

ClimateWise spurred forward by Climate Change Action Plan



By Brock Weir

Over the past year, Aurora's Windfall Ecology Centre has reached nearly 6,500 businesses in helping them become more energy efficient through their ClimateWise business network.

6,500 businesses, however, is closer to a drop in the bucket considering there are over 40,000 businesses registered in York Region alone.

Thanks to the Ontario Government, however, Windfall ? and ClimateWise ? are energized in their goal to reach every business within the next three years through Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan.

Released last week, the Climate Change Action Plan is intended to foster businesses and individuals to adapt to climate change and ?deliver innovative clean technology solutions? to help.

?We know that Climate Change is a fact in our daily lives, raising the cost of food, causing extreme weather, and we only have to look to the Toronto Island where Mayor Tory is up to his knees in carp and water to see examples of extremes in change,? said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard on Friday morning visiting Windfall, which is nestled in Sheppard's Bush Conservation Area off Industrial Parkway South. ?We know extreme weather damages property and infrastructure, threatens outdoor activities, and I know from my days working in the far north that melting winter roads are causing real problems in those northern communities that rely on winter roads to get the vast majority of their food and their fuel in for the year.

?We recognize the need to take immediate action because the costs of doing nothing are enormous and we're not willing to impose the costs on our children and our future generations. Taking action now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will mean cleaner air, less time spent in traffic, more comfortable homes and offices and more convenient, livable cities.?

Friday's visit was a reiteration of Province's support for Windfall and eight NGO's across Ontario who are sharing in \$1 million over three years for programs just like ClimateWise aiming towards sustainability.

?This is the first of many contributions that are all incentive based,? said Windfall Executive Director Brent Kopperson. ?We have made commitments in terms of the amount of emissions we're going to help businesses reduce, the amount of businesses we're going to be engaging in the program and the funding that the province has provided is performance-based, so the more that we do, the more money we will be getting to support the program.?

The ClimateWise Business Network is designed to provide supports for local businesses in York Region to set and achieve sustainability goals providing the resources for carbon accounting and integrated plan development.

?They are leading by example and helping us deliver the next generation of clean technology solutions that will help the world fight and adapt to climate change,? said Mr. Ballard. ?By acting now, Ontario can help foster innovation and will be well-positioned to export low carbon goods and services to markets around the world. Windfall helps business members develop a credible business case for sustainability and then works with them to qualify their sources of greenhouse gas emissions, identify mitigation priorities and establish emission reduction targets. To date, Windfall has received \$23,500 for that program.

?The fight against climate change is about respecting this province and this planet, whose care has been entrusted to us all. Ontario's

Climate Change action plan is a springboard to progress and it is a five year plan that builds on work already done in achievements already made in reducing Ontario's Greenhouse Gas pollution.?

From Mr. Kopperson's perspective, investments made in organizations that focus on sustainability are 'circular' and pay for themselves in the long run.

'Our mission here with this program is to engage the business community in reducing their emission. York Region is the second largest business community in the province and there are over 40,000 businesses registered,' said Mr. Kopperson. 'We have a long, long way to go and you would probably not be surprised that a majority of businesses are not aware of the quantity of emissions they are emitting through their daily activity and they are not really equipped to develop the mitigation opportunities. That is what we're doing. We're helping businesses identify the emissions they are emitting, helping them set targets to reduce them, and helping them develop strategies.'