

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Ontario supporting municipalities in fighting climate change

By Chris Ballard, MPP
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Here we are, ready for the Labour Day weekend. Where has the summer gone? It will soon be sweater season ? and I won't mention the ?s? word ? snow. Although it was a wet one, it has been a good summer for helping our towns and cities better deal with climate change.

I've often said our municipalities are the canaries in the coal mine when it comes to climate change. They see, first hand, the destruction of increasingly unstable weather.

There is good news. Ontario is investing \$100 million from its carbon market fund (a ?polluter pay? system) in local municipal projects that will help to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution. As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, I had the pleasure of making this announcement at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa mid-August. Municipalities are important partners in the fight against climate change. Ontario's new Municipal GHG Challenge Fund will support projects like renewable energy and energy efficiency retrofits to municipal facilities like arenas, and making energy-efficiency upgrades to drinking water or wastewater treatment plants. Projects must achieve long-term and cost-effective GHG pollution reduction. I've already challenged municipal leaders from both Aurora and Newmarket to come forward with innovative ideas. I look forward to what they put on the table.

Fighting climate change while supporting growth, efficiency and productivity is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives. Municipalities are invited to submit applications for the fund by November 14, 2017.

Selected projects will be announced in 2018. Municipalities may request up to \$10 million per project. The Climate Change Action Plan and carbon market form the backbone of Ontario's strategy to cut greenhouse gas pollution by 15 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020; 37 per cent by 2030 and 80 per cent by 2050. The government will report on the plan's implementation annually and review the plan at least every five years.

Team Ontario Tops the Medal Standings at Canada Summer Games

Ontario athletes topped the medal standings at the 2017 Canada Summer Games, and brought home 212 medals. They made their fans across the province proud. Team Ontario's athletes returned home with 87 gold, 65 silver and 60 bronze medals, including record breaking performances by Graysen Bernard, who won 10 medals in various male swimming events - including three individual gold medals. Karson Kowalchuk, who won gold and broke the Canada Games record in the Men's 100m and Hanna Henderson, who won 11 medals in various female swimming events ? beating the previous Canada Games record of nine medals won by one athlete.

Amateur sports play an important role in strengthening communities and inspiring people in Ontario to live an active lifestyle. Ontario provides year-round support to high performance athletes to help with the costs of living, training, equipment, coaching and travel to competitions.

Investing in the development of amateur athletes is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives. I am always thrilled to see the importance both local sport and recreation play in the lives of our citizens, especially our youth.

Electric School Bus Program

As part of Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan, Ontario is investing in a new Electric School Bus Pilot Program designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while giving students a safe, clean transit option to and from school.

School bus operators providing student transportation services in Ontario may apply for funding to purchase an electric school bus and associated charging infrastructure. Applicants will be chosen based on their experience in student transportation, ability to successfully deliver a pilot project, as well as their location in Ontario, type of route serviced, and the size of their school bus fleet.

Local events and happenings in Newmarket-Aurora

This past weekend I had the pleasure of attending Aurora's annual Ribfest. Every year I look forward to my annual ?feed? of delicious ribs. This event featured fantastic live entertainment, had many activities for families and children and, of course, had delicious ribs.

I also had an amazing time at the Newmarket Farmer's Market at the ?M? booth. ?M? stands for Mayor, MPP and MP. It's a place citizens can stop by to chat with their local elected leaders. It is always enjoyable meeting and chatting with so many members of both our communities during this event.

I look forward in participating in the next ?M? booth on September 23. Stop by and pick up a Shop Local bag and swag. Riverwalk Commons was alive with music during the recent Newmarket Music Festival. Thanks to George and Sher St. Kitts, sponsors, the Town of Newmarket, and volunteers who put on an amazing show. I attended all three days and met friends from across the area. This event is a significant economic booster for the town. Having the chance to talk to many members of the community is always such a pleasure.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.