

We are all aware of the global threats we face due to climate change which include droughts, severe precipitation events-flooding- freezing- snowstorms, altered jet stream patterns, extreme heat/cold, high winds, property damage, increase in vectors, acidification of our waterways, impact to vegetation, invasive species, decline in species and the list goes on. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 17.2 million people worldwide had to leave their homes in 2019 because of disasters exacerbated by climate change. In the future, people displaced by climate change may want to call Richmond Hill home. Can we accommodate? Will we be ready?

Increased awareness and concern for the climate crisis was evident during the federal election. In Richmond Hill it is reflected in the number of environmental groups that have formed over the past few years including Drawdown, Targeting Climate Change, Neighbours for the Planet, Extinction Rebellion, Blue Dot York Region and Climate Wise.

As a concerned citizen, I joined Blue Dot 5 years ago. This enabled me to become involved in some of the City's outreach programs. I participate on the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) Committee, in environmental booth presentations at Resilient Richmond Hill and Healthy Yards events. Through our group, I have endorsed other community programs such as the Clean Up/Green-Up, Blue Box recycling and the tree planting program. This has provided me first hand knowledge of the dedication and expertise of Richmond Hill staff and some of the details of their environmental programs. My past work experience includes 19 years at the Ontario Ministry of the Environment which has allowed me to provide relevant feedback on municipal environmental programs.

In reviewing the report provided to Council, it outlines much of the excellent work being done as it relates to Climate Change and the reduction of GHG's. As mentioned in the report, "Municipalities have direct or indirect control over 60% of Ontario's GHG emissions as they plan and regulate growth and development along with transportation systems and networks." It stands to reason to prioritize GHG's and energy since it impacts so many other areas of climate concerns. To address climate change, it would benefit the municipality to review their policies on transportation, buildings and land-use through a climate lens. I noticed that much of the work is on-going at this point in time, data is being collected and conclusions are being drawn. Additional time is required to draw effective policy recommendations. It may be beneficial to have expectations and targets identified over the short, medium and long term. Once conclusions are drawn it is anticipated that actions to take will be recommended. Leading by example is always favourable and the City should consider an internal audit, if not already underway, to see where improvements and savings can be made to city chattels.

I suggest that staff address some of the limitations they are facing, especially as it relates to transportation and being in a multi-tiered municipality, but there may be others. I am not aware of the relationship between York and Richmond Hill, but I believe it would be beneficial to forge or strengthen alliances with other York Region municipalities and the Region to address transportation issues as it relates to emissions.

It is encouraging to see that staff are reaching out to organizations and community groups to capitalize on their expertise. I would suggest this be continued and possibly expanded. With limited resources, it is important to forge strong alliances. In order for Richmond Hill to be a leader in the community, it is incumbent upon you to provide staff with the leeway to research innovative ideas to current and upcoming climate concerns. They need to be allowed to access leading edge technology and solutions including those that can be found with collaborative organizations such as the Ellen MacArthur

Foundation. Blue Dot has recommended York Region participate with this group and the Region is reviewing the feasibility of that through Regional Council.

As you know, our neighbours, Newmarket, Aurora and Toronto as well as hundreds of other municipalities have declared a climate emergency. The City of Toronto has been very proactive by adopting many actionable initiatives. The Toronto Environmental Alliance has reported them as follows:

- Endorse a net zero greenhouse gas emissions target and look at ways to achieve this target by 2040
- Explore financing mechanisms to adequately fund climate action in the 2021 budget cycle
- Meaningfully consult and cooperate with Indigenous communities on the development and implementation of the TransformTO climate action plan
- Apply the City's Equity Lens to TransformTO decision-making in order to ensure that strategies include and benefit equity-seeking groups
- Collaborate with youth to increase their participation in the development and implementation of TransformTO
- Apply a climate lens to evaluate the climate impacts of major City decisions including financial decisions
- Create a low-carbon jobs strategy that supports a decent work agenda and expands green industry sectors
- Initiate a plan to become a green investment City and exclude fossil fuels from City investments

My concern is that by others recognizing the urgent need to address climate change, they are opening up possibilities that Richmond Hill may not be able to obtain. Business opportunities exist in climate solutions found in the building industry, infrastructure, clean technology and other mitigative measures. Often these solutions find cost savings along the way such as when Richmond Hill changed to LED lighting. Legislative requirements may impose direction, however funding and grant opportunities from other levels of government may be contingent on forward thinking initiatives. I am hoping that Richmond Hill does not lose out on these opportunities.

At a Committee of Adjustments hearing, I was told that I was part of the environmental problem because I owned a house. I believe we are all a part of the problem but we all need to be part of the solution. Through collective efforts real change can occur to provide a sustainable, healthy environment. Some are in a better position to effect change. We need your support to make this happen. As Richmond Hill Councillors you have taken an oath to loyally and honestly serve the citizens of Richmond Hill. There is no greater responsibility you have, than to ensure a safe and healthy climate in which Richmond Hill residents live.

What will be your legacy? Future generations depend on the decisions we make today. Historically, Council has honoured its residents through their commitments to protecting our environment. I hope that you will continue to honour your oath to Richmond Hill residents, recognize the good work that has been done by staff and set forth a motion to enhance and build on their initiatives for the good of Richmond Hill. It is time for real action!

Cheryl Lewandowski

Richmond Hill