

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, May 6, 2025

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROCLAMATION REQUESTS

FROM:

Vince Musacchio, Interim Deputy City Manager, Planning, Growth Management and Housing Delivery

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek Council approval to proclaim, annually, three days of significance related to advancing environmental sustainability initiatives and fulfilling Goal 5 in Green Directions Vaughan: to be leaders in advocacy and education on sustainability issues.

Report Highlights

- Proclaiming Clean Air Day in Canada, Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week provides the opportunity to showcase City initiatives and accomplishments.
- The proclamations demonstrate the City's support of clean air for our residents, Ontario farmers, and local food.
- Staff will utilize existing promotion of Vaughan farms and farmer's markets on the Tourism Vaughan website in education campaigns, and will continue to encourage farms with specialty activations to list on the Tourism Vaughan website.

Recommendations

1. THAT the following be proclaimed, on an annual basis:
 - a. Clean Air Day in Canada (Wednesday, June 4, 2025), on the first Wednesday of June;
 - b. Local Food Week (June 2-8, 2025) starting on the first Monday in June;
 - c. Ontario Agriculture Week (October 6-12, 2025), starting on the first Monday in October; and

2. THAT the proclamations be posted on the City's website and that the Communications, Marketing and Engagement Department be directed to promote the above noted proclamations, education related to the proclamations, and any associated City-led initiatives, through the various corporate channels.

Background

Clean Air Day in Canada reminds us of the importance of clean air for good health and a safe environment.

Since 1999, Canada has recognized Clean Air Day on the first Wednesday in June. Air pollution has a significant impact on our health and environment and is the leading environmental risk to health in Canada. Air pollution increases incidences of stroke, heart disease and respiratory diseases and can worsen health issues such as asthma, bronchitis and diabetes, increase hospital admissions and emergency room visits, and can lead to premature deaths. Air pollution is also harmful to wildlife, vegetation and ecosystems.

Air pollutants are emitted from a variety of sources, including energy production and consumption, industrial and manufacturing activities, transportation and products like aerosols and sealants. Air pollution also includes wildfire smoke, and due to climate change, wildfire seasons are more severe and lasting longer. We have seen that Ontario can be affected by wildfire smoke originating from as far away as Quebec and the Canadian west coast.

Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week encourage us to celebrate the abundance of fresh Ontario products and celebrate Ontario farmers.

The Local Food Act, 2013 outlines that the week beginning on the first Monday in June is proclaimed as Local Food Week. Education and advocacy during the week improves food literacy, encourages increased use of, and increased access to, local food.

Ontario Agriculture Week was first established to recognize and celebrate Ontario farmers, through the Ontario Agriculture Week Act, 1998 and is observed starting on the Monday before Thanksgiving Day.

The agriculture and agri-food sector plays an important role in York Region's economy and supporting the Ontario food chain. The latest [agriculture and agri-food sector highlights](#), published by York Region, indicate that Vaughan is home to 52 farms and 7,862 acres of farmland, 131 food and beverage manufacturers and 1,296 agri-food businesses. Agricultural lands in Vaughan contribute to over \$33 million in total operating farm revenue.

Economic Development promotes the agriculture and agri-food sector in Vaughan.

The Economic Development website (vaughanbusiness.ca) shines a spotlight on the agri-food and food processing sector in Vaughan. The latest [Agri-food and Food Processing sector profile](#) report indicates that Vaughan supports 57,000 jobs regionally through food and beverage manufacturing. Notable concentrations include bakeries and tortilla manufacturing, sugar and confectionery product manufacturing, dairy product manufacturing and food merchant wholesalers.

In addition, Economic Development, through Tourism Vaughan, hosts the visitvaughan.ca website with the purpose of attracting visitors to Vaughan and helping visitors plan their vacations while here. Farms with specialty activations and farmer's markets are eligible to be listed on the website, by submitting a request.

Previous Reports/Authority

Not applicable.

Analysis and Options

Proclaiming Clean Air Day in Canada, Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week aligns with the City's community sustainability plan, Green Directions Vaughan and the City's Proclamation Policy.

Proclaiming and promoting the above noted days of significance meets Actions under Goal 5 of Green Directions Vaughan: to be leaders in advocacy and education on sustainability issues. Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week also directly align with Objective 4.3 to "Improve community well-being through support of local food, the Agricultural System and the Agri-Food Network."

These proclamation requests meet the requirements of the City's Proclamation Policy 03.C.10, as follows:

- 2.1 For the purposes of section 2, a proclamation may be issued for:
 - 2.1.4 Public awareness campaigns

The Proclamation Policy also states that requests are not automatically renewed for the following calendar year, unless otherwise directed by Council.

Proclaiming Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week enhances awareness of City initiatives and supports the local agriculture and agri-food network.

