

## Stratford Community Climate Conversations 2024-2024 Table Discussion Summaries

### **Session 1 - September 26, 2024, City Hall Auditorium, Attendance Estimate: 60**

An overview of Stratford's current and future climate initiatives including the Community Climate Action Plan presented by Sadaf Ghalib, Climate Change Program Manager

#### **1. Concerns:**

- Transportation - More walkability, bike-ability; get the big trucks driving emissions out of town; we need biking safety, we are a community of cars, pickup trucks in the city are bad; do what doesn't cost - like not driving to downtown, promote bike-ability for tourism, expand to a bikeable province, like in parts of Europe; bus routes - old routes made more sense, travelled to more streets where people live; do we have the energy for alternate choices; batteries (silicon is being added to lithium), we are waiting for hydrogen to be invested in, not enough electricity in the grid to be able to sustain modern transportation; have one sidewalk that is bike-able - allow for riding on sidewalk, won't cost City anything; have trucks move to edge of town; how can we get out of the predominance of cars with a single user; public transportation is a priority for Stratford; how can we change transportation when the province is pushing car use; what is the impact emissions from farming transportation and what is our connection to it?
- Education, awareness and working together - education is key
- Seniors - how does climate change affect vulnerable seniors, how can we provide home care for them?
- Extremes in weather patterns - are we prepared? "I want winter back"
- Changing Attitudes - personal accountability, i.e. drive less, reduce car use each year, provide incentives? How can we get people to give up, to learn to consume less, over-consumption is a root cause. A particular concern is that the older demo not willing to listen. There is a common belief that someone else will take care of it
- City governance - not seeing change or accountability at council - where was the mayor tonight? City council needs to show more support for the CCAP, we need their leadership in the community and with other levels of government.
- Financing - how are we going to pay for what needs to be done?
- Natural assets - remove annuals and plant native species, developing healthy environments for our ecosystem, take care of our birds in particular; the Dragonboat Festival destroys plants for a one day event; create pollinator habitats, native species and plants are in danger; the building of sub-divisions removes topsoil
- Buildings and development - retrofit buildings that would be torn down (e.g. Avoncrest) to high insulation levels to keep them; all new buildings should have heat pumps (note that ground source heat pumps are not allowed in Stratford); change roof colours to absorb or reflect, e.g. at the Alman arena which is now black.
- Affordability of making sustainable choices - heat pumps, electric cars, solar panels are not affordable for most people.

- Future generations - I want to leave the world a better place than I found it, my worry is for my children and grandchildren.
- Recycling/Re-use/Circularity - use Terracycle boxes for recycling that our blue boxes don't take (Note, E & E, prior to the pandemic purchased and placed such boxes around the city); circularity - how can we instill, i.e. the Beer Store has the best recycling, use glass milk bottles (returnable/re-useable) instead of plastic bags.
- Growth - how do we address the issue of unlimited growth, this lifestyle is not sustainable; agricultural practices are unsustainable in developed countries
- Human rights issues globally and extractivism, e.g. lithium mining
- Where is the money is spent - putting action into play, let's see the results
- Representation - where are the young people in this conversation? How do we bring them in, how can we get the community represented (i.e., can we get more diverse representation) in these conversations and motivated?
- Communication - how can we communicate when means of reaching people are siloed?
- Provincial policies are backwards on climate change, how can we stand up to the province?
- Timing - climate action is urgent, we are way behind in what we need to do and soon it will be too late. 2030 is barely 5 years away. We need to put pressure on politicians and industry leaders.
- Hopelessness - how can we address the issue of hopelessness, can events such as this event bring hope?

## **2. Topic Suggestions:**

- Building - hear from HP Builders Association, Hyde Construction about initiatives such as laneway housing and what they are doing to reduce energy use in buildings. Invite builder of net zero homes (in Embro?); planning and new builds- what is the planning department at municipal, provincial or federal level doing for new builds? We need to provide incentives for builders for energy efficient homes. It will increase long term value. Retrofits - How to include this in Stratford? We want to build all these things with green energy, but WHO is going to do it? Work with builders, retrofit training programs (Note, Kingston will do retrofitting and add it to your tax bill); change specs for new buildings
- Organic Foods - e.g. Pfennings organics food box and/or other sources
- Festival Hydro
- Public transportation – how to increase bus use, especially making it work for seniors
- Geo-thermal energy - how does it work?
- Business and Industry Energy Use - what are they doing to reduce energy use, emissions?
- Natural Assets - Replacing lawns with native friendly plants; how can we add more trees? Re food, bring in the contributions of agriculture.
- Heat Pumps and Solar Energy for homes
- House Sharing - especially for seniors

