

2020 Annual General Meeting of First Things First Okanagan

Chairperson's Report- Jim Beattie

It is my privilege to present the Report of the Chair of First Things First Okanagan (FTFO) for the year 2019.

It is clear from the reports of the Chairs of the Committees of FTFO that our non-profit society has, in a few short years, become a mature and effective organization that boldly advocates and acts to address the complex challenges of global warming. The Board and close working partners in our communities presented opportunities in 2019 for many hundreds of Okanagan Valley residents to better understand climate change and to consider the focussed actions required to slow its progress. We saw, from across our communities, youth, medical professionals, homeowners, elected officials, the arts community, local businesses, city administrators as well as other sectors and individuals joined in learning and action.

In these early stages of 2020, as we work through the Covid19 pandemic, it is more evident than ever that the answer to our largest challenges is the sincere commitment of the individual to take ownership of the problem. Clean hands and distancing will prevent illness and death. We know that and, in the main, we are doing that. We also know that reducing our individual carbon footprint, and urging our friends, our government, and businesses to do the same, will cool the earth. And we can do that, too!

In all conversations at the Board table in the past year, Board members put the quality and the impact of any given project in front of any consideration of time or monetary costs. This attitude reflects their deep commitment to do the best possible to make the world a better, safer place. The successful "Cool-it" program, the world class speakers that the Board brought to our Valley, Board member presentations across the South Okanagan, dialogue with leaders at the municipal, provincial and Federal level and the hugely successful and free EV, Solar and Conservation Show are just a few examples of this commitment. We also gratefully acknowledge that if it were not for the outstanding support of Jim

and Midge Wyze of Burrowing Owl Winery, David Prystay of the Penticton Lakeside Resort, Fortis BC and our financial supporters and volunteers these events could not have taken place. Thank you.

In the year ahead the newly appointed Board and its working partners will follow through on current initiatives and reset the agenda to match the changing times. The wise phrase in our mandate to “think globally and act locally” reminds us to be aware of the needs and struggles of peoples around the world and, with your support, to initiate effective and achievable action here at home.

In closing, I wish to extend to the Board members deep appreciation for their work in 2019. Our call to action in the last couple of years has been “Looking the Dragon of Climate Change in the Eye”, and as a review of the past year shows, at no point did the Board flinch.

Respectfully submitted.

Jim Beattie

Events Committee Report (Jim Beattie, Mike Healey, Harvey Quamme, Jim Corbett)

Our events got off to a good start last fall with an important lecture and an all candidates meeting before the fall election on October 19. On October 3, Rose Murphy from Marc Jaccard's Energy and Materials Research Group at Simon Fraser University gave lecture entitled, "The Strategic Environmentalist: how to make a difference in the real world" in which she discussed the necessary policy changes for Canada to reach its greenhouse gas reduction targets, how the policy platforms of the various parties compared with the required policy changes and ways that concerned citizens could use their vote to maximize the likelihood that progressive climate policies would be pursued by the new government. We are grateful to David Prystay and the Lakeside Resort for providing the lecture theatre and accommodation for Dr. Murphy at no charge to FTFO.

On October 14, First Things First hosted an all candidates meeting on environmental issues. Initially, this meeting was organized under the umbrella of "100 Debates", part of GreenPac, a Canada wide organization promoting the debates in all provinces. However, some weeks before the debate, GreenPac began endorsing candidates. FTFO is a non-partisan organization and so withdrew from the 100 debates initiative but continued to organize the local debate. Gord Lovegrove was moderator of the debate, which was attended by about 150 constituents. Candidates who participated included Dick Cannings (NDP), Connie Denesiuk (Lib), Tara Howse (Green), Sean Taylor (PPC), and Carolina Hopkins (independent). Helena Konanz (PC) declined to participate. Again, the venue (the ballroom at the Lakeside Resort) was provided free of charge by David Prystay, for which we sincerely thank him.

On November 3 we held the Fred Ritchie Lecture, given by Courtney Howard, president of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE). Dr. Howard spoke about the physical and emotional effects of climate change. Dr. Howard is internationally recognized for her work on emotional effects of climate change. We note that she is now also a candidate for leadership of the Green party. Hats off to Harvey Quamme for convincing Dr. Howard to come to Penticton as he found her difficult to contact while making travel and accommodation arrangements (no doubt due to her busy schedule). Dr. Howard stayed at the Lakeside Resort, again compliments of David Prystay. The Ritchie lecture was held at the Cleland Theatre and was well attended.

On February 4, 2020, Jim Beattie and Mike Healey presented talk at OK College entitled "Bridging the Gap: the bad news and the good news about climate change." This talk was part of the Okanagan College speaker's series for 2020.

The February lecture was our last event before COVID-19 shut things down. We were well along with planning for our second EV/Solar energy event (which we had entitled, the FTFO Smart Energy Expo). This event was to be held in the ballroom at the Lakeside Resort on April 25/26. However, with the growing concern about the pandemic and restrictions on public gatherings we regretfully cancelled the

event, hoping that it could be resurrected once the virus was under control. At present we do not have a future date for the event.

