approved and adopted this

_____ day of _____, 20_____.

Municipality/First Nation

Signature of Mayor, Chief or appropriate official

Print Mayor, Chief or official's name