

OVERVIEW OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE TAY WATERSHED COMMUNITY

SUSAN BRANDUM
613-285-7945 SBRANDUM1@GMAIL.COM
MAR. 28, 2019
Friends of the Tay Watershed AGM

Good afternoon Friends
It's such a pleasure to be with you today.
I'm going to start by just giving you a 10-minute snapshot of the status today.

STATUS SNAPSHOT - GLOBAL

IPCC report. 11 years, 7 months
That's to avoid just about inconceivable harm
To keep within a 1.5 C degree global temperature rise, we have to cut our fossil fuel use basically in half by 2030. And that means we don't start in 2030 to do it, it means we have to start now.
Just take a minute now to imagine that. Cut your household heating by half. Cut your driving by half. Cut your beef consumption by 90%. Cut out flying.

I'll let Greta Thunberg, the brave, young, oh-so-articulate Swede, explain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjsLm5PCdVQ>

STATUS SNAPSHOT - ONTARIO

To set the picture for Ontario, I can best refer you to the report of Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, whose role has just been ended by the Ford government. It is beautifully expressed, comprehensive, to the point, definitely worth reading.

Here is the opening abstract statement:

“Climate change is not a distant threat; it is the defining challenge of our time. The planet is warming and Ontario is warming faster than the global average. The historical climate normals that Ontario's economy, agriculture, infrastructure, and standards are based upon are gone.”

STATUS SNAPSHOT – LANARK COUNTY AND TAY WATERSHED

What does this mean locally? Here are just a few nuggets pulled from various reports that have relevance to our region.

- In the drought of 2012, Summer flows on the Mississippi River were maintained almost entirely from reservoir lakes.
- In general, in the Mississippi, stream flows will increase substantially in fall and winter by roughly 70-75%, while they will drop in the spring by 45% and summer by 65%.
- In 2018, we saw some weather extremes. In early January, extreme cold meant Toronto had to open two additional warming centres, while later in Jan. through March, Ottawa's Rideau Canal Skateway was repeatedly closed because of unseasonably warm temps.
- Last June, prolonged heat waves resulted in 70 deaths in Quebec.
- Ontario has the highest number of Lyme disease cases in Canada. Milder winters allow black-legged ticks carrying Lyme disease to

spread approximately 46 km further north every year through southern and central Ontario.

- In 2016, the species of mosquito capable of carrying the Zika virus was found in Ontario.
- The number of breeding areas of mosquitos carrying West Nile virus increased from 56 in 2014 to 409 in 2017.
- Between 2010 and 2012, hundreds of dairy cattle died in Ontario because of extreme heat.
- Climate change is a key driver of Canadian food prices; Ontario and British Columbia are expected to experience above average increases in food prices in the future due in part to the impacts of climate change.
- The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) estimates that up to 10% of Canadian properties may soon be too high risk to be insured by the private sector if no measures are taken to mitigate flood risk by the owner or through public policy, including investments in wetlands.
- In 2016, the federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development reported that “severe weather events have resulted in rising costs to governments at all levels in Canada and, by extension, to all Canadians.”
- Extreme weather is fueling lawsuits against municipalities, conservation authorities and the province for damages and costs. For example, in 2010, the City of Stratford paid \$7.7 million to settle a class action lawsuit brought on by residents who were flooded in a 2002 storm
- Kingston has produced what has been deemed to be the best report in Canada on their local conditions, expectations and possible actions.
- We are lucky that they are so close and we can effectively apply information to our area. So, again just a few nuggets, numbers are rounded.
 - o Kingston currently gets about 12 days a year that are greater than 30 degrees. By 2050, this is expected to go to 30 days a year.
 - o The growing season is expected to go from about 220 days a year now to 233 by 2050.
 - o Freezing rain events lasting 6 hours or more are expected to increase by 50% by 2050.

You'd think that with all this dire news, there would be a lot of activity on the local front. There has been, on somewhat of a low-key basis, with occasional popouts of more exciting activity.

For eg., 20 years ago, with REAL, I helped test and develop Canada's EnerGuide for Houses process and the Home Energy programs and trained the three main advisors in this region. Governments have come and gone, supported the program or not, provided incentives or not. The process is still there, you can still get an audit and learn how to cut energy use in your home.

