

King declares a 'climate emergency'?

By Mark Pavilons

King council has echoed the battle cry and declared a 'climate emergency.' Despite some reluctance from several councillors over the connotation the term 'emergency' carries, King council voted 4-3 to declare an emergency. Joining more than 35 other municipalities in Ontario, King stood tall in recognizing the global situation, and vowing to do its part to strengthen its 'green' moniker. The purpose of declaring an emergency is so King can deepen its commitment to the protection of the environment, community and economy from the impacts of climate change. The Township, by declaring an emergency, vows to reduce emissions across King. The Township will also proactively engage staff to reach near and long-term greenhouse gas reduction targets, contained in the recently passed Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan. Staff will also begin creating a climate action plan for the Township, focussing on mitigation and adaptation at the community level. King Mayor Steve Pellegrini brought the motion forward for a number of reasons. King's draft Official Plan refers to climate change adaption and resilience and King recognizes that climate change can also be an opportunity for economic growth in the low-carbon industry. A reduction in GHG is beneficial for everyone and hundreds of local governments around the world have made similar vows, and declared the situation an emergency. The facts, and the science all point to the dire situation. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) urged the world to reduce the level of GHG emissions by 45% by 2030 (from 2010 levels) to ensure temperatures don't rise more than 1.5 degrees. It's been indicated that temperature increases on that level will usher in 'catastrophic climate change.' Councillor Bill Cober said while he supports the intent, the term 'emergency' contains some powerful language. We have to confront and prepare for climate change, but federal and provincial legislation is addressing it. The mayor said he 'struggled' with it but the Township's legal experts said it's the correct term, being used nationwide. Councillor Debbie Schaefer said the term is appropriate and indicates that action is required. Councillor Avia Eek said we're already on the path. 'What's the cost of doing nothing?' she asked. Councillor Jordan Cescolini said we should make real change, but he did want the wording altered.