



HANDBOOK

A Toolkit for Local Electeds Climate Action

BEE CITY & BEE SCHOOLS



A part of the [Nature Based Solutions Councillor Handbook](#)



Stay tuned for the up-to-date version of this resource!

This document is undergoing fact checks and updates... you will be able to access the new version in September 2025.

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Introduction

Between 75% and 95% of all flowering plants on the planet need pollinators to produce their seeds. Our best-known pollinator may be the honey bee—but did you know that there are over 900 species of bees in Canada? Other pollinators include butterflies, moths, wasps, flies, beetles and hummingbirds.

Many pollinators are facing hard times in Canada and around the globe. But they can live and prosper in our yards if we protect their habitats.

Bee City wants to partner with cities, towns, First Nations, schools and businesses across Canada to protect pollinators 🐝

Resources

- [How to Become a Bee City](#)
- [How to become a Bee School](#)
- [Activities and crafts for kids of all ages to learn about pollinators and their habitats](#)

Bee City Presentation at the All Caucus Call

The graphic is a promotional poster for a presentation. It features a light yellow background with faint bee silhouettes. In the top left is the 'CLIMATE CAUCUS' logo. The main title 'Bee Cities & Bee Schools' is in large, bold, black font, with a small bee icon above the ampersand. Below the title is a green button with the text 'MAY 16 | 11AM PT/2PM ET'. On the right side, there is a microphone icon, the name 'Shelly Candel' with the title 'Founder of Bee City', the 'Bee City CANADA' logo (a pink flower with a bee on it), the name 'Mike McCann' with the title 'Councillor for City of Barrie', and the 'Barrie' logo in blue.

CLIMATE CAUCUS

**Bee Cities
&
Bee Schools**

MAY 16 | 11AM PT/2PM ET

Shelly Candel
Founder of Bee City

**Bee City
CANADA**

Mike McCann
Councillor for City of Barrie

Barrie

Shelly Candel, Bee City Canada Founder, joined to talk about the benefits and success of Bee City and School programs across the country and key steps to getting started.

City Councillor Mike McCann also spoke on the City of Barrie's experience as a Bee City and their work to protect and create pollinator habitats and provide community education.

- **Presentation - [Recording](#)**

Pollinator Friendly By-Laws

Professor Nina-Marie Lister, Director, Ecological Design Lab, Toronto Metropolitan University

Presentation at Ontario Caucus Call: [Watch the Recording Here](#)

Summary Notes from Presentation

There are significant biases towards lawns and communication challenges related to front yard maintenance requirements in municipal by-laws.

There is an issue that grass is considered to be the norm in many by-laws whereas that is outdated and not reflective of municipal stormwater management, pollination and other community desired outcomes.

Some front yard gardens have received complaints from residents because they are perceived as too wild, messy, or weedy. This is problematic as there is a lot of subjectivity and a significant lack of scientific definitions in by-laws for terms like "wild" and "messy."

Legal Background

- There was a court case in 1996 that confirmed the right of residents to implement their values through their front yard gardens.
- Updating yard maintenance by-laws is also important for changing norms and supporting climate resilience on private property.

Problems with Existing Bylaws include

- Vague terminology in bylaws regarding grass, weeds, and undesirable plants.
Aesthetic judgments are not scientific and can't be defended in court. It is a leading practice to be as specific as possible re: what plants are not allowed and for what reason (ex. invasive species that should be clearly named and be able to be identified).
- This lack of definitions leads to problems with enforceability and compliance.
- Many people support the idea of growing biodiverse, pollinator friendly and climate-resilient gardens without permits.
- Updating by-laws highlights the need for bylaws to reflect these changing norms.

Solutions and Recommendations

- Remove references to turf grass and height restrictions from bylaws.
- Define prohibited plants, especially invasive species.
- Consult widely with communities, including indigenous members.
- Emphasize health and safety concerns related to traffic visibility.
- Filter out baseless complaints to prioritize legitimate health and safety issues.

Success Stories and Future Challenges

- [Toronto's updated bylaw](#) can provide a good case study
- There are a number of other municipalities following suit and updating their bylaws
- If bylaws aren't updated there is the risk related to enforcement and equity. And if it goes to court there are legal cost implications if the municipalities lose as has been the case in a number of precedents so far.
- There are also municipal reputation risks that should be considered.
- It's recommended leading practice to name the bylaws based on what they control (e.g., prohibited plants) rather than what is presently often the case re the assumption that all front yards are turf.
- Emphasize the importance of regulating what's not allowed, focusing on legitimate health and safety concerns.
- Highlight the alignment of updated bylaws with climate and biodiversity goals.

Additional Resources

- [Model Bylaw By Ecological Design Lab](#)
- [FOE Canada Take the Next Step to Protect Pollinators - Call for By-Law Modernization](#)
- [CBC - Weed or habitat? Ontario cities must 'rethink' their approach to yard complaints, says lawyer](#)
- [ICLEI - a guide for pollinator-friendly cities](#)

Did you know Climate Caucus offers an “Ask Us Anything” service for elected officials in the network?

You could ask questions like “can you help me find this resource?” “Do you know of funding for X?” “Do you have examples of X policy language?” or “can you connect me with an expert in X?”

Send us your questions here!

Climate Caucus Resources:

[Climate Caucus Municipal Grants List](#) - detailed list of relevant municipal grants

[Policies and Resources Library](#) - list of motions, bylaws, council reports and briefing notes