

Delegation Speaking Notes:

Across Canada, habitat gardening has emerged as a hopeful and tangible response to pressing challenges like biodiversity loss, climate change, and humanity's detachment from wild species resulting in a surge in public interest in alternative gardening styles. Naturalized and sustainable gardening is gaining popularity among homeowners and municipalities due to its multiple benefits, such as increased pollinator habitat and biodiversity, reduced stormwater runoff, lower fertilizer and herbicide use, decreased water use, and a cooling effect during heat waves. These gardens also help sequester more carbon, are easier to maintain than traditional lawns, and absorb excess stormwater during big storms, reducing soil erosion. Ontario court decisions favoring naturalized landscapes, underscores the need to update yard maintenance by-laws to reflect evolving community expectations and legal standards.

Brampton is at the forefront of this movement, with numerous plans, policies, and strategies supporting biodiversity. The updated by-law will further bolster these efforts. In 2021, the Council endorsed the Brampton Grow Green Environmental Master Plan (EMP) Refresh, which included an action to review and update city by-laws to ensure they do not restrict naturalization efforts on public and private lands. Additionally, Brampton's Bee City designation highlights its commitment to enhancing pollinator habitats and promoting naturalized gardening. The Ground Cover Maintenance and Prohibited Plants By-law updates the former Grass and Weed Cutting By-law, aligning it with Brampton's environmental goals, clarifying maintenance standards for private properties, listing prohibited plants, and granting residents more freedom in their gardening approaches.

Other municipalities including Toronto, Burlington, Barrie, Windsor, London, Guelph, Kingston, and Markham, are also updating their yard and maintenance by-laws to allow boulevard gardens. It is crucial for municipalities to focus on health and safety rather than aesthetics when updating their by-laws. Municipal councils' support for these progressive policies is essential, as they have the power to help pollinator-friendly gardens flourish.