

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (1) – FEBRUARY 28, 2023

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Distributed February 24, 2023

Subject

SC 1 Memorandum from the Deputy City Manager,
Planning and Growth Management, dated
February 13, 2023.

2023 Earth Hour

Disclaimer Respecting External Communications

Communications are posted on the City's website pursuant to Procedure By-law Number 7-2011. The City of Vaughan is not responsible for the validity or accuracy of any facts and/or opinions contained in external Communications listed on printed agendas and/or agendas posted on the City's website.

Please note there may be further Communications.

**STAFF COMMUNICATION
FOR INFORMATION ONLY****Staff Communication : SC 1
Committee of the Whole (1)
February 28, 2023**

DATE: February 13th, 2023

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

FROM: Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning & Growth Management

**RE: STAFF COMMUNICATION
Committee of the Whole (1) February 28, 2023
2023 Earth Hour**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Staff Communication is to advise Mayor and Members of Council that the 2023 Earth Hour event will take place on March 25, 2023, and will require in-kind support from City Staff. The support will consist primarily of Facility Services staff and may also include additional City Departments to support the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee.

Report Highlights

- The 2023 Earth Hour global awareness campaign takes place on March 25, 2023 and staff are recommending that the City of Vaughan, in partnership with the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee, host a community celebration at City Hall.
- Staff anticipate that the event will attract over 250 Vaughan residents, thereby providing an opportunity for raising awareness on energy efficiency and climate change issues as it relates to Green Directions Vaughan and the City's Municipal Energy Plan.
- Staff from various City Departments will assist in supporting the event and had provided in-kind services for 12 consecutive years prior to COVID-19.
- 2023 Earth Hour will be the first time the event will be held in person since 2019 due to pandemic restrictions.
- During the last in-person event in 2019, Vaughan residents and businesses reduced energy consumption by over 13 megawatts over the course of Earth Hour (8:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.)

2. Analysis

Background

Earth Hour is a global initiative of the World Wildlife Fund that targets energy reduction and climate action. The City of Vaughan has supported Earth Hour for over a decade by partnering with the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee, which is made up of resident volunteers, to host an annual celebration at Vaughan City Hall. By participating in Earth Hour, the City continues to demonstrate environmental leadership by providing education and awareness to the Vaughan community in an effort to encourage behavioural changes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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 individuals and 2,000 businesses participated. One year later, on March 29, 2008, Earth Hour had become a global sustainability movement with more than 50 million people across 35 countries participating. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a global environmental non-profit organization, assists with coordinating the Earth Hour program.

Highlights from WWF's Earth Hour 2022 include:

- 192 countries and territories participated globally
- Over 10.1 billion social media impressions were generated and Earth Hour trended across Google and Twitter in 35 countries

Alectra Utilities reported that the last time the Earth Hour event was held in person in 2019, the Vaughan community reduced its energy consumption by 4.2 percent which was greater than the 1.8 percent reduction achieved by the entire Alectra Utilities service area. By turning off the lights between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., City residents and businesses reduced energy use by 13.68 megawatts. This led all municipalities in the Alectra Utilities service area.

Earth Hour Vaughan is organized by the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee, a citizen-led volunteer group. In 2019, the 12th annual Earth Hour Vaughan event held at City Hall attracted an estimated 500 people. A lantern walk, night-cycle ride, candlelit yoga class, citizen awards, children's activities and live entertainment were part of the 2019 event. Preliminary event planning for the 2023 Earth Hour has identified active transportation and waste management exhibits, lantern making, a lantern walk, a school banner showcase, smoothie bikes, social media engagement strategies, and local performers as potential components of this event.

Earth Hour aligns with actions in the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, *Green Directions Vaughan*, to reduce and promote the reduction of

greenhouse gas emissions and to advocate and inform residents about environmental issues.

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

Financial Impact

The Earth Hour Vaughan Committee coordinates all aspects of the event in consultation with City of Vaughan representatives. As in past years, the City will provide access to the following City Hall amenity spaces: Atrium, Multi-Purpose Room, Cafeteria and adjacent outdoor space. Tables for the exhibit portion of the event, an indoor stage and related sound equipment will also be provided by the City. Any other activities will be supported through existing budget allocations that have been approved by Council.

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

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (<http://ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>) identify that within the next decade global efforts to limit warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius must dramatically increase in order to avoid dangerous and potentially irreversible climate change impacts.

While the Earth Hour event is focused on awareness, rather than climate mitigation action, community engagement and building on environmental sustainability and climate change are foundational efforts needed to meet the challenge laid out in the IPCC report. Collaboration between City, resident, and business efforts will be needed, and events such as Earth Hour contribute to broader engagement goals.

Conclusion

Participating in the 2023 Earth Hour initiative on March 25, 2023 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 that have expressed their interest in participating in this global awareness event.

The Earth Hour Vaughan Committee will provide both administrative and promotional support. Alectra Utilities will 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 2023 Earth Hour celebration at City Hall will enable more people from across all the communities in Vaughan to participate.

For more information, contact Will Baigent, Sustainability Coordinator, ext. 8941

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Haiqing Xu', written in a cursive style.

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager,
Planning & Growth Management