

Group looking at ways to deal with climate change

By Bill Rea

Climate change may be a serious problem, but a school of thought is maintaining it might have solutions.

That possibility was discussed recently at a session in Bolton hosted by EcoCaledon.

It involves the concepts developed by environmentalist, author and activist Paul Hawken.

Jon Love, who was chairing the session with Satya Robinson, called climate change the 'most important topic in the world today.'

He also said the session was an introduction of Project Drawdown, with four more sessions in the works. They are planned for Oct. 23 at the Exchange on Healey Road in Bolton, Oct. 30 and Nov. 6 at Palgrave United Church and Dec. 10 at the Exchange. These sessions will be free.

Hawken is the co-founder of Project Drawdown, which describes when and how global warming can be reversed.

The session saw the roughly 40 people on hand divided into groups to discuss their views of climate change and global warming.

The resulting comments included acceptance that individuals can make changes in what they do, along with differences of opinions as to whether it can be done.

One person had reported to having recently attended an event like this one in Alberta, with engineers and geologists, and there had been a lot of denial expressed at that session, and some of the participants had been rather rude about it.

Through a video shown at the meeting and material that was distributed, it was explained that Drawdown is the point at which the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere peaks and starts to decline. The goal of Project Drawdown is to identify and measure 80 solutions that would have the most impact in reducing these gases, as well as to determine if Drawdown can be achieved by 2050. It was also explained that achieving Drawdown would require drawing the gases back to earth. That already takes place through photosynthesis.

In the video, Hawken said there are a lot of things that could be done that would make sense to anyone, but the problem is the great sense of helplessness people would feel. He also pointed out the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is more than 400 parts per million (PPM), and people have never had to live with those kinds of levels before.

'The solution is around us,' he said.

There have been 100 'plausible solutions' to the problem developed, and Hawken said that was based on research with peer-reviewed literature. He also said there was some surprise expressed at the top solutions on the list.

'We didn't even see it coming,' he said.

The top item on the list was Refrigerant Management, which involved looking at what is used in refrigerators and air conditioning, and cutting back on it.

Other top suggestions included the use of wind turbines and reducing food waste. 'Our food system is very energy-intensive,'

Hawken said, adding a lot of that ends up in landfill. Other solutions were plant-rich diets, preserving rain forests, educating girls and women (including in such areas as reproduction choices), family planning and solar farms.

He also stressed all solutions have to be employed, adding it would be a mistake to just concentrate on the top ones. There is no one magic solution.

'We need all of it,' he said, adding people know what they should do when they read and understand something that makes sense.

He added that given scientific knowledge, the odds of being able to do something might seem long.

'My attitude is to take them,' Hawken said in the video. 'They're just odds.'

More group discussion led to several conclusions, including the fact it comes down to education. One woman observed that schools are well positioned to pass along information. There are students these days who go home and instruct their parents on how to recycle.

There are other groups in the community ready to share information.

There were representatives at the meeting from Whole Village in the northeast corner of Caledon, as well as Albion Hills community Farm.

'We don't know what the outcome of all this is going to be,' one man observed, commenting people can concentrate on possible solutions, but they also have to look at the problem from the start. He said life started billions years ago, yet it's only now that people talk about global warming. The agenda of humanity over that time has been to conquer things like famine and disease, and avoid war. Things are changing, with greater use of innovation and technology.

Love agreed that the last 20 of the possible solutions, classified as 'coming attractions,' involve more technology.

One man at the meeting said he was recently in Germany. He said all the farms there and about 90 per cent of the homes are on solar

power. He added wind mills are a huge source of power there.

One woman pointed to the need to talk to politicians, noting that's a critical link to making things happen.