

CITY OF MARKHAM – DECLARATION OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY

WHEREAS: The City of Markham has demonstrated its leadership in sustainability, energy, and climate action for decades, and current policies and plans support continued action to mitigate and adapt to climate change including the Building Markham’s Future Together 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and Council-approved Municipal Energy Plan – Getting to Zero’s goal of net zero emissions by 2050;

AND WHEREAS: Markham’s ongoing leadership in climate action has resulted in \$2-Million per year in cumulative utility savings and \$1.6-Million in revenue to date, including approximately \$300,000 annual non-tax revenue from one of the largest municipally-owned rooftop solar PV fleets in Ontario, and as such is part of Markham’s commitment to fiscal responsibility and keeping life affordable for residents;

AND WHEREAS: Markham has received over a dozen awards to date for its actions on environmental sustainability and climate change;

AND WHEREAS; The City of Markham would like to express its solidarity with the almost 500 local governments in Canada that have declared Climate Emergencies as of February 3, 2020, including provincial and national capital cities Edmonton (AB), Halifax (NS), Moncton (NB), Ottawa (ON), St. John’s (NL), and Toronto (ON), several local municipalities near to Markham, including Brampton, Caledon, Durham Region, King, Newmarket, Mississauga, Pickering, Peel Region, Toronto, Vaughan and Whitby, as well as the Government of Canada;¹

AND WHEREAS: Markham recognizes the urgency of climate change as presented by the latest science, including:

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C*, issued in 2018, which identified that concerted and effective action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases must be taken in the near term if global warming is to be limited to not more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by mid-century;²

¹ (<https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/>), Since June 2019, many more Canadian cities and towns have declared a climate emergency including the city of Toronto. The website cited above shows that 464 towns and cities in Canada have now declared a climate emergency.

² This report was the first of three reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that reviewed the progress being made to meet the Paris Agreement targets agreed by over 190 countries including Canada in 2015. A press release summarising the findings of the report is available [here](#). The report specifically focused on the probable global impacts if warming could be held to 1.5°C, and the more intense likely effects if this was not possible. One finding that received international attention was that the world has at most 12 years to substantially reduce and draw down emissions of greenhouse gases if the 1.5°C target is to be met. At the present time, emissions of greenhouse gases are continuing to rise

- II. Latest measurements on concentrations of carbon dioxide, which have now risen to 415 ppm for the first time in human history and show no signs of slowing;³
- III. The May 2019 report from the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which has determined that out of 8 million known species of animals and plants, about 1 million are under threat of extinction;⁴
- IV. The report on Canada’s Changing Climate, issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada in 2019, which has forecast that Canada will warm twice as fast as the global average, which will very likely increase the probability and intensity of heat waves, wildfires, extreme weather and floods;⁵ and
- V. Research suggesting risks to public health related to climate change, such as potential increases in the incidence of tick-borne lyme disease;⁶

AND WHEREAS: The cost to Canada of global warming effects including floods, heat waves and sea-level rise, has been estimated at \$21 billion to \$43 billion a year by mid-century, and continued action on climate change has the opportunity to yield new opportunities and reduce financial and operational risks to the City of Markham;⁷

AND WHEREAS: The impacts of global warming and climate change will almost certainly have an adverse impact on the economy of the City of Markham and on the welfare of its residents;⁸

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY OF MARKHAM:

1. Declare a climate emergency for the purpose of deepening our commitment to taking strong and effective measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, and to ensure that the essential services provided by the City can withstand the adverse impacts of the changing climate;

³ Data on the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air are continually published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US. Data accessed on October 13 shows that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has reached about 415 parts per million. These are low concentrations of the gas, but it has a very strong impact on global warming

⁴ The ‘Summary for Policymakers’ of the referenced report is available [here](#). This report caused great concern among scientists as it carefully documented the steady global decline in the abundance of millions of species of animals and plants. The report was authored by a multinational team of experts.

⁵ This report from Environment and Climate Change Canada shocked many Canadians when it stated that Canada was warming faster than the global average. Many people still believe that Canada will not be greatly affected by the changing global climate. Unfortunately, that is not true. The press release from ECCC can be found [here](#).

⁶ Dunic, I., and Severini, E. (2018). “Ticking Bomb”: The Impact of Climate Change on the Incidence of Lyme Disease. *Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases and Medical Microbiology*. Retrieved from <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/cjidmm/2018/5719081/>

⁷ These numbers are taken from an article in the Toronto Star that appeared in May this year. The Star reported that “The cost to Canada of global warming effects including floods, heat waves and sea-level rise, has been estimated at \$21 billion to \$43 billion a year by mid-century.”

⁸ In September last year, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, issued a report titled: Climate Action in Ontario: What’s Next. It is available [here](#). The report noted that Ontario is warming faster than the global average, and that the ten warmest years on record have all occurred since 1998. Moreover, the report stated that in the first five months of 2018, extreme weather had already resulted in nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars of insured damaged in Ontario (p18).

- i. Note that this Declaration is not intended to invoke the City of Markham's Emergency Plan or to interfere with the responsibilities and power delegated to the Mayor to declare or to terminate a local emergency under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 1990*;
2. Leverage its existing partnership with York University and other post-secondary institutions to establish a program for students to access and explore data owned by the City of Markham for the purposes of furthering climate change research and cleantech entrepreneurship, in alignment with Markham's open data program;
3. Continue to implement Smart City initiatives to support innovative, efficient, and effective service delivery, with a renewed focus on new initiatives that help Markham to mitigate and adapt to climate change;
4. Continue working with other levels of government to champion alternative, low-carbon transportation methods, including implementation of the Yonge Street North Subway Extension;
5. Report back periodically to the public on the progress being made on the implementation of (a) Greenprint, Markham's Sustainability Plan, (b) Markham's Municipal Energy Plan, and (c) other measures that are currently being taken or are planned for the future to mitigate and adapt to climate change;
6. Engage Markham residents and businesses to play a more significant role in addressing climate change mitigation and impacts;
7. Direct staff to explore the establishment of a carbon budget for corporate emissions commensurate with Markham's goal of Net-zero by 2050 and establish a process for reporting on the expenditure of the City's remaining carbon budget;
8. Commit to joining the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy for the purposes of sharing best practices, establishing a process of regular reporting on progress, and sharing Markham's leadership with respect to climate change action with the world;
9. Direct staff to update the City of Markham's Official Plan in accordance with its commitment to Net Zero Emissions by 2050 at such time as the plan is to be updated.
10. Review and update the Markham Greenprint Sustainability Plan, in particular the climate-related components, with new targets for 2030-2050 in light of new global and local data and models which have become available since the plan was first written.