The City is already committed to support the agriculture and agri-food network through the following initiatives:

1. Stewardship and transformation: creating connections with local urban agriculture organizations to provide residents with opportunities to learn and engage, and creating a network of community gardens which allow residents of all ages and all abilities to grow fresh food.
2. Development: promoting urban agriculture in development through the [Sustainability Performance Metrics Program](#).
3. Education and promotion: supporting local food initiatives through education at events and on the City's website and providing information on the health and environmental benefits of choosing local food options. Farms with specialty activations and farmer's markets, should they choose, are also promoted on the Tourism Vaughan visitvaughan.ca website.
4. Advocacy: participating as a member of the [York Region Food Council](#). The York Region Food Council works to build networks across the food system, conduct research on the York Region food system, educate through public events, advocate for policy changes that foster a healthy food system, and support the creation and implementation of food system initiatives.

For residents, buying and supporting local helps to create vibrant, resilient communities. Benefits of buying local expand across the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – and include the following:

- Support for local economic growth by supporting local farmers and businesses.
- More nutritious food due to produce being fresher at consumption (less travel).
- Social responsibility through the connection with local farms, green houses, and community organizations to ensure fair working conditions, including migrant workers.
- Reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to reduced transportation distances.

Proclaiming Local Food Week provides the opportunity for the City to emphasize the benefits of supporting local, to the economy, our health and the environment. It will allow the City to offer tips to residents on how to get involved in growing their own food, and where to purchase local food, highlighting the farms and farmer's markets that are listed on the Tourism Vaughan visitvaughan.ca website. Proclaiming Ontario Agriculture Week provides the opportunity for the City to demonstrate support for farmers and the agri-food sector in Vaughan.

Proclaiming Clean Air Day in Canada demonstrates commitment to clean air for residents and brings awareness to City initiatives.

Trees, wooded areas and greenspaces help provide clean air by filtering out pollutants and sequestering carbon. It is important to recognize the efforts the City is taking to contribute to clean air, including the Urban Forest Management Plan and the development of a Greenspace Strategic Plan to guide decisions surrounding the acquisition, provision, and maintenance of Vaughan's parkland and open spaces. Additionally, the City is implementing initiatives that address more walkable and bikeable neighbourhoods, encouraging low-carbon, low-polluting transportation options. Examples include implementing active transportation networks, developing an Active School Travel program, updating the Transportation Master Plan, and through the Official Plan creating mixed-use, higher-density communities where residents rely less on cars for travel.

Inside the home, residents can replace gas stoves and fireplaces, undergo upgrades to remove mold and dampness, retrofit to improve thermal comfort, optimize energy use and reduce GHG emissions, and eliminate products that contribute to pollution.

Proclaiming Clean Air Day provides the opportunity for the City to educate residents on how they can contribute to clean air, both indoors and outdoors, and highlight the work the City is doing to reduce pollution and GHG emissions.

Council approved annual proclamations improve operational efficiency

An annual proclamation of Clean Air Day, Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week, without the need to submit a proclamation request each year, saves on time and resources. Annual proclamations demonstrate the City's commitment to support Vaughan agriculture and the agri-food network, and reinforces the importance of clean air for residents in Vaughan.

Financial Impact

Staff will utilize existing operating budgets for materials needed for activities and events and to supplement promotion, if required.

Operational Impact

In collaboration with partners in Economic Development, staff will continue engagement with Vaughan farms and farmer's markets to identify opportunities that will attract residents and visitors to these businesses.

In collaboration with partners in Communications, Marketing and Engagement, a communications plan will be developed to promote Clean Air Day, Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week. Materials will be provided to Council for use in eNewsletters and social media channels.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Proclaiming Clean Air Day aligns with the Federal Government and will contribute to increased awareness of any Federal education campaign, and the work they are doing to combat air pollution.

Proclaiming Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week aligns with the Provincial Government and will contribute to increased awareness of any Provincial educational campaign, as well as Ontario farmers and the agri-food network across Ontario. It will also bring awareness to the initiatives that York Region is undertaking through the [Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy](#).

Conclusion

Staff is recommending that the following dates be proclaimed on an annual basis:

1. Clean Air Day in Canada on the first Wednesday of June
2. Local Food Week starting on the first Monday in June
3. Ontario Agriculture Week starting on the first Monday in October

Additionally, staff recommends that the proclamations be posted on the City's website and that the Communications, Marketing and Engagement Department be directed to promote the above noted proclamations, education related to the proclamations, and any associated City-led initiatives, through the various corporate channels.

These proclamations remind us of the importance of clean air for good health and a safe environment and encourage us to celebrate the abundance of fresh Vaughan produce and Vaughan farmers.

For more information, please contact Alanna MacKenzie, Sustainability Specialist, ext. 8941.

Attachments

N/A

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