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DATE: February 22, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **PARTICIPATION IN EARTH HOUR**

FROM: R. Kent Gillespie, Commissioner of Employee and Business Services

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Region of Peel continue to participate in Earth Hour on an annual basis as a means of raising awareness regarding the conservation of energy and climate change.**

#### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Earth Hour 2012 is an international initiative of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), where participants will switch off their lights for a dedicated hour on Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup> from 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
- In 2011, almost 1 billion people in 134 countries worldwide switched off their lights for Earth Hour
- Approved Regional Facilities will turn off all non-essential lights on March 31<sup>st</sup> from 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
- Council is being requested to authorize annual participation for 2012 and in future years.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Background**

Earth Hour 2012 represents the sixth annual event initiated by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia and Fairfax Media. Earth Hour was created to educate and engage the community in fighting human-caused climate change. Last year millions of Canadians took part in all provinces and territories, turning out the lights in over 420 cities, towns and municipalities. Earth Hour demonstrates how individuals can work together to fight climate change and turning off the lights for one hour provides a highly visible action that is easy for most people to partake in.

##### **a) Peel's Participation in Earth Hour 2012**

The Cities of Mississauga and Brampton and the Town of Caledon have all confirmed that they will be signing up for Earth Hour 2012. By participating in this campaign, the Region of Peel can show its support for the area municipalities while also demonstrating its leadership in the fields of energy conservation and environmental stewardship.

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## **PARTICIPATION IN EARTH HOUR**

Participation in Earth Hour 2012 aligns with Peel's commitment to protect, enhance and restore the environment, as outlined in Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan 2011-2014, specifically:

- 1.1 Demonstrate leadership in responsible environmental management practices and energy use.
- 1.3 Improve air quality, mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 1.7 Collaborate with other levels of government.

It is proposed that Regional Facilities participate in Earth Hour only where there is no safety risk to the community or Regional staff. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. all Region of Peel facilities that can do so safely will turn off all non-essential lights. Facilities that function on a 24/7 basis will ensure that the safety of building occupants remains top priority. Operational issues that may restrict participation in Earth Hour will be addressed on a per facility basis and all necessary safety measures will be taken beforehand.

The symbolic action of turning off the lights within Regional facilities will send a clear message to the community about Peel's environmental commitment. In addition, public promotion of Peel's participation in Earth Hour may also encourage more local businesses and residents to become involved.

## **2. Proposed Direction**

It is proposed that the Region of Peel participate in Earth Hour at facilities where involvement poses no risk to safety and does not disadvantage any services required at Regionally owned or leased facilities. Within these limits, Region of Peel facility operators would commit to turning off all lights, other than essential security lighting, for the one hour period between 8:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

### **a) Marketing and Communication**

Peel's participation in Earth Hour 2012 will provide an opportunity to encourage local businesses and residents to participate in the one hour lights-out initiative. Residents and businesses can currently sign-up to participate and learn more about the campaign at <http://wwf.ca/earthhour>.

#### **i) Internal**

Information will be made available to inform all staff of Peel Region's participation in Earth Hour. This material will include information about the campaign/Peel's participation, and will also encourage staff to join in. Potential mediums include the Region of Peel's internal website, e-mail communications, and marketing materials to be displayed in highly trafficked areas such as building lobbies and lunch rooms.

A clear understanding of the requirements of facility operators within Peel must be established to ensure the safety of all building occupants during Earth Hour. Facility operators will be encouraged to promote the event within their building and to provide further information for residents and/or occupants. Each facility operator should receive the appropriate information and promotional materials from the Energy and Environment Management team prior to the event.

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As the Earth Hour campaign has evolved, the focus has become less about kilowatt reductions during the dedicated hour and more about raising awareness of climate change and energy use.

As organizations learn to use energy more efficiently during daily operations on a year-round basis, it becomes increasingly difficult to find ways of reducing consumption specifically for Earth Hour; which also happens to take place during off-peak hours for electricity consumption when most facilities are using minimal amounts of electricity to begin with. As a result, Earth Hour 2012 at the Region of Peel will be about coming together to support action on climate change and to promote sustainable energy behaviours year round, rather than focusing on extensive means of achieving temporary kilowatt reductions during the dedicated hour.

**ii) External**

Information will be made available to inform the local community of Peel Region's participation in Earth Hour. This material will include information about the campaign/Peel's participation, and will also encourage others from the community to join in. Potential mediums include the Region of Peel's external website and mobile signs, local newspapers, social media, and marketing materials to be displayed in publicly accessible areas such as the lobbies of some Regional facilities. The Region of Peel will also make efforts to collaborate with the area municipalities for outreach initiatives wherever possible.

**CONCLUSION**

It is recommended that the Region of Peel continue to participate in Earth Hour on an annual basis as a means of raising awareness regarding conservation of energy and climate change in 2012 and in future years as well.



R. Kent Gillespie  
Commissioner of Employee  
and Business Services

**Approved for Submission:**

D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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