

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE– MARCH 3, 2015

2015 EARTH DAY TREE PLANTING

Recommendation

The Interim City Manager and the Manager of Environmental Sustainability in consultation with the Director of Transportation Services and Parks & Forestry Operations recommend:

1. That the City of Vaughan partner with local area Scotiabank branches in a tree planting event on April 22, 2015 to celebrate Earth Day;
2. That staff in Corporate Communications be directed to support this event;
3. That staff report back on the Earth Day Tree Planting through the *Green Directions Vaughan* annual update.

Contribution to Sustainability

Vaughan's participation in and promotion of the Earth Day tree planting event supports *Green Directions Vaughan*, Goal 5: To be leaders in advocacy and education on sustainability issues. The Earth Day event aligns well with the City's ongoing environmental outreach program with Vaughan businesses and the community.

Economic Impact

There are no additional economic impacts resulting from this report. Scotiabank has committed to securing the trees, which align with standards set by Parks & Forestry Operations, for this initiative. The City of Vaughan will provide in-kind support through provision of staff time to participate on the steering committee to coordinate the event, equipment to prepare the area for planting, mulch for the area being planted and a location to host a sponsor appreciation event.

Communications Plan

As was done in 2014 for the first Earth Day tree planting event with Scotiabank, Corporate Communications Department will review and comment on the media release developed by Scotiabank and compliment Scotiabank's efforts to promote this event through social media and print media. Information on the event will be posted on the Environmental Sustainability area of the City website. Vaughan's participation will also be highlighted in a broader marketing and communications strategy that will be coordinated by Scotiabank.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to obtain Committee approval for the City of Vaughan to partner with Scotiabank in a tree planting event on April 22, 2015 to mark Earth Day.

Background - Analysis and Options

Earth Day was founded in 1970 by then US Senator Gaylord Nelson who envisioned hosting a "national teach-in on the environment" that featured rallies across the US to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment. In 1990, Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and raising the importance of environmental issues on the world stage. In 2014, Earth Day was celebrated by more than a billion people in 192 countries and is recognized as the largest, most celebrated environmental event worldwide.

In Canada, Earth Day is celebrated by more than 6 million Canadians through participation in events and projects that focus on local environmental issues. For the past eight years, the City of Vaughan has coordinated the 20-Minute Makeover, a community wide clean-up event, to coincide with Earth Day.

Tree planting is a critical component to maintaining an urban tree canopy. The urban tree canopy helps to mitigate climate change and air pollution impacts as well as provides energy conservation benefits. In addition, the City of Vaughan has effectively used its urban forest comprised of boulevard trees, green Spaces, parks, natural areas, and woodlots to visually enhance outdoor spaces, creating inviting spaces for visitors, businesses, and a source of civic pride. Strategic planting continues to be a key component of the five year plan to expand and diversify the Urban Forest.

Scotiabank has a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility. As a financial institution they recognize they have a role to play in raising environmental awareness among retail and corporate clients. By partnering to deliver a tree planting event in the City of Vaughan, Scotiabank will provide an opportunity for employees and customers to enhance the green space of their local community and help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Scotiabank has partnered with other municipalities in tree planting efforts as evidenced by their recent support of the City of London's Reforest London program.

For the Scotiabank 2014 Earth Day tree planting event, approximately 400 trees and whips, unbranched tree seedlings, were planted in Tudor Park and Chancellor Park. These areas were identified by Vaughan Parks and Forestry Operations as being greatly impacted by the Emerald ash borer. Scotiabank was able to secure the participation of a local school for the Chancellor event and a variety of student volunteers for the Tudor Park planting.

In 2015, there is a desire to host the event at Concord/Thornhill Regional Park with corporate sponsors secured by Scotiabank providing the financing to purchase the trees. This park has been identified by Parks and Forestry Operations as being an ideal location to expand the urban tree canopy. The number of trees planted will be highly dependent on the success of securing corporate sponsors.

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. The Earth day tree planting leverages the strong environmental commitment of a corporate leader to improve the natural environment of the broader community.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

Earth Day and the planned tree planting event encourage residents, students and businesses to take action in their community through environmental stewardship. The City's participation demonstrates environmental leadership and provides an effective vehicle for public education. With the support of Scotiabank, the City of Vaughan is able to improve its urban tree canopy and mitigate the losses of trees to disease and extreme weather events.


Attachments

N/A

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Respectfully submitted,


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