



Report to: General Committee

Date Report Authored: January 08, 2015

SUBJECT:	Markham Celebrates Earth Month- 2015
PREPARED BY:	Prabh Banga, Sustainability Coordinator x 5283
REVIEWED BY:	Graham Seaman, Senior Manager, Sustainability x 7523

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report titled Markham Celebrates Earth Month 2015 be received;
- 2) That as Council proclaimed on January 27, 2015 that Earth Month 2015 be from March 28 to April 30, includes the following events;
 - a. Earth Hour at Cornell Community Centre and Library on March 28, 2015
 - b. Earth Month Celebration at Thornhill Community Centre and Library on April 11, 2015
 - c. Keep Markham Beautiful clean up events throughout the month of April
 - d. 10,000 Trees for Rouge annual habitat restoration event being held on Sunday, April 26, 2015
- 3) And that the Environmental Issues Committee coordinate Earth Month's annual organization, funding and promotion;
- 4) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the promotions and activities underway by the City of Markham for Earth Month celebrations (March 28, 2015 to April 30, 2015). This report will also recommend establishing Earth Month and its component events as corporate events and recommend a governance structure for Earth Month going forward.

BACKGROUND:

Earth Day

Earth Day is an annual event held on April 22. On Earth Day, events are held worldwide to increase awareness and appreciation of the Earth's natural environment. Earth Day started in the United States in 1970, was first celebrated in Canada in 1980, and by 1990 had become international with organized events in 141 countries.

In 2012, the Markham Environmental Advisory Committee (MEAC) planned an Earth Day event with the support of the Sustainability Office and Corporate Communications. It was held on Sunday April 22 at the Millennium Bandstand and Park on Main Street Unionville. Despite cool weather, a total of 350 residents attended. Since then, MEAC has organized an Earth Day event each year and each year it has grown substantially. 2014 was the largest event with a turnout of over 800 residents. The event brought together many community partners including the Waste Management staff, PowerStream, Water for Tomorrow, Varley Art Gallery, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Rouge Park, The Youth Environment Network of York Region, and Muskoka Wildlife Centre.

Earth Hour

In 2014, the City also celebrated Earth Hour, organized by Councillor Campbell's office and the Sustainability and Corporate Communications departments. Earth Hour is an annual global World Wildlife Fund (WWF) climate change initiative where individuals, businesses, governments and communities turn out their lights for one hour on the last Saturday of March to show their support for action on climate change. The event was held outdoors at Cornell Community Center and Library and included live entertainment, a Sustainability Fair and an evening lantern walk. As in previous years many of our facilities reduced power consumption wherever possible without affecting service.

Keep Markham Beautiful

April has been designated as the kick-off for Keep Markham Beautiful as a mean to encourage community clean up events. This Markham specific program was created to take the place of initiatives such as Pitch-In Week and the 20 Minute Makeover which were not exclusive to Markham. During April, 2015 and throughout the spring and summer, there are a number of community tree planting events and stewardship events as part of the Trees for Tomorrow Program.

10,000 Trees for Rouge

This annual habitat restoration tree planting occurs every year in the month of April. The event brings out over 2000 volunteers and approximately 7000 trees get planted. This is one of Canada's largest tree planting events.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Markham's Earth Day and Earth Hour celebrations raise awareness and inspire environmental action within the community. In 2014, both the Earth Day and Earth Hour events were very well attended. Through community surveys, positive feedback was received about both events. It was found, however, that there is some confusion, internally and externally, about Earth Hour vs. Earth Day. Many residents were getting dates and events mixed up. To avoid this confusion and to consolidate communication efforts MEAC, Corporate Communications, Parks Operations and the Sustainability Office are proposing combining their events under the banner of Earth Month celebrations in 2015.

Earth Month celebrations will begin on March 28, 2015 with Earth Hour and will continue into April. The Earth Hour event will be held at Cornell Community Center and Library. The logistics for Earth Hour will be organized by Councillor Campbell's Office with the support of the Sustainability and Corporate Communications departments.

MEAC will host their annual event on April 11, 2015 at the Thornhill Community Center and Library. Communications for both events will be organized by the Sustainability Office and Corporate Communications.

In addition, the City of Markham has other Earth Month related activities, such as the "Keep Markham Beautiful Month" events organized by the Operations Department which includes tree plantings and park clean ups. The first tree planting event in 2015 will be the 10,000 Trees for the Rouge 26th Annual Habitat Restoration tree planting. This event is scheduled for Sunday, April 26, 2015.

Combining all of the events under one identifier, Earth Month, will allow for consolidation of promotion and advertising.

Further, staff are recommending the Environmental Issues Committee oversee and coordinate Earth Month which includes Earth Hour, Earth Month Celebration, 10,000 Trees for the Rouge, Keeping Markham Beautiful and local ward events where and when available.

Mandate

The Environmental Issues Committee will oversee, review and promote the City of Markham's Earth Month events with residents, volunteers and MEAC.

The committee will be responsible for consolidating and promoting under Earth Month all environmental and sustainability activities and events taking place annually in Markham from the last Saturday of March to April 30. This includes corporate events and Councillor events. The committee will liaise with the Sustainability Office to promote all of these events under the Earth Month label. In order for an event to qualify, it must:

- be relevant to local environmental/community interests.
- increase learning opportunities about the environment for the community.
- have environmental/beautification impact.

Note: Staff representatives from Parks, Waste Management, Corporate Communications and Sustainability Office will support the Committee for Earth Month activities as required.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

The Earth Month celebration at Thornhill Community Center will cost approximately \$2500 and will be funded from the Markham Environmental Advisory Committee account number 001-1120051, which has a balance of \$8,892.55.

The Earth Hour event at Cornell Community Center in 2014 cost \$3,200.44 and was funded by Celebrate Markham residual event funds, external fund raising and the Sustainability Office.

The Keep Markham Beautiful community clean ups are funded through Waste Management and include the costs for gloves and garbage bags. The cost is dependent on the number of people who sign up for the cleanup events.

The total cost of the 10,000 Trees for the Rouge 26th Annual Habitat Restoration tree planting is \$149,392, of which \$30,000 is funded from the City of Markham's Trees for Tomorrow project 700-101-5399-14214.

Future Earth Month events (Earth Hour event, Earth Month Celebration and possibly the clean ups and tree planting) funding should seek sustainable funding for future years in a coordinated manner.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

None.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

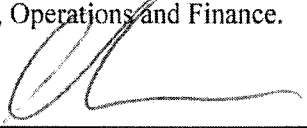
To realize the Greenprint, ongoing community engagement is critical. Earth Month celebrations provide an avenue to inform and educate the community about the Greenprint. Earth Month also promotes the Greenprint priorities of Energy and Climate, Materials Management, Water Efficiency and Ecosystem Integrity

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Corporate Communications, Operations and Finance.

RECOMMENDED

BY:



Graham Seaman
Senior Manager, Sustainability



Andy Taylor
Chief Administrative Officer