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Calgary City Council
P.O. Box 2100, Stn. M
Calgary, AB
T2P 2M5

Re: Calgary's Biodiversity Strategic Plan and Advisory Committee

Dear Calgary City Council,

We are at a pivotal point as *Our BiodiverCity – Calgary's 10 Year Biodiversity Strategic Plan* reaches the end of its 10-year timeframe, amidst growing global concerns over biodiversity loss. The Southern Alberta Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS SAB) would like to reinforce the importance of maintaining and enhancing the City of Calgary's commitment to biodiversity conservation. The decision to update or sunset the City's biodiversity strategic plan, along with the Biodiversity Advisory Committee (BAC), will have long-term ecological, economic, and social impacts.

CPAWS is a reputable nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and sustainability of public lands across Canada. The Southern Alberta chapter has been engaged on local issues since the 1960s. We work collaboratively with governments, industry, Indigenous Peoples, and others to provide landscape level, science-based support and advice for the protection and proper management of parks and wilderness areas, both rural and urban.

As one of Alberta's largest cities, Calgary has a significant role to play in supporting Canada's commitment under the Kunming-Montral Global Biodiversity Framework - to safeguard nature and reverse biodiversity loss by 2050 - and provincial and federal species recovery, habitat protection, and invasive species management objectives. Calgary's natural spaces support the ecological integrity of the larger Southern Alberta landscape. The city contains vital habitat and corridors for wildlife, ranging from small invertebrates to larger ungulates. For its visitors and residents, the natural spaces and ecological processes behind biodiversity provide important goods and services, mental and physical health benefits, and opportunities to connect and appreciate nature.

We recommend that the City of Calgary (1) release a report on progress to date using the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan's success metrics, (2) develop a new standalone biodiversity strategy with updated targets, objectives, and success metrics for the next 10 years, and (3) explore ways to improve the communication and integration of input from biodiversity experts and the public in its renewed commitment and strategic approach. We additionally encourage Council to consider the level of expertise and focus the BAC offers, which could be leveraged in these tasks.

In 2011, Calgary City Council signed the Durban Commitment and formally joined Local Action for Biodiversity, committing to long-term action. While creating the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan and BAC were positive steps, the conclusion of the strategy's 10-year term does not signify the end of this work, especially when not all targets have been met. For example, 2021 data indicated that restoration efforts were only on track to meet 36% of the 20% increase in open space restoration target set for 2025.¹ Maintaining biodiversity is an ongoing commitment. Sunsetting the current strategy and BAC contradicts the intent of the Durban Commitment and the need for increased efforts to meet current 2025 biodiversity targets and future objectives.

¹ BiodiverCity Advisory Committee. 2023. Annual report: Attachment A – Key areas of concern and accomplishments. City of Calgary.

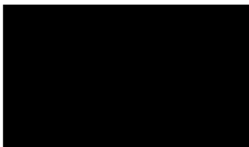
While the BAC has faced challenges in finding its purpose, the success of similar committees in other jurisdictions suggests how effective it could be and the need to assess why the committee has struggled in the past. For example, areas to evaluate and consider improvements might include how BAC input is communicated and considered in decision-making. Having a public committee that can effectively advise Council provides a vital conduit for local conservation groups to bring forward issues in an official manner and supports public involvement and oversight in biodiversity matters. If past barriers are addressed, the BAC could enhance communication and collective action between Council, key stakeholders, and the general public, while ensuring integration into the ongoing work of Administration and the implementation of related strategies and plans.

Having a standalone biodiversity strategy contributes to reaching targets and objectives outlined in other plans and strategies, including the Municipal Development Plan, Calgary Transportation Plan, Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050, and upcoming Connect: Calgary’s Parks Plan. Any commitments to improving the well-being of Calgarians, visitors, and the environment necessitates a commitment to biodiversity. Simply integrating biodiversity targets into other plans and strategies risks diminishing the focus required for meaningful contributions.

While it is exciting to see the City of Calgary’s commitment to addressing climate change, it is important not to conflate all climate action with biodiversity conservation. Although interconnected, the concurrent global climate and biodiversity loss crises are each uniquely complex and solutions may vary or conflict. While the Climate Advisory Committee (CAC) has a large mandate of its own that includes natural infrastructure, this does not equate to biodiversity or cover the full mandate of the BAC. Neither addressing climate change or biodiversity should come at the expense of the other. Having separate strategies and committees ensures both receive the necessary attention and expertise. Collectively, the BAC members supply valuable insights in areas ranging from biology, ecology, horticulture, to recreation management, distinct from those in the CAC.

The current biodiversity strategic plan reaching its 10-year mark presents an opportunity for the City of Calgary to demonstrate its commitment to biodiversity, its residents, and visitors. Evaluating and reporting on past actions for future insight and accountability, recognizing the importance of developing and implementing a strong standalone biodiversity strategy, and maintaining the BAC in a format capable of supporting such, is crucial. To discuss any of our above recommendations or suggestions for what a new biodiversity strategy should look like further, please contact one of our organization’s representatives listed below.

Sincerely,



Chloe Hahn, Conservation Coordinator, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Southern Alberta



Katie Morrison, Executive Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Southern Alberta

Recipients: City Clerk’s Office – Public Submissions (publicsubmissions@calgary.ca), Jyoti Gondek (themayor@calgary.ca), Sonya Sharp (Sonya.Sharp@calgary.ca), Jennifer Wyness (Jennifer.Wyness@calgary.ca), Jasmine Mian (Jasmine.Mian@calgary.ca), Sean Chu (Sean.Chu@calgary.ca), Raj Dhaliwal (Raj.Dhaliwal@calgary.ca), Richard Pootmans (Richard.Pootmans@calgary.ca), Terry Wong (Terry.Wong@calgary.ca), Courtney Walcott (Courtney.Walcott@calgary.ca), Gian-Carlo Carra (Gian-Carlo.Carra@calgary.ca)

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Public Submission

CC 968 (R2024-05)

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Please note that your name and comments will be made publicly available in the Council or Council Committee agenda and minutes. Your e-mail address will not be included in the public record.

ENDORSEMENT STATEMENT ON TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

The purpose of The City of Calgary is to make life better every day. To fully realize our purpose, we are committed to addressing racism and other forms of discrimination within our programs, policies, and services and eliminating barriers that impact the lives of Indigenous, Racialized, and other marginalized people. It is expected that participants will behave respectfully and treat everyone with dignity and respect to allow for conversations free from bias and prejudice.

First name [required] Stephanie

Last name [required] Findlay

How do you wish to attend?

You may bring a support person should you require language or translator services. Do you plan on bringing a support person?

What meeting do you wish to comment on? [required] Council

Date of meeting [required] Jul 30, 2024

What agenda item do you wish to comment on? (Refer to the Council or Committee agenda published [here](#).)

[required] - max 75 characters The disbandment of the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee

Are you in favour or opposition of the issue? [required] In opposition



Public Submission

CC 968 (R2024-05)

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Comments - please refrain from providing personal information in this field (maximum 2500 characters)

I am an professional environmental scientist working in the City of Calgary, and I want it on the record that I believe that council is not demonstrating a commitment to preserving biodiversity in this City by dissolving the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee. By disbanding this committee, it is effectively setting aside the City's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan. The plan has many goals, one of which was the commitment to restore 20% of Calgary's current open space to increase biodiversity, a goal which will not be met by 2025. I can't see a path forward, nor do I see the City providing us with next steps to continue to prioritize biodiversity. As a result, biodiversity will likely get left behind other initiatives of the day, or drown out by louder voices if paired with other groups. I hope the City takes formal steps to protect biodiversity in a more meaningful way in the wake of this decision. For example, the European Union has passed a restoration law requiring Member states to restore 20% of the bloc's land by the end of this decade.