

Town of Caledon follows neighbours? lead in officially declaring a climate emergency

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

In June of 2019, the House of Commons passed a motion to declare a climate emergency across Canada. Several local municipalities have since followed suit, with Mississauga and Brampton declaring back in June, Toronto in October and Newmarket-Aurora in August. Kingston was the first municipality to declare climate emergency in Ontario, in March 2019.

Co-Chairs of ecoCaledon Donna Ferron and John MacRae and Co-Chair of Gratitude for Food Caledon Carolyn Vallejo presented to Council this past Tuesday to encourage Mayor Allan Thompson, along with all members of Council, to declare climate emergency for the town of Caledon.

“Our vision is to connect the majority of Caledon citizens to their environment. Encouraging them to live more sustainable lives and to help in making Caledon itself more sustainable,” said Ferron in the presentation.

Statistics prove that dramatic changes Caledon has had due to climate change in changes in weather during the seasons.

“Caledon is not immune to the effects of climate change. Many of us can recall the ice storm in 2013 and the recent flooding in Bolton last year, as well as record breaking temperatures and damage to crops due to dramatic weather changes,” explained Carolyn Vallejo.

According to the Climate Emergency Website, “a climate emergency is one that threatens life as we know it. It is a public signal indicating that governments and society will be mobilized in emergency mode, until the emergency passes.”

The Town has made some crucial climate change plans to focus and improve life in Caledon and take part in reducing the effects of climate change. A Climate Change Action Plan has been in the works to create strategies and future goals to tackle several approaches to improving life in Caledon and its environment.

“There's no doubt that we're in for many challenges, which we have to do our best to mitigate,” said Vallejo. “Entering emergency mode is the critical first step to launching the comprehensive mobilization require to rescue and rebuild civilization.”

She added, “using the term emergency recognizes that the earth has reached key climate tipping points and that incremental actions such as gradual reduction of emissions over several decades is no longer reasonable course of action if we want to secure a future for our children and grandchildren.”

Each council member was inspired and moved by the presentation as well as the several members of ecoCaledon who attended to provide support and each provided their thanks to the eco-friendly group.

“Caledon has a long history of being environmentally proactive, I think we were one of the first municipalities in the province to have an Environmental Progress Officer. I feel like this is formalizing what we're working on and what we're doing. I always say that actions speak louder than words and I think Caledon has been very strong in its actions, and I think a big part of that comes from the drive of our community members,” expressed Ward 3 ad 4 Regional Councillor Jennifer Innis.

The Town of Caledon council unanimously passed the motion to declare climate emergency.

Ward 1 Area Councillor Lynn Kiernan soon after the motion passed to declare climate emergency, made an amendment to ban all single-use plastics from the Council Chamber no later than the end of February and for staff to be directed to report back with a strategy to ban all single-use plastics. The amendment was unanimously agreed on by the rest of council.

For more information on Town of Caledon's plans to tackle climate change, please visit caledon.ca/climatechange.