



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Catherine Edwards, Environment and Natural Assets Specialist

DATE: August 27, 2024

MEMO NO.: CSE-2024-004

SUBJECT: Right-of-Way Pollinator Meadow Project

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform Council that the Town submitted a successful grant application to the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) to fund the establishment of two right-of-way pollinator meadows in Halton Hills, as a pilot project. This Memo also provides Council with an overview of the project.

BACKGROUND:

In spring 2024, the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) released a call for proposals to fund the creation and restoration of pollinator habitats along public roadsides, rights-of-way, and on marginal farmland in the GTA. This call for proposals is part of the CWF's Monarch conservation program. In collaboration with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), Town of Halton Hills staff (Community Services and Public Works) developed a proposal to establish two right-of-way pollinator meadows on Town property as a pilot project: one along Halton Hills Drive, across from Town Hall in Georgetown (Appendix A); and another on Churchill Road South in Acton (Appendix B). While the Town is the project applicant/lead, CVC was identified to carry out components of the on-site work on behalf of the Town.

In July 2024, CWF notified the Town that its application was successful, approving the full \$6,900.00 requested to cover the total project cost (excluding Town staff time). Community Services and Public Works staff time will be required for project management, mowing and site preparation, watering and planting event support.

Creating pollinator habitat in Halton Hills reinforces the Town's vision and identity as a nature-rich community, and supports Council's Strategic Plan objectives as well as the Town's environmental and climate goals. This project will advance the Strategic Plan's Natural Areas and Heritage objectives by enhancing local biodiversity and increasing access to natural spaces.

Converting lawn/grass to this type of natural asset will increase ecosystem services, including improving soil health and potentially reducing the need for mowing (and the associated staff time) once the meadow is established. This project will also provide wildlife habitat, increase biodiversity, reduce invasive species, enhance neighbourhood aesthetics, provide ecological services (e.g. flood mitigation), and contribute to community engagement around biodiversity and pollinators.

COMMENTS:

The pollinator meadows established on Halton Hills' properties will contain more than 20 species of native flowers and grasses. Credit Valley Conservation developed a seed mix that will attract a variety of pollinating insects, including native butterflies and bees. The selected flowering plants bloom at different times of the year, providing resources for native pollinators throughout the growing season. Not only will this approach maximize the number of pollinator species benefiting from the meadows, but it will also ensure that the meadows will provide colourful aesthetic value from spring to fall, contributing to neighbourhood beautification.

Project implementation is anticipated to begin this September 2024, with on-the-ground work concluded in December 2025. In 2026, CVC will develop a best practice report to guide monitoring and the potential future establishment of other pollinator meadows in Halton Hills. The meadows will be established according to the following timeline:

- Fall 2024: Site preparation – includes mowing, invasive species control and establishing a cover crop of millet
- Spring 2025: Meadow establishment – includes invasive species control and applying a native seed mix
- Summer 2025: Tending – includes mowing and monitoring
- Fall 2025: Meadow infill - includes a community event where residents will plant potted wildflowers in the meadows and additional application of native seed mix

Culminating in CVC's development of a best practices report, this pilot project will document effective methods for pollinator meadow establishment, maintenance and monitoring. This will inform the Town's Natural Asset Management Plan and future biodiversity initiatives.

In addition to supporting the Town's environmental initiatives, the meadows are intended to act as demonstration sites for the community, inspiring residents and businesses to naturalize their own properties and to learn more about pollinators and the habitats created. Town staff will develop a communications plan to support this project and explore the potential for educational signage in order to amplify community engagement and position this pilot project as a public biodiversity showcase.

CONCLUSION:

This pollinator meadow pilot project, enabled by the CWF grant, will provide habitat, increase biodiversity, enhance neighbourhood aesthetics, provide ecological services, and contribute to community engagement around biodiversity and pollinators.

Council's Strategic Plan priorities will be advanced by this project, demonstrating that Halton Hills is a nature-rich community.

Reviewed and approved by,

Michelle Bourdeau, Manager of Environment & Climate

Dharmen Dhaliah, Director of Climate Change and Asset Management

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer