

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Landscape industry is drowning with lack of water in Calgary

Over 500 firms in greater Calgary have been impacted by the summer of 2024 water crisis. Calgary green industry companies (landscapers, tree and sod growers, lawn care companies, and garden centres) have lost approximately 50% of the available working days this season with the recent addition of 4 more weeks of water restrictions.

More than 5000 Calgary families rely on their careers making and keeping Calgary green. Many have indicated that given the announced timeline that the only option remaining is widespread layoffs. This would mean thousands of people out of work in an already disastrous year. An over \$1 billion-dollar local industry is facing economic ruin. Many won't have jobs to come back to considering how many companies may fail. We need help!

Landscape Alberta, on behalf of the professional landscape industry, is asking the City of Calgary to make the following changes for the August/September shutdown to save jobs and small businesses.

1. Allow the landscape and construction activities listed in Stage 3 of restrictions to be permitted through exemption during the upcoming repairs.
3. Immediately remove all restrictions in the lead up August 26th shutdown to allow for additional watering ahead of restrictions to allow plant material to survive the repair timeline.
4. Adjust the wording in press and public communications to focus on what watering solutions are available versus the current language of 'bans' and 'fines'.
5. Open additional water pumping facilities, including use of stormwater ponds to ensure professional landscape users do not have extended travel or wait times.
6. The City of Calgary amends their own construction inspection standards to allow for approval of plant material, irrigation systems etc. that are otherwise ready for CCC or FAC inspection. No plant material will pass inspection given the water restrictions this year. Having the ability to complete jobs in 2024 will have an incredible impact.
6. Add the ability to test irrigation systems using compressed air as opposed to water.
7. Ask all businesses to reduce non-essential indoor water usage to allow for the landscape professional to not be unfairly singled out for reasonable water usage.

The landscape industry has been disproportionately impacted by the outdoor water restrictions in 2024. Without access to water through the planned time of restrictions, many projects will not be completed, plant material will not have proper establishment time before winter, and many in our industry will be facing severe layoffs and/or bankruptcies and closures of many small businesses that drive the local economy.

Landscape Alberta members are professionals in the green industry and thus regularly practice efficient water use in all their operations including having access to landscape standards, training and certification, and the latest in greatest research and technology. Over the years the industry has invested greatly in creating drought tolerant turf mixes and trees and shrubs that are hardy to the dry Prairie climate. They will continue to be stewards of responsible water use, including use of non-potable water where allowed, and the ability to adapt water usage to real world needs.

Many Landscape Alberta members have taken advantage of non-potable water pumping to provide planting services through the first shutdown and will continue to do so moving forward. Combined with helping customers pick water wise plants and solutions including drip irrigation, and rain barrels, this is how we contribute to the ongoing greening of Calgary. However, many companies/sites lack the infrastructure or equipment to take advantage of non-potable water and being water smart doesn't simply mean no water.

September is one of the busiest planting months of the year, without the survival of green infrastructure Calgary is set on a course for more severe impacts of climate change including issues with stormwater flooding and erosion, as well as increased impacts of the urban heat island effect. Trees, shrubs and turf are the lungs of our city.

We are asking Mayor Gondek and Council for your immediate support in directing staff to work with Landscape Alberta and its membership to implement the above changes. As all Calgarians know, winter is coming – we just don't know when. The plants and people that make Calgary green cannot survive another watering ban this year.

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