Popouts included the fabulous ecoPerth effort that ran over the change of the century and meant to show what a small community could do to address climate change. Another was Mississippi Valley Conservation's Almonte workshops in 2011 that brought the science home to this area that climate change was happening and was here, now.

Today, we're going to bring you up to speed on what is now happening. I've separated these broadly into 3 categories:

- 1.) LOCAL ACTIVITIES**
- 2.) LOCAL POLITICAL ACTIONS**
- 3.) PUBLIC EDUCATION**

This is going to be a quick zoom through, so please hold your questions until the end. Thank you.

1.) LOCAL ACTIVITIES

LANARK CLIMATE ACTION GROUP

A month ago, some 18 disparate groups and some individuals found each other and came together to kick start the Lanark Climate Action Network. Gord Harrison and the Lanark County Stewardship Council are taking the lead in getting funding and setting up a structure that will provide supports for a range of local activities.

The groups and individuals to date are:

[Sue Brandum]
EcoPerth
EcoTay
Friends of Lanark County
Friends of Tay
GAIA Citizens Climate Lobby
[Ramsey Hart]
Homesol Energy Solutions
Lanark County Stewardship Council
[Patricia Larkin]
Madawaska-Lanark Land Trust
[Robert Mears]
Mills Community Support
Mississippi Valley Cons Authority
National Farmers Union, Local 310 (Lanark)
Notre Dame Catholic High School
Perth and District Community Foundation
Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)
Tay Valley GHGs
Tay Valley Township
Watersheds Canada

Gord has already secured some funds.

We're focused on three priority areas:

- establishing a network;
- taking collaborative efforts relevant to climate change in the context of conservation and natural ecosystems;
- taking concerted political action.

Initial plans being discussed include:

- A workshop in May or June that would define the role and functions of the network,
- Identifying local opportunities for adaptation and mitigation,
- Identifying local natural areas for protection

- Building capacity including using the Engagement Organizing methodology used by Ecology Ottawa

BUT, we aren't waiting for the funding and supports to get started. In fact, we've already started on a number of actions that I've included in this presentation.

ALUS - ALTERNATIVE LAND USE SERVICES PROGRAM

Gord and his group met on Weds. to move this forward. It's a program that was developed by farmers and ranchers and works with farmers to create and sustain agricultural, wildlife and natural spaces, specifically with wetland, grassland, and woodland spaces.

TAY NET – THE TAY WATERWAY VOLUNTEER NETWORK

DAVID TAYLOR – See David's presentation. A network of volunteers to alert fellow citizens of serious deviations in water levels on the Tay.

2.) LOCAL POLITICAL ACTIONS

I have spent the past 20 or so years in developing and encouraging personal action, incremental action in the terminology of the industry. It's become clear that incremental action is not enough, and that we really have to cause politicians to make systemic change. There are a number of actions in the area.

CITIZENS CLIMATE LOBBY – (CCL)

Citizens' Climate Lobby is an international grassroots environmental group that trains and supports volunteers to build relationships with their elected representatives in order to influence climate policy. Started in the US, they've had considerable success. Not heard much in the media but there is a group of Republicans for climate action. The local branch is under the guidance of Anita Payne. They meet regularly with the federal MP for our area, Scott Reid, and encourage the acceptance and adoption in particular of a Carbon Fee and Rebate program.

FRIDAYS FOR THE FUTURE

CCL adopted the Fridays for the Future Campaign, triggered by Greta Thunberg and her Friday Schools Strikes for the Climate. A group of us have come together and held 3 strikes in Perth and one in Smiths Falls and are planning a strike in Almonte on Apr. 16. These are short, fun, festive, and get attention. Anyone interested in helping or coming out, see Anita or me.

At the lower-tier municipal front, three local municipalities have taken action:

MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP

Bill Dobson, Reeve of Montague Township, has just informed me that they are forming an environment and climate change committee. Excellent news.

We'll now hear from the two that have already taken some action.

Forbes Symon, Director, Development & Protective Services, Town of Perth

TOWN OF PERTH'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

FORBES SYMON – SEE FORBES' PRESENTATION

Next Barrie Crampton, Deputy Reeve, Tay Valley Township

TAY VALLEY TOWNSHIP'S GREEN ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

BARRIE CRAMPTON

LANARK COUNTY – PRESENTATION TO HAVE LANARK COUNTY BECOME MEMBER OF FCM PARTNERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

In the past three years, there have been two efforts to have the County become a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Partners for Climate Protection. Both failed.

