

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE- JANUARY 13, 2015

EARTH HOUR 2015

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Strategic and Corporate Services and Manager of Environmental Sustainability in consultation with the Director of Building and Facilities recommend:

1. That the City of Vaughan continue to support and participate in the Earth Hour 2015 initiative on the night of Saturday, March 28th, 2015 by partnering with the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee, to host a community celebration at City Hall; and
2. That City staff, including but not limited to, Corporate Communications, Recreation and Culture, Environmental Sustainability and By-law and Compliance Services be directed to provide in-kind support as needed to Earth Hour Vaughan in executing the event.

Contribution to Sustainability

Leadership and action are core principles that guide our actions on sustainability. This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council in the *Green Directions Vaughan*, Community Sustainability Environmental Master Plan:

- Goal 5, Objective 5.2: To continue the City's role in advocacy and information sharing on environmental issues; and
- Goal 1, Objective 1.1: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards carbon neutrality for the City of Vaughan's facilities and infrastructure.

Economic Impact

The Earth Hour Vaughan Committee would coordinate all aspects of the event in consultation with City of Vaughan representatives. The City would provide access to the Atrium, Multi-purpose room, Cafeteria and adjacent outdoor space along with tables for the exhibit portion of the event, outdoor stage and related sound equipment, as well as indoor stage. Any overtime labour costs incurred by Building and Facilities on March 28, 2015 to execute the Earth Hour event are to be covered by the Environmental Sustainability Office special events budget. Any other activities will be supported through existing budget allocations.

The Earth Hour Vaughan Committee will be tasked with securing the necessary financial support from other community partners to execute the event.

Communications Plan

The Earth Hour Vaughan Committee is committed to securing strong participation from Vaughan area high schools and building awareness of public school students about the event. The Environmental Sustainability Office will work with Corporate Communications to develop a communications plan to promote the initiative to the community throughout the City which will compliment the efforts by the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide background on the Earth Hour initiative and recommend the City of Vaughan partner to host the community celebration of this event at City Hall on March 28, 2015.

Background - Analysis and Options

On March 31, 2007 residents, businesses and local governments in Sydney Australia turned off their lights for one hour to bring attention to the issue of energy conservation and climate change. More than 2 million residents participated causing energy usage to drop by 10.2 per cent across the business district. The drop represented a reduction of 25 tonnes of carbon dioxide (equivalent to taking 48,613 cars off the road for one hour). Only a year later on March 29, 2008, Earth Hour had become a global sustainability movement with more than 50 million people across 35 countries participating. World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), a global environmental non-profit organization, assists with coordinating the Earth Hour program.

Highlights from WWF's Earth Hour 2014:

- more than 7000 cities and towns in 162 countries and territories across all seven continents participated globally; and
- just over two of five Canadians from hundreds of cities, town and municipalities took part.

PowerStream reported that Vaughan reduced its energy consumption by 4.5 per cent in 2014 for the Earth Hour event which was slightly below the 4.8 per cent reduction achieved by the entire PowerStream service area. By turning off the lights between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., the City reduced its energy use by 14.9 megawatts, enough energy to power 450 average-sized homes for 24 hours.

In 2014, the Vaughan Earth Hour event at City Hall attracted an estimated 500 people. A lantern walk and separate bike ride, environmental trade show, youth engagement activity, York Region Catholic School Board's Rock the Bike, citizen awards, hot refreshments, children activities and live entertainment were part of the 2014 event. Early planning for the 2015 Earth hour has identified a residential energy exhibit, lantern making, a high school environmental knowledge challenge activity and local performers as potential components of this event.

Earth Hour has been identified as a component of the *Green Directions Vaughan* citizen engagement/education strategy as it has strong links to energy efficiency and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

By participating in Earth Hour, the City continues to demonstrate environmental leadership and responsibility, by encouraging behavioural change in the business and residential communities, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and supports the City's strategic goal of service excellence with the specific objective of leading and promoting environmental sustainability as demonstrated by the 2014 initiative where City reduced its energy use by 14.9 megawatts, enough energy to power 405 average-sized homes for 24 hours.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

Participating in the Earth Hour initiative on March 28, 2015 will demonstrate the City of Vaughan's ongoing commitment to promoting and practicing environmentally responsible behaviour. Vaughan will be joining a growing number of Canadian municipalities and international cities who have expressed their interest in participating in this global awareness event.

Working with the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee will provide both administrative and promotional support. Powerstream will be able to monitor the impact on electrical demand, which will provide the public with an indication of the potential benefits of a minor behavioural change on their energy usage. Hosting the Earth Hour 2015 celebration at City Hall will enable more people from across all the communities in Vaughan to participate.

Report prepared by:

Chris Wolnik, Manager, Environmental Sustainability

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Pittari, MSc
Commissioner of Strategic
and Corporate Services

Chris Wolnik, MA
Manager, Environmental Sustainability