

GOING GREEN IS MORE THAN A BUZZ WORD, IT'S A LIFESTYLE COMMITMENT!

As I sat at our most recent BeeGreen Festival, I marveled at how our community has grown into “being green”. It doesn't really surprise me as Hampsteaders have always had a tradition of social action. Since it is becoming easier and less costly to adopt a greener lifestyle, the question becomes one of values. Do we as a town respect the notion of sustainability? How far does that respect go? What are we willing to pay for it as taxpayers?

I have a concrete vision for Hampstead's sustainability plan, a vision that others do not.

Garbage and recycling programs are well-established, but we must learn to do more to make these collections more efficient and more environmentally-minded. I have always been in favour of allocating more resources to educate residents on how we can do better. We need to provide real tools to help you reduce pure waste and explain the benefits; long-term on the environmental front, and short-term on the financial.

Beyond garbage and recycling, we need to finally get a true curbside composting option for residents. Many boroughs and demerged cities – including our neighbours in Côte Saint-Luc and Westmount - already offer their own kitchen-waste collections. In total, 67,000 households on the island now have access to a municipal compost-collection program, more than double since last year. This spring, the borough of Sud-Ouest is running a pilot project for 3,000 homes. We have less than 2,000. Why aren't we offering this option to our residents?

Your Voice Counts.

I would like to expand our internal Green Committee to include residents so that projects we work on come from the grassroots of our community. When residents have a compelling cost effective or environmentally friendly project to share, we should be able to figure out together how to engage our neighbours and find the funds to support it.

On water conservation, our mantra is “every drop counts”. I learned at our first Green Fest from a Hampstead business owner and exhibitor that automatic sprinkler systems can be equipped with sensors so they don't go off if the ground is already moist enough.

Communities are building sustainable facilities with outlays of 10% more in capital costs and projected savings of up to 40% in operating costs over the next 10 years. From small initiatives to large scale projects, going green makes sense.

Hampstead is the Garden City.

I believe investing in our parks and green spaces is a necessity. Our trees are an integral part of the natural setting of Hampstead and I would take a **real pro-active** approach in time of urban forest crisis. Currently our non-reaction to the Emerald Ash Borer infestation has destroyed many of our public Ash trees. I believe Council missed an opportunity to tackle this problem in 2012. We could have done more to combat the scourge and we should have. Instead, we chose to stick our heads in the sand and hope that the problem would go away. I regret that I didn't fight hard enough to counter the ideas of my colleagues.

The fact is our caucus conversation was all wrong. The money should never have been the issue. This is an issue of the Town's image. We can't be a garden city if we go around cutting down trees instead of protecting them. Now, our garden and beautification initiatives seem hollow by comparison. Our residents choose to live in Hampstead because of the beauty of our community.

We need to do more.

I believe that what we are doing now is not enough. Going green provides great opportunities to not only build a better town, but to do it in a way that reflects the values that are important to us as a community. Please feel free to contact me bonnie@bonnieformayor.ca to share your thoughts for our Green Plan.

Bonnie Feigenbaum