

Item:



## Committee of the Whole Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, February 05, 2019

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE: 2019 EARTH HOUR**

**FROM:**

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

**ACTION:** DECISION

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### **Purpose**

To advise Council that the 2019 Earth Hour event will take place on March 30, 2019 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 2019 Earth Hour global awareness campaign takes place on March 30, 2019 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 500 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, which will mark its 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of City staff support by providing in-kind services
- In 2018, Vaughan residents and businesses reduced energy consumption by over 12 megawatts during Earth Hour (8:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.)

## **Recommendations**

1. That the City of Vaughan support and participate in the 2019 Earth Hour event on March 30, 2019 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 and Strategic Communications, Economic and Cultural Development, Recreation Services, Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability, Facility Services, Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations, and By-Law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services be directed to provide in-kind support, as needed, to deliver the 2019 Earth Hour Vaughan event.

## **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 11 years 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 2018 include:

- 188 countries and territories across all seven continents participated globally with over 18,000 landmarks and monuments switching off their lights
- Over 3.5 billion impressions of official campaign hashtags leading up to and on Earth Hour and over 250 ambassadors and influencers joined the movement

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

Previous staff reports dealing with Earth Hour can be found at the following links:

[Earth Hour 2018 Report](#)

[Earth Hour 2017 Report](#)

## **Analysis and Options**

Alectra Utilities reported that the Vaughan community reduced its energy consumption by 3.6 percent in 2018 for the Earth Hour event, which was greater than the 1.5 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 12 megawatts.

Earth Hour Vaughan is organized by the Earth Hour Vaughan Committee, a citizen-led volunteer group. In 2018, the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Hour Vaughan event held at City Hall attracted an estimated 500 people. A lantern walk, night-cycle ride, electric vehicle roadshow, energy exhibit, candlelit yoga class, citizen awards, children's activities and live entertainment were part of the 2018 event. Preliminary event planning for the 2019 Earth Hour has identified a residential energy exhibit, lantern making, night-cycle ride, candlelit yoga class, elementary school science experiment showcase, smoothie bike, 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**

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (<http://ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>) identifies that within the next twelve years 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 2019 Earth Hour initiative on March 30, 2019 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.

Working with 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 2019 Earth Hour celebration at City Hall will enable more people from across all the communities in Vaughan to participate.

For more information, please contact: Alanna MacKenzie, Sustainability Coordinator, Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability, ext. 8941.

## **Attachments**

N/A

## **Prepared by**

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