

YOUTH COUNCILLORS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Talk of the Town - June 2019

by Jason Lewis and Sacha Stipeć

We have reached a critical point in our battle against climate change; if direct and immediate action is not taken, the world as we know it will end. As this issue becomes increasingly prevalent in society, worldwide protests calling for effective government action have broken out. At the centre of many of these protests, passionate youth are speaking out and are no longer afraid to speak up.

The protests were started by Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old girl from Sweden, who began skipping school on Fridays to protest parliament on their inaction against climate change, demanding her government must act in accordance with the Paris agreement. Her determination and calls to action have been massively influential, resulting in a global, student-led movement calling for fundamental environmental policy changes.

Youth on the Sunshine Coast have become involved in these protests. Some Fridays see students taking to the streets near the Davis Bay pier, striking against climate change with handcrafted signs and chants. In conjunction with the climate strikes, groups of students have gathered outside town hall in Gibsons to demand change from the local community. In addition, a student-led forum is being organized for students to ask elected officials about issues such as climate change.

This kind of student advocacy is exciting and necessary; actions that we take today will shape the lives of tomorrow's generation. While climate change has, and will have, a massive impact on everybody, today's youth will be disproportionately affected. Youth must take responsibility for their futures and make politicians aware that their voices count too. That is the purpose of our climate strikes.

Sunshine Coast citizens face the firsthand impacts of climate change, particularly forest fires, rising temperatures, and droughts that affect entire ecosystems. We cannot be silent about these issues and expect them to be solved. As a community, we can make our voices heard by coming together and signaling we care. We are proud to live in a community where citizens are so engaged, and we are thankful to the Town of Gibsons and SCRCD for providing numerous public engagement opportunities. This includes the general public, and the youth voice.

The Town of Gibsons has made tremendous effort and had good success in engaging students and bringing their voices to the table. The youth councillor position is just one example. Supporting the climate strikes, talking to the students, and inviting students to events also helps maintain their voice in the community.