- Transportation, farming and construction emissions - what is the city doing to reduce these emissions? Are there - could there be incentives? look at personal versus commercial; Why are we so resistant to enforcing the ring road? (Note, Alliston has enacted a by-law to prevent trucks driving through town)
- Dissemination of information - Create a Facebook group of solar panel owners
- Practical ideas - how to fix a house after a flood, what to do when your home is too hot, etc.
- Financing Options - Having the city as a lender (rural communities do it often)
- Governance - Care in electing politicians who are elected every 4 years on their platforms. People power is needed, the community needs to rally to see that change happens, politicians will follow
- Community building - how to work on building a stronger community, e.g. could we offer our front yards to those who wish to tend to gardens? Grants to incentivize? In BC this is part of the curriculum. How do we build a movement, could speakers be invited to speak about successful campaigns elsewhere? Or could there be workshops?
- Waste - look at textile legislation in California, add more information on textile waste and what to do about it. Recycling - where does it go and where does it end up, is it being recycled really and how is it used?
- Insurance - What is impact of the climate disasters on insurance and insurance premiums? Does this effect Stratford?
- Fossil Fuels - Moving away from natural gas - can we do it? And how?
- Nuclear Energy - Explanation of reliance on nuclear energy and the dangers (i.e. storage) and benefits (no emissions?)
- Farming and emissions, how is Stratford impacted by emissions from farming, are better farming methods beginning to be practiced. Invite farmers to speak. Stratford is impacted economically and environmentally by the agricultural sector.
- Tourism and emissions - how can we address the emissions from the tourism sector?
- If China is practicing sustainable methods as presented in the slides from CCAP presentation, could we learn more about it?
- Cost of extraction re emissions and impact on the land and waters for minerals for EV and solar panel usage. Are there new technologies being developed that won't require such extraction?
- What are the challenges particular to smaller cities when it comes to implementing climate action plans. Can we hear from the politicians?
- Capitalism and the pursuit of infinite growth is a root cause of climate change - how can we address economic growth while combatting climate change? How can we grow in care, intelligence, health rather than constant pursuit of economic growth?
- Indigenous knowledges - we have much to learn in terms of environmental and sustainable practices, but also in consensual governing and the fundamental care for people and planet.
- Let's hear from the young people - can we have a panel to hear their concerns and suggestions for solutions?

- Can we get the MPP and the MP to speak to us and tell us their policies for climate action and hear ours? And hear from other party reps too?
- Examples - give us real world examples to give hope and energy
- This format of speaker followed by discussion works well to animate and maintain participation.
- Resource suggested - writings of Margaret Wheatley (Wiki: an American writer, teacher, speaker, and management consultant who works to create organizations and communities worthy of human habitation. She draws from many disciplines: organizational behavior, chaos theory, living systems science, ancient spiritual traditions, history, sociology, and anthropology)

### **3. What can we do as individuals to help, and/ or what are you already doing?**

- Talk to people/experts about what they are doing – example Brad Robertson who completely retrofitted his home, was recognized at City Hall for green recognition program
- Think about what you are driving, how many cars you have, how you can car pool, make less trips, walk more, use public transit as transportation is responsible for so much of our emissions.
- Use compostable bags in apartment buildings so that if collection system is not perfect, you are not adding to problem of plastic in the landfill
- Think about solar panels on the church roof – use knowledge from Zion that has one
- Taking a course, joining a book club, coming to climate conversations to become immersed and learn more about climate solutions
- Invest in green energy
- Use public transit
- Retrofit our houses to save energy
- Connect with our neighbours, community and spread information

### **4. General Suggestions/Observations for the City and other organizations:**

- Government incentives - Could everyone be advised of government programs offering incentives so that we can take advantage of them, eg recent heat pump incentives. Need conditions for low energy initiatives while building is happening – eg solar panels, heat pumps, geothermal part of the build.
- Energy rating system for all buildings - Energuide
- Expand the use of green bins in apartment buildings
- Make public transit more desirable, less difficult – mention of programs for students and seniors in other cities
- How can residents of apartments, retirement homes, condos and other shared living spaces have agency over some decisions such as waste collection and energy sources (heat pumps, solar panels)
- Get schools and service clubs involved in climate initiatives
- When roofs on major buildings are being redone, think solar panels  
new apartment/condo buildings need to be built with shared energy sources