We are attempting again to persuade the County to do this. Some 50% of the population of Canada is in municipalities which are members of this body. We know that climate change is felt first and foremost at the municipal level. And we know that many of the issues we face here are best figured out on a county-wide level. And we know, that it really is time for our local political structures to step up to the plate and take genuine action.

An informal group, supported by the new Network, is organizing to present again to the County.

Under the Liberal gov't in Ontario, all municipalities had to collect information on their own internal GHGs – from their buildings, from fleets, etc. What Perth and Tay Valley, and Montague will be doing, and what we want the County and Smiths Falls to do, is collect information on the whole of activities within those jurisdictions and then develop plans to reduce those GHGs – by half. And, of course to develop plans to adapt and to ensure that all decisions made by a municipal level of government are made through a climate crisis lens.

Understand that the County could get financial assistance in the order of 80 cents on the dollar to determine what our comprehensive GHGs are here, to target how to reduce them, and to build in a methodology for examining GHG emissions in every decision. We estimate that it would only cost the County about \$25,000 over two years for this initial program. A no-brainer if there ever was one, and a means for all the other lower-tier municipalities in Lanark County and Smiths Falls to join forces and do this together. Again, if anyone is interested in helping, please talk to me.

CALL - CITIZENS CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN LANARK COUNTY AND SMITHS FALLS FACEBOOK GROUP

As part of the effort to organize a citizens' push on the County, we've launched a Facebook Group, called *CALL – Citizens Call for Climate Action in Lanark County and Smiths Falls*. It's a place for people to post the types of ideas they think our local political leaders here can be taking action on. So, for example, there are stories there of the municipalities across the country that are declaring a climate emergency in their cities – Hamilton, Kingston, Vancouver, 300 Quebec municipalities and others have all

declared climate emergencies. Other stories support the development of Active Transportation plans and bicycling paths and routes, yet others green businesses, and sustainable agriculture. Please Friend the site, and post your ideas for what you would like to see happen in this area. It is specifically NOT a bad news site.

3.) PUBLIC EDUCATION

MEDIA

Hot off the press, Robert Mears and I met with Paul Lehman and Alyson Symon at Mississippi Valley Conservation earlier this week. Under Paul's leadership, MVC has done a great job collecting research and data on climate change in their watershed. Much of the findings are generally applicable to the Tay and Rideau. They are keen to get it out to the public. I personally have taken initiative to have Lake 88 cover the climate crisis locally and they are very interested and committed. So, we're talking about a roaming Speakers Series throughout Lanark County and Smiths Falls, a radio interview series and a series of media stories, all on local climate effects, and on actions that we can take personally and collectively on both mitigation and adaptation.

ANOTE'S ARK

The Friends of the Tay, the Perth and District CFUW, and Dr. Shelley Ball of the Biosphere Environmental Education are making a special showing of the documentary Anote's Ark here in Perth.

<http://www.anotesark.com/>

The video will be shown on Monday, April 15 in the PDCI in the morning and then in the evening here at the Legion to the public. Admission is free.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO LOCAL DATA AND INFORMATION

You may well ask, how did I gather all the information that is in my presentation today?

It's critical that we have information that is relevant to our local community on the climate crisis, on specific actions here that will help us reduce GHG emissions and adapt to the crisis.

As a writer and environmentalist, I've been seeking out sources of information for a while. But I have been ably assisted by a volunteer who's recently come forward and loves to read and collect data! That's Robert Mears.

We are in the process of posting everything relatively current we find that is relevant to our local area on a Google Drive. But when the Lanark County Climate Network gets going, it is our intention that there be a website devoted to making this information available to all comers.

So far we have collected things like the wonderful library of climate information that MVC under Paul Lehman collected, the City of Kingston report, the Environmental Commissioners report, the documents from the Town of Perth and Tay Valley.

Again, of course, if anyone has any document they would like to contribute, or would like access to in the short term until we get the website set up, please contact me.

That concludes the overview. I hope it leaves you buoyed that action is happening here, but I hope you don't think you can sit back and let others take care of it. This is the single biggest crisis we face, and we really do need all hands on deck – for the future of humankind and for the diversity of life on this beautiful planet.

I opened my talk referring to the fact we have 11 years and 7 months left. But the fact is we actually have 11 years and 7 months to take action, so let's get going.

QUESTIONS