

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

REPORT WITH RESPECT TO THE TASK FORCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Recommendation

The Mayor recommends:

- 1) That this report be received;
- 2) That once the new Council is established, more focus be given to creating new environmental initiatives and leadership opportunities by officially creating the Task Force on the Environment and that the Task Force be comprised of political, administrative and environmental representation;
- 3) That Staff provide a report, identifying the necessary resources to implement the Task Force, including the role and responsibilities of the Environmental Co-ordinator position, for the next Committee of the Whole meeting and
- 4). That the Commissioner of Economic / Technology Development and Communications undertake the development of a brochure identifying the City of Vaughan's environmental initiatives in co-operation with Hydro Vaughan Distribution and other private sector supporters.

Background

The City of Vaughan has grown into a vibrant and dynamic place to live, work and play. Every month, the City welcomes 1,200 new residents. These residents have chosen Vaughan for its myriad of employment opportunities, its diversity and quality of life. To sustain the momentum of employment and residential growth, it is necessary to realize the interconnection of quality of life, which includes environmental qualities like air, water and land, and economic opportunity. Municipalities must become active players in building the framework for all its members to participate in being environmentally conscious in their activities.

The City of Vaughan has been very active in its own environmental stewardship practices, but more work must be undertaken to publicize these practices, create awareness, activate the Kyoto Protocol and develop new opportunities for environmental sector businesses. For this reason, Council has incorporated environmental leadership as one of the goals of Vaughan Vision 2007. Furthermore as part of Vaughan Vision 2007, Council also recognizes the need to communicate the community's successes amongst residents and businesses.

City Staff is to be commended for its Report on City of Vaughan Environmental Initiatives. The City is taking leadership in environmental matters and there are already positive and tangible results that should be communicated immediately. Vaughan's citizens want to know about these results and they want to know how to further participate in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preserving the environment.

Building public awareness, encouraging community involvement, and leveraging government and private sector funding requires a co-ordinated and sustained approach. Those municipalities with progressive environmental programs all have dedicated staff resources. "Environmental Co-ordinator" or "Advisor" positions exist in Burlington, Mississauga, Oakville, Markham and Toronto, as well as in all Regions. These positions, in addition to their public engagement functions, also serve to protect the community's interests and resources, a vitally important function in growing municipalities.

Conclusion

The qualities of life, health and economy are interconnected and interdependent. What is good for Vaughan's environment is good for the health of its citizens and makes Vaughan a sound place to do business. Cities will be at the front lines of the Kyoto Accord and a progressive municipality like Vaughan must move forward and commit to providing the necessary resources for an ongoing environmental stewardship program. Climate change and environmental engagement will occur when there is an attitudinal adjustment that is a result of sustained effort and resources.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Di Biase
Mayor