

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE- JANUARY 17, 2012

EARTH HOUR 2012

Recommendation

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

1. The City of Vaughan support and participate in the Earth Hour 2012 initiative on the night of March 31st, 2012 by partnering with the Woodbridge Earth Hour Committee, to host a community celebration at City Hall

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
- 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

All activities can be supported through existing budget allocations. Woodbridge Earth Hour 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, and adjacent outdoor space along with tables for the exhibit portion of the event. The Woodbridge Earth Hour Committee would be securing additional financial support from other community partners.

Communications Plan

Woodbridge Earth Hour 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 through the City which will compliment the efforts by Woodbridge Earth Hour 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 31, 2012.

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 2011:

- A record 134 countries and territories participated globally
- Countries with emerging economies, such as Uganda and Lesotho, participated for the first time
- Scotland was the first country to have 100% of its cities to commit to Earth Hour
- In Canada, over 420 cities, town and municipalities took part - a 38% increase from the previous year.

PowerStream reported that Vaughan reduced its energy consumption by 8.8 per cent in 2011 for the Earth Hour event which is up from 7.0 per cent in the previous year. By turning off the lights between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., the City reduced its energy use by 28.4 megawatts, enough energy to power 860 average-sized homes for 24 hours.

Woodbridge Earth Hour Committee has hosted previous Earth Hour celebrations at the Woodbridge Memorial Arena. A lantern walk, energy efficiency trade show, citizen awards, hot refreshments, children activities and live entertainment are typically part of the event. Attendance ranges from 200-400 participants. Early planning for the 2012 Earth hour has identified a residential water and energy exhibit as well as a high school climate change project exhibit 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.

During Earth Hour 2011 the lights at City Hall were reduced to a minimum during the 8:30 -9:30 PM time period.

By participating in Earth Hour, the City will be demonstrating 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 objective of leading and promoting environmental sustainability.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

Participating in the Earth Hour initiative on March 31st, 2012 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 who have expressed their interest in participating.

Working with Woodbridge Earth Hour 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. Moving the Earth Hour 2012 celebration to City Hall from its previous home at the Woodbridge Memorial Arena will allow for broader participation from across Vaughan.

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