

MORE REGULATIONS NEEDED, SAYS FOGAL

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is already planning how to continue its activism efforts throughout these trying times.

"It's a challenge to advocate for climate action during the pandemic, but it's increasingly obvious that the pandemic conditions are not going to simply disappear in a few months as we may have thought back in March when the lockdown started," said Halton Hills Councillor Jane Fogal, a founding member of the team.

"At the same time, it's very clear that climate change is the bigger challenge over the long term. There will be no vaccine for the climate crisis. It will take action at all levels of government to address it in order to have any success at avoiding complete catastrophe."

The local team is joining forces with other environmental groups across Halton to take part in what's known as a global shoe strike on September 25 (further details to be announced). To maintain social distancing, the event will see dozens, hundreds or thousands of shoes lined up together in a large group to represent people at a rally, signifying a message of unity calling for climate action.

"This gives us an opportunity to engage with the community once again and put the issue back on the front burner," noted Fogal.

During the pandemic, supporters of the Halton Hills Climate Action Team have been writing letters to the provincial and federal governments, calling for economic recovery stimu-



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

Jane Fogal is a regional councillor for Wards 3 and 4 in the town of Halton Hills. She is passionate about recreation, sustainable development and environmentalism, as well as serving the town.

lus funding to be directed to green projects. Fogal said this will not only boost the economy, but also help transition away from fossil fuels.

"We deluged Doug Ford and Justin Trudeau with letters," said local resident Janet Duval, who heads up the Climate Action Team alongside Fogal. "It's an opportune time to rethink economic recovery and bring in a green recovery, which can be quite exciting and is worth doing."

Fogal stressed that priority should be given to electrifying the transportation system — something she said would be "an enormous win for the environment."

"We saw during the lockdown the difference dramatically fewer cars on the road had on the air quality," she said. "We can achieve the same results by electrifying the system and this can happen over a very short time, if properly incentivized."

She said the local team also believes the upper levels of government should use their power to enact regulations that will bring down greenhouse gas emissions, such as enhancements to the building code to make all structures more green.

At the local level, Fogal

said the Town of Halton Hills is working on a program where residents could borrow money for energy-efficient retrofits for their homes, then pay the loan back over several years through property taxes. The initiative is expected to launch via a pilot project in 2021.

The Town is also looking at energy retrofits for municipal facilities, increasing its tree canopy and enhancing natural lands that can act as carbon 'sinks,' meaning they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Globally, Duval said she would love to see leaders give climate change the same amount of attention as the pandemic.

"Greta Thunberg said look at what the world was able to do in one month (when the pandemic began) in March. The whole world woke up and the leaders instantly produced great plans and threw money at everything," said Duval. "Climate change is an equal emergency."

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: *With a climate emergency being declared in Halton Hills and across the region last year, local residents are raising their voices to keep the issue front and centre during the pandemic.*

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