

## New Tec Climate Action focused on eco-friendly initiatives and green economy

As COVID-19's peak passes, many are wondering how the government can transition to a more eco-friendly economy when recovery efforts begin.

"This is an opportunity now, as we see there's going to be a 'new normal' once we get through this pandemic about 'how are we going to rebuild the economy,' said Helen Doyle, member of New Tec Climate Action.

"This is our opportunity to rebuild it with clean technology and renewable energy sources?we need to ween ourselves off of fossil fuels.?"

New Tec Climate Action, a small group of environmentally conscious individuals, formed through St. John's United Church in Alliston late last year, had to pause monthly meetings due to COVID-19, but is hoping to start up some green initiatives locally when they resume.

"Our aim is to engage citizens of New Tecumseth on climate action and to increase the awareness of the need for climate action at the local level,?" noted Doyle.

She told The Times two key components of climate action are mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting communities to ensure they're resilient to the impacts of climate change.

"I believe that this is the biggest global health threat that we've faced,?" Doyle stressed. "Our generation and future generations are certainly going to bear the brunt of the actions that our generation and past generations have taken.

"It's just so important, as individuals and as community, that we begin to take action ? it's not too late.?"

New Tec Climate Action was slowly growing before COVID-19 struck the community, putting a stop to its monthly meetings, but group members plan to resume at an appropriate time when controls around the virus loosen.

In late February, New Tec Climate Action held an open house at St. John's Church that saw notable interest from the community.

"We talked to members of the public that were interested in climate action, we talked to them about what our community could do,?" Doyle recalled.

The group is currently determining its primary areas of focus, which could include sustainable transportation, waste reduction, and protecting green spaces.

"We're still at the exploratory stage where we want to engage the community more,?" Doyle noted. "I think we do really have to look at where we can have the most impact, where are the sources of emissions in our community.?"

In terms of transportation, Doyle said it's important for the Town to support active methods, such as sidewalks, trails, and bicycle paths.

"It's great that we have the Trans Canada Trail that runs through New Tecumseth,?" Doyle said. "The Town could support that, make sure that it's accessible, and people are aware of it.?"

As well, it's important to look at the way communities are built to create less of a need for driving long distances.

"If we're reducing our transportation use, we're also improving air quality because the same emissions from transportation that

contribute to climate change also contribute to air pollution," Doyle noted.

When looking at waste reduction, New Tec Climate Action partnered with TerraCycle in early April, which is a convenient and responsible solution for recycling toothbrushes and oral care waste.

There's currently a designated box for oral care waste and packaging setup in the foyer of St. John's Church, which helps the community recycle toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, the outer packaging of toothbrushes and toothpastes, and floss containers, all in one place.

Although the church is currently closed because of COVID-19, people are encouraged to hold onto their dental waste and deposit it there when it reopens.

Meanwhile, planting trees to create more green spaces and protect existing ones is another area of focus for New Tec Climate Action, according to Doyle.

"On mitigation, trees are a great tool to sequester carbon and on the adaptation side, we know trees provide shade for our communities, so that's reducing urban heat islands," she noted. "They're also providing protection from harmful rays from the sun to prevent skin cancer."

Doyle said New Tec Climate Action has plans to work with Town Council on achieving its goals related to the environment.

The municipality has an official plan related to climate change, but Doyle said they're hoping to build a climate action plan with a more concrete framework for becoming eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable.

She told The Times she's encouraging anyone with an interest in climate change to contact their government representatives as well.

"Talk to your local politicians and send emails or letters to your provincial politicians to say we need climate action for the future generations and we need to start now," Doyle stressed.

Going forward, she said because New Tec Climate Action is still a relatively new group and growing, any feedback or ideas around climate action are appreciated.

"We really are hoping to engage the community and have them tell us if there are local initiatives they really want to promote," she said.

To get involved send an email to [NewTecClimate@gmail.com](mailto:NewTecClimate@gmail.com) or send a direct message to the "New Tec Climate" Facebook Page.

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