

Sustainability should be part of everyone's vocabulary

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The term sustainability is defined as "the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance."

King Township expanded on this and widened its reach to include almost every aspect of community living. While often associated with the environment, sustainability in King is all encompassing. It's about who we are and where we're going.

There's a very interesting sentiment scribbled on the wall in the King Township council chambers:

"King Township is an idyllic countryside community of communities, proud of its rural, cultural and agricultural heritage. We are respected for treasuring nature, encouraging a responsible local economy, and celebrating our vibrant quality of life."

There's no doubt King is charming, rustic and picturesque in its natural simplicity.

But beauty is more than skin deep, and King is no exception.

For anyone who attended the annual Volunteer Appreciation Night last week, the true definition of King was quite obvious. People, pure and simple. It's people - especially those who've made amazing contributions over the years - who are the very fabric of the community. They are the leaders, movers and shakers. They are the adventurers, explorers and achievers.

This Township, and all of its strategies, documents and long-term plans, all boil down to enshrining community ideals. It's about taking the essence of King and its people, and translating this into living, breathing, evolving documents. The documents in and of themselves, have little umph, until they're brought to life by human hands.

But it shows a commitment, a political recognition, of the importance of maintaining our quality of life and all that it entails. The grassroots blood, sweat and tears, and political will, all made it happen.

It's hard to believe the Integrated Sustainability Plan marked its 5th birthday. Boy, it seems like yesterday that it was introduced, with much fanfare, at Country Day School.

There's a reason it received a lot of attention, and continues to be an integral part of how King is growing and evolving.

While many may not fully understand it, the Plan is key in many ways. It quietly works, behind the scenes, like an irrigation system, constantly feeding the lifeblood of this large community. And it's bearing fruit.

The mention and intent of the Plan is documented on every single staff report. While it may be a formality and often a token expression of our idyllic charm, it is relevant and actually shores up planning considerations and recommendations. It's something you don't see in other municipalities.

The document itself is a testament to public engagement. It was the citizenry who charted the course, stayed at the helm and navigated these uncharted waters.

The result, to this day, is one of the best sustainability plans of any municipality in the province.

It's almost unbelievable that this small municipality, in a sea of urban giants, can be such a leader, in many respects. It's not surprising to its community leaders and not surprising to a very supportive and appreciative team of political leaders. All of council and staff are big fans and act as cheerleaders of all things King. They may not sport vuvuzelas, but their voices are heard far and

wide.

If you visit the website and scan the Plan, you'll see a list of all the contributors under acknowledgements. That list is as impressive as the laundry list of community groups, organizations and volunteers who were honoured during the Volunteer Night. It's proof positive that our residents are not merely inhabitants and taxpayers, but active, engaged citizens who are all willing to take the wheel and help steer our ship into the future.

The Plan should be required reading for all students of municipal planning, politics and civics.

The Plan continues to evolve because of the work of committee members, who often go unnoticed. But their dedication to the cause reverberates off the walls of the council chambers, every time you glance up and read those words.

Committee chair Rick Sikorski provided an update to those at the Volunteer Night. The 5th anniversary is a time to pause, reflect, review and offer input into this plan. Since it's fluid, it requires current opinions, realities and yes hurdles, to keep it vibrant and efficient.

That's where you come in.

Since it was the brainchild of the public, it's the public who's responsible for nurturing this offspring. To keep it relevant, and King-centric, please pitch in your two cents worth; provide any relevant and current data; and relay efficiencies. The opportunity to provide this input will arrive shortly, so stay tuned and pay attention.

The fact that you're being given such an opportunity is something you should be proud of. It's your plan, as much as it is of the creators who put their signatures on it. It echoes the sentiment *"for the people, by the people."*

Much of the public's apathy of governance comes from complex gobbledygook and out of touch, top-down strategies that end up in the great bureaucratic shredder.

You can help chart the course and help shape King Township for generations to come. Why wouldn't you take advantage of it? Your children are depending on you.