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Mayor Gondek
Office of the Mayor
The City of Calgary
P.O. Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5
(via email: themayor@calgary.ca)

August 15, 2024

RE: City of Calgary Water Restrictions

Dear Mayor Gondek,

I am writing to ask for your urgent assistance to help save small businesses and jobs 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.

Over 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 your 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 the upcoming repairs for landscape professionals. Outdoor water usage by the public is widely different between June and September, where it is a vital time of year for our green infrastructure. This could be completed as emergency relief on a rotating schedule based on area of the city as allowed in the Water Utility bylaw (40M2006 – Page 15/16 - 20-4)

2. Immediately remove all restrictions in the lead up August 26th shutdown to allow for additional watering ahead of restrictions. This will allow a great deal of plant material to survive the second shutdown.
3. Adjust the wording in press and public communications to focus on what watering solutions are available versus the current language of 'bans' and 'fines'.
4. Open additional water pumping facilities to open with the August 26th shutoff. Two locations with long wait times are simply not enough. Additionally, the City could permit professional landscape companies access to City stormwater ponds to create more local pumping facilities in every community. Landscape Alberta notes that water pumping of non-potable sources only serves a small portion of the industry, as many small companies do not have the equipment to haul or distribute water for commercial use.
5. 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 indoor water usage by 50% 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Beatson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Joel Beatson, CAE, CLHM

Executive Director