

CLEAN AIR, LIVABLE CLIMATE 'BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS'

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"I want to ask all of our leaders a serious question: do I deserve a future?" he asked. "In the future, I want to see green forests, clean lakes and comfortable summers. I want a future where we live within our environmental limits. We have the power to make a difference."

Jonah Hobbs, a Georgetown District High School Grade 9 pupil, contended that climate change isn't a political debate, but rather a human one.

"Clean air and a livable climate are basic human rights," he said. "If we don't protect nature, we can't protect ourselves."

According to research from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, presented by Grade 12 Christ the King Secondary School student Han-

THE ISSUE:

CLIMATE CHANGE

LOCAL IMPACT:

HALTON HILLS RESIDENTS RISING UP TO DEMAND POLITICAL ACTION

nah Robinson at the rally, society will be past the point where it can stop runaway climate change by 2030 if immediate action isn't taken.

"That gives us 127 months until we as a human race reach the point of no return," she said. "This change is beyond needed and is needed now."

She went on to quote Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, who said, "I want you to act as if our house is on fire,



Melanie Hennessey/Torstar

Georgetown's Mallory Henderson is joined by daughters Sadie (left), 5, and Sophie, 7, during the Citizens' Rally for Climate Action at Dominion Gardens Park May 3.

because it is."

"That's why we're here today, to shout at the government to wake up, because they are sleeping in a burning house and need to wake up before it's too

late," she said.

A visibly choked up Fogal then opened the mic up to other children in attendance who wanted to speak, like nine-year-old Fiona Robertson-Jammer,

who said she has learned if climate change keeps happening, all of penguins and polar bears in the world's colder climates could die.

"If they all die, it could affect the nature of other animals," she said. "The more animals that die, it could affect the whole Earth."

May 3 marked School Strike for Climate Action Day in Canada, and Fogal said the Georgetown rally was registered as an official strike - potentially the first one led by a politician in Canada.

"Today we are on the map," said Fogal. "We have to get political on this; it's the way it has to be. We need action from all levels of government."

Mayor Rick Bonnette and Dr. Lesley Barron, the federal Liberal candidate for Wellington-Halton Hills, added their voices to

the call for political action on climate change.

To turn words into action, Fogal brought a resolution to Halton Hills Council on May 6 to declare a climate emergency that requires "permanent, robust changes in how the corporation conducts its business."

The motion, which was passed unanimously, recommends a variety of measures that can be taken, including a transition of the municipality's fleet to electric vehicles, setting a goal of net zero emissions by 2030, updating Halton Hills green building standards and establishing a climate change task force.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY

A councillor's recent motion declaring a climate emergency in Halton Hills has heightened local interest in the topic. The IFP attended a rally to better understand residents' concerns.

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