

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity Advisory Committee

Earth Day 2034 Proposal to Thorold City Council

August 1<sup>st</sup> 2023

The First Earth Day

Every year on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970.

Let's take a look at the last half-century of mobilization for action.

ORIGINS OF EARTH DAY

In the decades leading up to the first Earth Day, Americans were consuming vast amounts of leaded gas through massive and inefficient automobiles. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of the consequences from either the law or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment affects human health.

However the stage was set for change with the publication of Rachel Carson's New York Times bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book represented a watershed moment, selling more than 500,000 copies in 24 countries as it raised public awareness and concern for living organisms, the environment and the inextricable links between pollution and public health.

Senator Gaylord Nelson, the junior senator from Wisconsin, had long been concerned about deteriorating environment in the United States. Then in January 1969, he and many others witnessed the ravages of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Inspired by the student anti-war movement, Senator Nelson wanted to infuse the energy of student anti-war protests with an emerging consciousness about air and water pollution. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a teach-in on college campuses to the national media, and persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Republican Congressman, to serve as his co-chair. They recruited Denis Hayes, a young activist, to organize the campus teach-ins and they chose April 22, a weekday falling between Spring Break and Final Exams, to maximize the greatest student participation.

Recognizing its potential to inspire all Americans, Hayes built a national staff of 85 to promote events across the land and the effort soon broadened to include a wide range of organizations, faith groups, and others. They changed the name to Earth Day, which immediately sparked national media attention, and caught on across the country. Earth Day inspired 20 million Americans-at the time 10% of the total population of the United States-to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the impacts of 150 years of industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts. Thousands of colleges and universities organized protest against the deterioration of the environment and there were massive coast-to-coast rallies in cities, towns and communities.

Groups that had been fighting individually against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife united on Earth Day around these shared common values. Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, urban dwellers and farmers, business and labour leaders. By the end of 1970, the first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of other first of there kind environmental laws, including the National Environmental Education Act, the

Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Clean Air Act. Two years later Congress passed the Clean Water Act. A year after that, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act and soon the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. These laws have protected millions of men, women and children from disease and have protected hundreds of species from extinction.

#### 1990: EARTH DAY GOES GLOBAL

As 1990 approached, a group of environmental leaders approached Denis Hayes to once again organize another major campaign for the planet. This time, Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and lifting environmental issues onto the world stage. Earth Day 1990 gave a huge boost to recycling efforts worldwide and helped pave the way for the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It also prompted President Bill Clinton to award Senator Nelson the Presidential Medal of Freedom-the highest honour given to civilians in the United States-for his role as Earth Day founder.

As the millennium approached, Hayes agreed to spearhead another campaign, this time focused on global warming and a push for clean energy. With 5,000 environmental groups in a record 184 countries reaching out to hundreds of millions of people, Earth Day 2000 built both global and local conversations, leveraging the power of the Internet to organize activists around the world, while also featuring a drum chain that travelled from village to village in Gabon, Africa. Hundreds of thousands of people also gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. for a First Amendment Rally.

30 years on, Earth Day 200 sent world leaders a loud and clear message: Citizens around the world wanted quick and decisive action on global warming and clean energy.

#### EARTH DAY 2010

As in 1970, Earth Day 2010 came at a time of great challenge for the environmental community to combat the cynicism of climate change deniers, well-funded oil lobbyists, reticent politicians, a disinterested public, and a divided environmental community with the power of global environmental activism. In the face of these challenges, Earth Day prevailed and EARTHDAY.ORG re-established Earth Day as a major moment for global action for the environment.

Over the decades, EARTHDAY.ORG has brought hundreds of millions of people into the environmental movement, creating opportunities for civic engagement and volunteerism in 193 countries. Earth Day engages more than 1 billion people every year and has become a major stepping stone along the pathway of engagement around the protection of the planet.

#### EARTH DAY TODAY

Today., Earth Day is widely recognized as the largest secular observance in the world, marked by more than a billion people every year as a day of action to change human behaviour and create global, national and local policy changes.

Now, the fight for a clean environment continues with increasing urgency, as the ravages of climate change become more and more apparent every day.

As the awareness of our climate crisis grows, so does civil society mobilization, which is reaching a fever pitch across the globe today. Disillusioned by the low level of ambition following the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 and frustrated with international environmental lethargy, citizens of the world are rising up to demand far greater action for our planet and its people.

Details of the proposed Earth Day Event  
Date third Saturday in April

Focus will be directed to elementary school-aged children, future environmental stewards

Vendors fall into 2 categories-Education and retail vendors selling earth friendly products.

Education vendors approached:

Habitat For Humanity, Indoor Booth and E-Waste bin to be provided

NPCA, Indoor Booth

Thorold Library, Indoor Booth, environment activities directed at the children

Lake Gibson Corridor Committee, Indoor Booth, Information

Recommended:

Community Care, clothing drop for resale or conversion to rags

Mel Swart Committee, Education

Indigenous Community, Education

And any suggestions welcome

Retail Vendors, none as of yet, criteria for eligibility to be determined.

Venue

Basciano Centre preferred

Thorold Seniors Centre alternate

WeeBeeHouse to hold 2 Native Bee workshops. Assemble a pre-cut bee habitat with an educational presentation. 1 workshop for child aged members of TCAG and 1 workshop child aged Thorold Library members.

The motion put forward by Councillor Sentence re: tree Giveaway/Rain Barrel Sale Program would ensure citizen participation for this event.