



PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 4

Halifax Regional Council
March 24, 2009

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Phillip Townsend - Acting Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

DATE: March 16, 2009

“Earth Hour” Event - 2009

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates with staff in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and is further to a January 20, 2009 Council Report.

BACKGROUND

Since 2007, the WWF has been promoting the annual Earth Hour event in support of climate change awareness around the world. The program involves a globally coordinated effort to switch off all nonessential lighting for a one hour period.

HRM has been a corporate supporter of this initiative through the IAM Director’s Office and the Sustainable Environment Management Office (SEMO). Plans for Earth Hour 2009 are now well developed and this report is provided as a status update.

DISCUSSION

Earth Hour is an annual international “lights out” event promoted by the World Wildlife Fund which is supported by more than 30 countries around the world. In 2008, the event was celebrated in more than 150 cities and by almost 10 million people in Canada and, to date, 207 Canadian communities have signed on as participants for this year. It is expected that more than one billion people worldwide will take part in Earth Hour 2009.

Council has taken a pro-active leadership approach to developing and maintaining a healthy, sustainable community through the adoption of a number of sustainability related plans and strategies such as the Regional Plan and Community Energy Plan. Participation in Earth Hour provides an excellent opportunity to take part in a global event and celebrate HRM’s commitment to environmental sustainability.

Staff from IAM, TPW and CD have worked closely with WWF representatives to promote Earth Hour in the community and raise corporate awareness within HRM. The following represents a brief summary of the actions in support of Earth Hour:

- The event has been extensively promoted internally using the HRM Newsletter, the Naturally Green bulletin delivered to every household in HRM, the HRM Intranet and through an educational on-line quiz/contest. The prize for the winner is an Earth Hour gift pack containing sustainability-related HRM and WWF promotional items.
- Earth Hour and HRM’s involvement has been promoted within the community, around the country and throughout the world through the following initiatives:
 - Earth Hour information and relevant links have been placed on HRM’s main public website and the Good Neighbours/Great Neighbourhoods site
 - HRM has written letters to our sister cities around the globe inviting them to take part in Earth Hour celebrations
 - Mayor Kelly has issued a “video challenge” to other Atlantic Canadian municipalities and all citizens of HRM to take part in Earth Hour
 - HRM has a full web page dedicated to celebrating its involvement with Earth Hour on the national WWF website - <http://wwf.ca/earthhour/hrm/>
- The “main event” will be a public celebration in the Parade Square between 8:30 P.M. and 9:30 P.M. on Saturday, March 28. That event will include:
 - a ceremonial “darkening” of the Parade Square, City Hall and many of the surrounding buildings at 8:30 PM
 - musical entertainment by candle-light
 - on-site educational demonstrations hosted by the Discovery Centre
 - testimonials in support of Earth Hour from the Mayor, WWF officials and representatives from Earth Hour sponsors
 - complimentary snacks and hot drinks

Clearly, the Earth Hour focus in HRM will be on the Parade Square and City Hall. However, it is also important to note that HRM, Halifax Water and numerous members of the business community will also be turning off non-essential lighting at various facilities around the community during Earth Hour.

While this report is primarily intended to advise and update Council as to the status of Earth Hour in HRM, staff would also like to take this opportunity to issue a formal invitation for Councillors and their friends and families to take part in Earth Hour celebrations by attending the Parade Square event on March 28 and/or registering support for the initiative on line at www.EarthHourCanada.org

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Municipal expenditures related this event are minimal. Incidental promotional expenses and staff resources are accommodated in existing operating envelopes.

In addition, minor operating cost savings will be realized in response to a reduction in electricity usage during the event itself.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by : Steven Higgins - Coordinator, Infrastructure and Asset Management (490-1819)