

City Council meeting of March 3, 4 and 5, 2008

City supports climate change goals by greening its vehicle fleet

Council unanimously approved the Green Fleet Plan 2008-2011, which will see the City purchase more environmentally friendly vehicles. These vehicles will help the City Fleet meet or surpass its emission reduction targets adopted by Council: it will reduce locally produced smog emissions by 20 per cent by 2012, and meet Kyoto greenhouse gas reduction targets. The City Fleet will add a minimum: 80 vehicles in 2008, 100 vehicles in 2009, 140 vehicles in 2010 and 200 vehicles in 2011. The City will test electric and hydrogen powered vehicles. Also, the City's street sweepers will be replaced with dustless models that will trap the swept particles, preventing them from becoming airborne. The Fleet Services Division will work with other City divisions to reduce the overall number of vehicles used and kilometres travelled, and to use vehicles more efficiently.

Council adopts bylaw to allow property owners to generate and sell electricity

Council unanimously approved a new bylaw that allows for the production of energy from renewable energy sources and cogeneration sources city-wide, and for the distribution of the energy off-site, such as the electrical system or to a district energy system. The new bylaw brings clarity to the current situation where the 43 zoning bylaws are silent on the issue, mainly because they were written at a time where options, including solar panels or windmills, were not available. The integration of 'green energy' into the electrical system or district energy systems will help reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution in the city. Use of such power sources will help the City reach its climate change goals.

Retail holiday shopping locations and hours remain unchanged

A report outlining new options for holiday shopping was received for information only by Council, which means the status quo remains. Most stores in the City must continue to close on New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Chapter 510 of the Municipal Code lists 15 categories of exempt store types that are permitted to remain open. In addition, stores in the Eaton Centre, Distillery District, Queen's Quay Terminal, Downtown Yonge BIA and the Bloor Yorkville BIA are permitted to remain open on certain designated holidays.

Support for Toronto's film and television industry

City Council approved a motion to oppose the Federal government's Bill C10, which would allow tax credits to be denied to productions deemed to have "offensive content." Canadian law and the current tax credit system already require Canadian productions to meet high standards of quality and decency. Under the new bill, productions approved for tax credits would have to return the funds if their final product did not meet with government approval, making it even more difficult to attract financial backers. Council also voted in favour of asking the Federal government to conduct a nationwide consultation with industry stakeholders on the implications of the proposal prior to implementing any change to the tax credit system. In 2006, production companies spent more than \$704 million filming on location in Toronto, and more than 35,000 people are employed in the city's film and television industry.

City endorses plan to build a creative city

Council adopted the Creative City Planning Framework, a plan to increase economic competitiveness and long-term prosperity by adopting a Cultural Planning model and developing “Creative Toronto.” Cultural Planning seeks to leverage the connections between place, culture and the economy. “Creative Toronto,” one of the four pillars outlined in the Agenda for Prosperity: a Prospectus for a Great City, states that Toronto can compete in sectors that add value, increase productivity and grow the economy through research, development and the commercialization of ideas. The Creative City Planning Framework was developed in conjunction with The Agenda for Prosperity and supports its priority actions. City Council adopted the Agenda for Prosperity at its January 2008 meeting. The report will be used to guide major strategic policies having an impact on Toronto’s economic competitiveness and growth.

Ratification of the Toronto-Ontario Agreement on Cooperation and Consultation

Council ratified the Agreement on Cooperation and Consultation between the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario, signed on January 15, 2008. Under the agreement, the two governments will consult with each other on proposed changes to legislation, regulations, bylaws and resolutions, and on policy matters of mutual interest, as provided in the City of Toronto Act, 2006. The Act, which came into force on January 1, 2007, gives the City new tools and flexibility to better respond to residents’ needs.

Leaf and yard waste collection and Christmas tree pick-up extended

Council voted to extend the current leaf and yard waste, as well as Christmas tree collection schedules starting in September 2008. Given that religious holiday celebrations now extend into the second and third weeks of January, and that changing climate conditions have altered seasonal weather patterns, the extended spring and fall leaf and yard waste collection, and extended Christmas tree collection will provide better service to residents. Under the new schedule, bi-weekly collection of leaf and yard waste will occur from March 16 through to December 31, and Christmas tree pick-up will take place bi-weekly from January 5 to 23. Currently, the City provides single-family residences with curb side collection of leaf and yard waste beginning the first full week of April and continuing through until the first week of December, on an alternating weekly/bi-weekly schedule. Christmas trees are currently collected from single-family residences weekly during the first two weeks of January.

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