



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: April 4, 2016

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**SUBJECT:** Canada's First Monarch Butterfly Friendly City  
**PREPARED BY:** Graham Seaman, Director, Sustainability -7523  
Barb Rabicki, Director, Operations - 4857

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) THAT Council issue a Proclamation, proclaiming Markham as Canada's First Monarch Friendly City in order to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat; and,
- 2) THAT the Sustainability Office and Operations Department implement the following actions to make Markham a Monarch Friendly City;
  - a. Launch a public communication effort to encourage citizens to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods.
  - b. Communicate with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.
  - c. City staff to continue to identify opportunities for milkweed / nectar plant planting & seeding programs.
  - d. Convene a meeting with gardening leaders in the community to discuss partnerships to support monarch butterfly conservation.
  - e. Continue to support the monarch & pollinator friendly demonstration garden at City Hall.
  - f. Consider the use of native milkweed and nectar plants on city properties where appropriate; and,
- 3) THAT the City of Markham encourage residents to sign the David Suzuki Foundation's Monarch Manifesto; and,
- 4) THAT Staff evaluate opportunities for bee hives within the City of Markham in partnership and/or hosting on City properties; and,
- 5) THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council authorization to proclaim Markham as Canada's First Monarch Friendly City.

**BACKGROUND:**

Monarch butterfly population is declining at an alarming rate, hitting a historic low in 2014. Current estimates show the monarch population at about 80 percent lower than 20 years ago.

Pollinators such as monarchs and other butterflies, as well as bees, birds and other insects, help move pollen from one plant to another, fertilizing food needed for people

and wildlife. Three quarters of the food we eat, and flowering plants worldwide depend on pollinators to grow.

The City of Markham is undertaking important initiatives to support pollinator populations including monarch butterflies and bees. Municipalities can provide monarch habitat at parks, community gardens, municipal facilities, and public lands. City properties can serve to help educate citizens about how to grow milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants. In 2015, the City commenced the use of signage in parks to educate the public about the benefits of natural areas. "Natural Spaces, Wildlife Places" signage, as well as "Butterfly Parking Only" signs will continue to be expanded across City parks and open spaces. The City website has also been updated with key messages about the benefits of naturalized spaces.

The National Wildlife Federation initiated the Mayor's Monarch Pledge (Appendix # 1) in the United States to encourage local governments to:

"... to help save the monarch butterfly, an iconic species whose populations have declined by 90% in the last 20 years. Through the National Wildlife Federation's Mayors' Monarch Pledge, cities and municipalities are committing to create habitat and educate citizens about how they can make a difference at home.

Staff are recommending adapting this American initiative for the first time in Canada with this report while promoting a new program from the David Suzuki Foundation. (DSF)

The DSF is a key partner in helping to establish programs to help restore and enhance habitat for monarchs, as well as conducting important research through the establishment of a milkweed nursery for seed production. In 2015, the City partnered with DSF to undertake research by Dr. Tyler Flockhart at trial plots at Milne Park. A milkweed nursery plot will also be established at Milne Park, to grow seed to help increase milkweed establishment across the City of Markham, as well as other locations. Establishing a monarch-friendly corridor which includes milkweed plants as a food source, is critical to support the monarch's annual migration.

#### **OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

Council has an opportunity to be the first Canadian Municipality to declare itself a Monarch Friendly City. This is based on the National Wildlife Federations' Mayors' Monarch Pledge, a North American initiative of communities promoted by the National Wildlife Federation. Other cities surrounding the Great Lakes are expected to also follow suit. A commitment to implement at least 3 initiatives to support monarch habitat is easily achievable, as at least 2 initiatives have been started in 2015 with others planned for 2016 by the Sustainability & Operations Departments (noted above).

The National Wildlife Federation has a list of 25 action items (Appendix # 2) and requests that proclamation participants take at least three actions. The City of Markham will initiate the following actions within existing budgets and programs:

- 1) Issue a Proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat.
- 2) Launch a public communication effort to encourage citizens to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods.
- 3) Communicate with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.
- 4) City staff to continue to identify opportunities for milkweed / nectar plant planting & seeding programs. Milne Dam Park is currently underway.
- 5) Convene a meeting with gardening leaders in the community to discuss partnerships to support monarch butterfly conservation.
- 6) Continue to support the monarch & pollinator friendly demonstration garden at City Hall.
- 7) Consider the use of native milkweed and nectar plants on city properties where appropriate.

To further support action number two the City of Markham will promote and encourage residents to participate in the David Suzuki Foundation's Monarch Manifesto, which asks residents to take the following pledge.

<http://action2.davidsuzuki.org/monarchmanifesto>

### **My pledge for monarch butterflies.**

I commit to:

- 1) **GROW** milkweed and other native wildflowers in my yard and/or on my balcony
- 2) **REPORT** monarch butterfly sightings in my community using #monarchwatch
- 3) **AVOID** using pesticides or herbicides in my yard or garden
- 4) **CONTACT** at least one school, faith group, business or other institution in my neighbourhood about planting a butterfly garden
- 5) **CALL** local garden centres and nurseries to ask them to order native milkweed plants for next spring

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)**

Initial program actions will be accommodated within existing Operations and Sustainability budgets. Sustainability Office costs are projected to be \$1,000 for seed acquisition and marketing and promotion. Operations costs are projected to \$1,000. Total costs for 2016 are not expected to exceed \$2,000. Further actions and initiatives may be considered for 2017 implementation, and will be developed for 2017 budget consideration.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

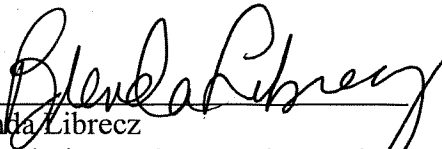
### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**


Building Markham's Future Together – Goal 3 – Safe and Sustainable Community  
Markham's Greenprint – Ecosystem Integrity (one of 12 sustainability priorities)


**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Corporate Communications, Finance

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

  
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Brenda Librecz  
Commissioner, Community & Fire Services

  
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Graham Seaman  
Director, Sustainability

  
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Barb Rabicki  
Director, Operations

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix # 1 – National Wildlife Federation's Mayor's Monarch Pledge

Appendix # 2 – National Wildlife Federation's Mayor's Monarch Pledge Action Items