

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE, MAY 26TH 2008

UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

Recommendation

The City Manager recommends that:

1. This report be received for information purposes only.

Economic Impact

All activities are supported through existing budget allocations.

Communications Plan

Not applicable at this time.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a regular update to the Environment Committee on various environmental initiatives that have been coordinated through or attended by the Economic Development Department for 2008. Please note that this list is not exhaustive for all City departments, but focuses on initiatives and events the Economic Development Department is specifically involved with. This report is solely for information and discussion purposes.

Background - Analysis and Options

Each year the City of Vaughan participates in a number of environmental events and initiatives geared towards residents, businesses and staff. Highlights from these initiatives are detailed below:

City of Vaughan/Powerstream Reusable Shopping Bag Pilot

Status: Ongoing (new this year)

Details: To date, close to 400 bags have been distributed to council, at events and through Welcome Wagon to new residents. Another 300 were distributed at the Public Works Environmental Day on May 24th. Feedback has been positive and the Department is investigating the possibility of expanding the use of reusable bags as an ongoing promotional item.

Earth Hour

Status: Complete, March 29th (new this year)

Details: PowerStream reported a service territory-wide 4.85 percent electricity reduction between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on Saturday March 29, 2008. The average for Vaughan was slightly lower (3.59 percent) due in part to the fact that Vaughan has a higher percentage of industrial areas than residential areas than surrounding municipalities. Vaughan alone saved 13,700 kWhrs – enough to power 570 average sized homes for one day. There appears to be much public support for this event.

20-Minute Vaughan Makeover

Status: Complete, April 18th

Details: This year's 20-Minute Vaughan Makeover was a great success, with over 11,000 participants registered, including residents, students from 40 schools, 19 businesses and community groups. This year's participation is 38 percent higher than 2007 and more than 60 percent higher than 2006.

Public Works Week Event

Status: Complete, May 24th

This year, Economic Development will attend the Public Works Environmental Day to distribute information about the environmental events, incentives, etc. and highlight the City's environmental initiatives.

Pesticide Bylaw Education Program

Status: Ongoing (new this year)

Details: To provide information to the public, businesses and retailers about the new City of Vaughan Pesticide Bylaw, enacted in April 2008, a webpage has been created which provides a link to the bylaw, an explanation of what pesticides are and why they are harmful, alternative lawn care suggestions, links to other useful resources and a FAQ section. Other educational materials are forthcoming pending the details of provincial legislation.

Energy Conservation Week

Status: Ongoing, May 26th to May 31st (new this year)

Details: The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) has declared May 25th to May 31st Ontario's first Energy Conservation Week. The OPA is using this initiative as a step towards creating a "culture of conservation". This is an opportunity to promote conservation not only in our community, but amongst our own staff – leading by example and demonstrating our commitment to environmental sustainability. Staff will be receiving energy saving tips and daily reminders (mainly via email and promotional materials) to conserve throughout the week to encourage energy conservation. Powerstream will also be promoting Energy Conservation Week.

Windfall Ecology Trash Fashion Show

Status: Upcoming, June 5th

Details: Part of the 7th Annual Windfall Ecology Festival, the City of Vaughan will be participating in on the judging panel for the Trash Fashion Show. The Festival is the only one of its kind in York Region and highlights green practices and products. The Windfall Ecology Festival takes place June 7th and 8th at Fairy Lake in Newmarket.

Clean Air Commute

Status: Upcoming, June 23rd to 27th

Details: As part of our ongoing Employee Trip Reduction Program, the Clean Air Commute is a week long event encouraging employees to reduce their personal greenhouse gas emissions through a variety of potential measures (from properly inflated tires, to using alternate modes such as biking, carpooling, walking or taking transit). A transportation fair is being planned during this week to highlight green vehicles, transit and active transportation. Posters, emails, prize draws and other materials will encourage our employees to think out how they travel.

Smart Commute – Employee Trip Reduction Program

Status: Ongoing

Details: Our current program includes a free, web-based carpool site, an emergency ride home program and a variety of educational and promotional events. Currently, the City of Vaughan has 4 registered and active carpools, but as per discussions with employees - there are other groups that are currently carpooling but not registered with Carpool Zone. This year, in conjunction with Smart Commute – North Toronto, Vaughan, there have been two employee events (one focused on transit and another on the Emergency Ride Home Program). In June, we will have other events during Clean Air Commute, as mentioned above.

Green Energy Home Show

Status: Upcoming, September 27th to 28th

Details: Each year the City of Vaughan, Economic Development Department attends the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Green Energy Home Show to highlight City environmental initiatives. Now in it's fourth year, the Show highlights sustainable and green energy options to residents of York Region.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and supports the City's objective of leading and promoting environmental sustainability.

Regional Implications

Not applicable at this time.

Conclusion

The overview above provides highlights of the ongoing environmental initiatives the City of Vaughan, Economic Development Department is involved with. While it is not exhaustive, it provides an update to the Environment Committee of the types of programs being offered to engage our residents, businesses and staff and demonstrate our commitment to environmental leadership.

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Respectfully submitted,

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