- Community leadership is needed
- The challenge isn't creating conversations amongst the converted, but broadening them to include the skeptical.
- Permaculture becoming a trend within high schools. Use compost, cardboard, small twigs and leaves to compost.
- For Climate Momentum - can we work on changing grass to gardens?
- What is city doing to incentivize change, the government has to be part of this conversation.
- We need to involve all the parties, e.g. we can't leave the oil workers behind
- Why can't we build higher than the skyline - how does this benefit the city?
- Front yard gardens, get rid of the grass, grow food - get people outside more.
- Plant native plants around the city and not annuals to reduce costs and use of water
- Green business development, how do you distinguish retrofit manufacturers
- Stratford could be seen as an eco-friendly place
- Agriculture and red meat are huge contributors to climate emissions - how to reduce this in Stratford, cattle feed is a massive issue and cows produce methane, there are more cattle on earth than wild animals. People should get back to farming - better for individuals and no packaging
- Get to the grocery stores - plastic and contaminating packing is contributing to emissions, get stores switch to compostable bags
- Focus on under-consumption - thrifting
- Getting places in a more active way (transportation is largest source of pollution) - walk instead of drive, have car-free Fridays, create by-laws for electric vehicles and their use
- Lack of transit to Stratford to get to big cities like Toronto
- Trees, how we kill them just for tissues and papers that we only use once. Instead of trees bamboo could be used. Bamboo is a plant that grows very easily and works just like trees.
- The City land acknowledgement does not state that the city is on "traditional" lands but does the city acknowledge this?
- Why wasn't the Mayor in attendance to demonstrate support of the CCAP?
- Climate Momentum newsletter is important source of information on climate change
- We need to build empathy with one another and with all, our actions affect the planet.
- What can we learn from the campaign against smoking that could be applied in climate action?
- We do have accomplishments to be celebrated in Stratford and in Canada - let's acknowledge and celebrate them- it isn't all negative. "Celebrate the good."

##### **5. Responses/Suggestions for Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP):**

- How do we get to goal of reducing CO2 and carbon footprint? Publish the results, the national goal should be common goal.
- Non-profit housing and communal living - how organize and implement green energy in these homes and start recycling and green garbage collection.
- What is cost of implementing change?

- What has been implemented to date as part of the action?
- Is the city planning to incentivize the community looking to make positive changes? (not always cash incentives but could increase property value).
- Gasoline and natural gas - could build new buildings without use of natural gas, change the policy, even if province promotes natural gas.
- The charts - a lot of goals suggested to reduce by 30% and more but the bottom line is it is not happening. We would have seen an increase in emissions if the timeline started earlier.
- How are things specifically done? Where do we stand - we need more of an idea of the specifics.
- What will the city initiate? When is the implementation?
- How can the city be a lead on this?
- Create an arms-length NFP (separate from the city) to focus on the CCAP (e.g. Invest Stratford)
- Money for CCAP comes from the city - where is it going to come from and when?
- Having a person designated at city for climate action makes a powerful statement.
- What is air sealing?
- How does a "community energy" plan work?
- Add the word "reduce" to what needs to be done.
- Can it be stated more clearly that the emissions are man-made (the Anthropocene)
- What is the impact of the wildfires on CO<sup>2</sup> emissions in increasing them and also in depleting the carbon uptake of the forests and what is long-term impact as far as reaching net zero?
- What is carbon uptake of trees in Stratford and how many more trees are needed to absorb our emissions?
- What about the technology of carbon capture and storage and reliance on technological solutions, could some information on this be included/explained? People are very confused about what a carbon tax does.
- How does Stratford carbon emissions per person compare with what should be universal average per person to stay within safe emissions area per person? Projections for net zero?
- How does Stratford rate in terms of emissions with other cities of comparable size?
- How will the public be informed as to how we are doing on the CCAP? How can citizens responses be heard?
- Impact of our emissions from imports and exports, are they reported?

**Live "major concern" reports from tables around the room:**

- How do we pay for it - where does the financing come from?
- When is it going to happen
- There's a lot of pessimism and hopelessness
- How do we create change in the community
- Get off of fossil fuels, keep them out of new developments

- Buildings - key to address emissions in current and future
- Transportation - major issue
- Natural habitat
- Young people
- The forests - can we stop consuming our forests?
- Growth and over-consumption