

Resilient Caledon Community Climate Change Plan works towards the Town reaching net zero emissions by 2050

By Rob Paul

Resilient Palgrave and ecoCaledon teamed up to host a walking eco-fair in Palgrave on Saturday, October 30.

The idea the eco-fair was to provide the Caledon community with a fun, interactive, and educational experience while informing residents about resilience.

Climate change has become one of the most important topics in recent years and resiliency is the word that frequently comes up when addressing it. Resilience is the sustained ability of a community to respond to withstand and recover from challenges, which is what has led the Town of Caledon to put focus on the Resilient Caledon Community Climate Change Action Plan.

As climate change has a growing impact on the world, Canada, and Caledon itself, the Town has implemented the plan to ensure there's a home to be proud of for future generations.

In Caledon alone, there have been increased storms that have led to flooding and more extreme heat waves and this problem is only suspected to get worse.

The Resilient Caledon Plan is built around making a change now with over 60 actions to prepare for the local impacts of climate change and achieve greenhouse gas reduction targets.

By 2030, the Town of Caledon is aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 36 per cent below 2016 level and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

“There is no doubt that Caledon is feeling the impacts of climate change firsthand,” said Mayor Allan Thompson. “In March 2019, the Bolton ice jam saw more than 200 people being forced to evacuate their homes due to flooding. Every year, we're seeing more storms, higher temperatures and changes to the flora and fauna around us.

“The Town acknowledges the challenge of climate change, and we recognize the threat that it poses to our residents, businesses, farmers and the Town's own operations. That's why earlier this year Council unanimously declared a climate change emergency and committed to taking serious action on climate change, including adopting a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.”

The plan asks that various community partners and all residents play a role in making contributions to ensure goals in the climate plan are reached with the vision of a low carbon community that uses energy and resources sustainably, protects the natural environment, and is prepared to face climate disruptions.

The goals of the plan are to mitigate by reducing community-wide greenhouse gas emission to reach future goals while adapting to increase resiliency of the Town, its residents, economy, and the natural environment to current and future climate impacts.

There are five key actions areas that will help the Town reach net zero emissions by 2050 with smart growth, sustainable communities, agriculture and natural systems, low-carbon transportation, and resilient infrastructure and energy.

Smart growth is centred around designing new communities to maximize active transportation and transit, green infrastructure, and health, and ensure new buildings are low carbon and climate resilient.

For sustainable communities to take shape the Town is aiming to support residents and businesses to retrofit their homes and

buildings, reduce waste, green their operations, and prepare for climate emergencies, and building community capacity to address climate change through education, engagement, and funding

With agriculture being the biggest industry in Caledon, the plan will support a resilient food and agriculture sector that contributes to GHG emissions reduction. It will also focus on protecting and restoring the Town's natural and agricultural lands.

Low-carbon transportation in a large area like Caledon is tough and that's why the goal to increase access to walking, cycling, and transit, and expanding the use of zero-emissions vehicles is a prime factor in the plan.

Finally, the resilient infrastructure and energy is to ensure the Town's roads, bridges, and stormwater infrastructure can withstand anticipated climate impacts while developing local renewable energy systems that are low carbon and improve resilience to weather disruptions.

"This Plan builds on Caledon's achievements as an environmental leader, including being one of only 30 municipalities across Canada to complete all five milestones of the Partners for Climate Protection Program, pioneering a Green Development Program to encourage commercial developers to construct energy efficient buildings, installing 22 publicly available electric vehicle charging stations, running the Green Fund and Tree Seedling programs to help the community take environmental action in their own neighbourhoods, and leading by example with energy and emissions reductions in our own Town facilities and operations," said Thompson.

Currently alongside the Resilient Caledon Plan, there are ongoing initiatives and events to support climate action in Caledon. Among these events and natives are the West Bolton Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP), Community and School Green Fund Programs, the Tree Seedling Program, and Green Biz Caledon.

To help in Caledon's efforts with the impact of climate change, residents can reduce their personal emissions with a few recommendations from the Town: consider a hybrid or electric vehicle; walking, cycling, or using transit instead of driving; make your home or business more energy efficient; eat local food and produce and make effort to reduce food waste; plant native trees and gardens on your property; and participate in Town and local community group events to stay informed on climate change.

"It's clear that many Caledon residents are already taking action on climate change, from improving the efficiency of their homes or switching to electric vehicles, to farmers using innovative measures to improve soil health, to businesses installing solar panels, to young people getting involved in local climate advocacy and solutions," said Thompson. "The Resilient Caledon Plan aims to raise the ambition of what the Town and broader community can do to embrace a more resilient, low carbon, and livable future."