

Proposed Essex County Council Climate Change Emergency Declaration

Whereas the most recent report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC) has indicated that within less than 12 years, in order to keep the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius and maintain a climate compatible with human civilization, there must be a reduction in carbon emissions of about 45% from 2010 levels, reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050; and

Whereas based on current projections of the future impacts of human caused climate change, climate change will adversely impact Windsor-Essex's local economy, damage local infrastructure and property, put a strain on municipal budgets and result in significant economic and health burdens for the constituents of Windsor-Essex, particularly our vulnerable populations; and

Whereas climate change will jeopardize the health and survival of many local plant and animal species, as well as their natural environments and ecosystems; and

Whereas Windsor-Essex is already experiencing large and increased climate change impacts, including but not limited to overland flooding, heavy rain event flooding, emergence of invasive species, an increased number of high heat days, the rise of vector borne diseases, the re-emergence of blue-green algae and harmful algal blooms in our lakes and rivers; and

Whereas municipalities are understood to produce and/or have regulatory jurisdiction over approximately 50% of carbon emissions in Canada; and

Whereas the County of Essex joins the Government of Canada and 444 Canadian municipalities (including Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal, and 18 other Ontario municipalities, among them Chatham-Kent, Sudbury, Sarnia, Guelph, and Kingston) that have declared climate emergencies, some of which are also implementing strategic plans in order to help reduce global carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change; and

Whereas the City of Windsor, the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) and the Windsor Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) are committed to and currently undertaking city and regional climate change planning, encompassing both mitigation and adaptation, in partnership with others; and

Whereas the County of Essex, the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA), local municipalities in Essex County, in partnership with other community stakeholders, are undertaking a Regional Community Energy Plan to assist the County of Essex and local municipalities to align with provincial and federal energy policies and programs; and

Whereas this emergency is an opportunity to bring together County, City and Local municipal governments, as well as regional stakeholders to work together on climate change planning and implementation with the aim of protecting our region and contributing to greater national and global climate change response; and

Whereas implementing climate action and making a transition to a low-carbon economy also represents a significant opportunity to stimulate economic growth, increase job opportunities and develop new technologies;

Therefore be it resolved that the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex declare a Climate Emergency in the knowledge that this is an emergency with no foreseeable conclusion which will require robust and permanent changes in how municipalities conduct their business;

And further that in response to this emergency, the need to reduce overall emissions from the City of Windsor and County of Essex as well as continue to prepare for Windsor-Essex County's climate future are deemed to be high priorities when considering budget direction and in all decisions of council;

And further that the County Administration be directed to identify priority action items, implementation measures and cost requirements for those programs and services it is responsible for, to accelerate and urgently work towards the reduction of emissions and preparing for our climate future;

And further that this declaration be shared with local municipalities in Essex County, who are encouraged to consider endorsing the declaration and identify priority action items, implementation measures, and cost requirements for those programs and services they are responsible for, to accelerate and urgently work towards the reduction of emissions and preparing for our climate future.