

Last month we passed a resolution regarding our participation in the Climate Change Local Initiative. In it we stated our Vision on Climate Change Action was to position ourselves as a community leader and help navigate the potential long-term impacts of climate change. We recognize the climate is changing, but our planet is changing also with more people using up the planet's resources.

As we strive to cut down on the use of fossil fuels, we also have to find other ways to provide all the things we use fossil fuels for, right down to our everyday plastics. To that end, and to complement our commitment to Action regarding Climate Change, I would like to introduce our commitment to Action regarding Conservation of our Environment.

We all have to start somewhere.. and for municipalities that somewhere is policy change. In that policy we have to address not only climate change, but sustainability and environmental health. However, right now it's baby steps as we have virtually nothing in place to address these issues. Yes we are looking at funding electric cars and charging stations with the aid of AMBM, but there are other things we could be doing to reduce pollution. Greenhouse gas emissions are something we are going to have to address, but I think first we need to deal with the obvious problems in our landfills.

We thought we had it under control with recycling, but in the last year I have recognized that re-cycling is slowly becoming less of a solution and more of a problem in itself. It is becoming more expensive, less practical due to restrictions being put on items that are allowed to be recycled. Therefore re-use is becoming more and more important. We need to get rid of single use items that cannot be recycled like single-use plastic shopping bags, single use plastic cutlery and storage containers etc. that just end up in our landfill and do not biodegrade. We need to educate the public on what is and what is not recyclable. We need to provide grants to help organizations green their communities with projects such as community composting areas, properly fenced in and animal proof, with volunteers to maintain it all summer. We need to start the ball rolling by greening ourselves through Green purchasing for our office and public works departments - Always keeping in mind what is most sustainable.

I think we can adopt a comprehensive policy for a municipal sustainability program that sets out reasonable and achievable goals. I realize we will have to find someone with the proper training to help and guide us in these decisions, but in looking at government sites I have seen available funding and grant opportunities. If we share our vision with the community through our newsletters, I am convinced we can get our local organizations on board.

We will have to address such things as

- **Energy reduction** with audits on our facilities and perhaps consider other renewable sources such as wind farms and solar arrays (as per Goal 4 in our Climate Change Action Plan)and I think we have already started with environmentally friendly lighting products. Personally I have installed an Air Source Heat Pump in my home.. it is energy efficient, inexpensive to operate and I would encourage home owners to consider this option rather than electric baseboard heating.
- **Green purchasing** considering such things as lifecycle costs, sustainability of materials, transportation costs, recyclability of components and potential health impacts of products; using and receiving packing materials that are

biodegradable (not Styrofoam peanuts which by the way are so bad that every polystyrene peanut ever made is still here, somewhere as they never break down) and finally, following sustainable printing guidelines.

- **Green transportation:** among other things such as electric vehicles (and the conference I just attended made me aware that all our public works vehicles right through to the graders are all available in BEV and very proficient –but that is something to be considered in future purchases – as per Goal 2 of our Action Plan); but we need to stop driving our PW vehicles great distances and devise a way to establish satellite garages for vehicles being used seasonally: ie – a grader and snow plough and truck for example seasonally housed in one or two wards. As per Goal 2 to improve air quality we need to educate regarding ‘idling’ of vehicles and perhaps introduce “no idle” zones.
- **Green Building Policies:** re-use over virgin development; mixed use zoning projects; fast-track green building projects; green roofs; healthy building materials; develop a policy regarding technology including cell towers, wireless routers and smart meters.
- **Land management:** we should have a policy to preserve and protect open space; tree protection and re-planting policy; prohibit pesticides; discourage use of synthetic grass on playing fields.
- **Water Management :** water-conserving plumbing fixtures and other effective water conservation policies. As per Goal 1 of our Action Plan, we need to educate the public on all aspects of water conservation and maintenance of safe water for future generations.
- **Waste Water Management:** I believe Alexander has one of the most progressive Wastewater Management systems in the province. In Ward 1, we filter all our sewage naturally through our wetlands, natural filters of reeds and roots, then to the creek and out to the lake, pure and clean. This is something I think we should pat ourselves on the back for and try to duplicate wherever possible.
- **Waste Management:** go for a zero-waste goal; perhaps a shelter where members of the community can leave things they don’t want and we, as the RM can sell (for charity or putting back in to the greening projects), re-cycle or re-use (I know the problems here, but that should not deter us from trying to do it right); perhaps we will learn from our EOLE collection of electric products (Goal 3); community composting areas (Goal 3); a ‘toxics’ collection area for hazardous/ toxic materials.
- **Cleaning and Maintenance:** bio-based green cleaning products for instance and ban products containing triclosan and phosphorous.

- As per Goal 3 of our Action Plan, we need to actively solicit the participation of the **Community**: get rid of single-use plastics by encouraging the use of re-usable and biodegradable products; ban use of petroleum based Styrofoam products which is manufactured in factories which contaminate the nearby water and air and which never, ever completely break down in the environment; encourage farmer's markets.

There are several presentations available online to explain many initiatives in greening communities and developing new policies to encourage sustainable resource management including the use of ground and air source heat pumps, the future of solar energy, and sustainable building projects.

The Federal Government set aside \$1B for green initiatives last year and will be setting aside at least that much for 2020. FCM listed a number of initiatives that were federally funded including one from the Town of Morris who received \$123,900 to see how they can divert large household appliances from Manitoba Landfills. The Government of Canada Natural Resources department lists 28 programs in Manitoba offering financial incentives to homeowners which we should be putting up on our website to encourage individuals to start greening their homes:

www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/funding/efficiency/4947 and click on Manitoba

Everyone has a choice.. but a choice to a healthy planet is in our hands.