Before the pandemic interfered with social gathering, a group of FTFO members calling themselves "Nxt Stps" was meeting to sew reusable bags for produce and to discuss ideas for individual action on climate change. This initiative was spearheaded by board member, Lori Goldman. Nxt Stps is currently on hold but, hopefully, can resume once gathering in groups is OK again.

Education Committee Report for AGM, July 15, 2020

The focus of the Education Committee's work in 2019 was to bring the BC Sustainable Energy Association's (BCSEA's) "Cool It! : Climate Leadership Challenge " to middle schools in the south Okanagan.

The successful "pilot" delivery of the program by Cool It! Educator, Ella Braden was in the spring of 2019 and to four classes in Summerland Middle School, followed by delivery in Dorothea Walker Elementary School in Kelowna. The costs were covered by Summerland District Council and by the Dorothea Walker school respectively.

As our committee worked to expand the program into Penticton, we were fortunate to know that educator Ella Braden was willing to stay on. Financial sponsorship was sought and presentations to Penticton City Council and Berry and Smith Trucking Ltd. Penticton resulted in donations to cover a large part of the cost. The First Things First Board voted to cover the shortfall from general funds. The funding was not secured until early 2020 and the optimal start time was decided upon: after spring break, early April, 2020.

When Covid 19 arrived, Melanie Lazelle and her Cool It! team at BCSEA rose to the challenge and rewrote the program in an on-line delivery format. The new program is currently winding up having been delivered on-line by Ella to three classes at KVR Middle School and two classes at Skaha Lake Middle School in Penticton. The final report of this delivery is still to come but by all accounts, the on-line version is at least as engaging for students as the in-classroom delivered program.

Going forward, the Committee looks forward to future delivery of the program in Penticton and possible other south Okanagan locations with financial support from FortisBC, and in Summerland with the continuing support of the District of Summerland.

Respectfully submitted,
Education Committee

First Things First Okanagan - Communications Committee Report, July 2020 AGM

Communications activities include the monthly newsletter, web site, Facebook page, media releases promoting First Things First events and programs, and newspaper columns. Communication committee members are Margaret Holm, Lori Goldman, and Barry Loewen. William Stollery will be joining the committee in 2020.

In 2019, First Things First Okanagan revamped the website. There are now links to subscribe to the monthly newsletter, email FTFO, renew memberships, or donate securely. Response has been very positive. We welcome suggestions for posting articles and resources on climate issues on the Resources page of the web site.

The Facebook page is updated regularly with news items on positive global climate actions as well as actions by governments and industry that continue to harm our planet. The goal of the Facebook page is to increase awareness of climate issues and motivate visitors to become active in climate issues, write to government leaders and local papers, and keep the conversation going about how to affect change. Posts get from 50 to 150 visitors. Facebook is also an effective way to promote First Things First events with inexpensive “boosting” that can reach hundreds more Facebook users.

The monthly newsletter is sent out to a contact list of 553 people in the Okanagan Valley. Unfortunately, during this time of COVID, FTFO have been unable to take part in community events and displays where we meet new people and add to our membership and communication list.

In 2020, Black Press has given us an opportunity to submit columns to their online newspaper. The committee plans to submit regular columns on climate topics.

Submitted by Margaret Holm

Political Action Committee Report for 2019-2020

Members of the Political Action Committee are Margaret Holm, Jim Beattie, Mike Healey, Leanne McDonald and Lori Goldman.

1. City of Penticton Sustainability Committee

In 2019 FTFO was concerned that the City of Penticton Sustainability Committee had not met in the past two years. Jim Beattie and Political Action members made a presentation to Mayor and council in April, asking for the committee to be reinstated. Our presentation was well received, and the matter was referred to staff.

The City of Penticton Sustainability Committee was re-established and met for the first time in January 2020. Margaret Holm is one of eight members on the committee which meets monthly to make recommendations to the Council on Corporate and Community Climate Action Plans and community sustainability.

2. Federal Candidate Debate on Climate and the Environment

In June, the committee began planning an all-candidates debate for the upcoming federal election. The well-attended event was held on October 15th. The event is further described in the Events Committee report.

3. Federal Lobbying for Climate Action

Several committee members have joined an initiative by Citizens Climate Lobby Okanagan, to visit every federal MP in the Okanagan Region to ask for support for a fair, effective, and revenue-neutral carbon fee.

4. Fridays for Future Climate Strike at Penticton City Hall

FFF is a global movement begun by Greta Thunberg. Around the world people gather outside parliaments and city halls to express their concern for the climate. Lori Goldman lead the 2019 Penticton City Hall Friday gatherings (currently on a break during the COVID-19 pandemic).

5. BC Climate Action Plan

Several BC climate action and environment groups are activity discussing the creation of a climate action alliance to lobby the provincial government on issues of joint concern. Margaret Holm represents FTFO in these discussions.

In this period of social distancing due to the coronavirus, political lobbying and climate action committee meetings continue via the Zoom platform.

Submitted by Margaret Holm