

St. Stephen in position to set climate-change adaptation example for the world

Kathy Bockus

ST. STEPHEN

St. Stephen is in a position to become a world leader in climate change reaction, according to a locally prepared climate change report.

The vulnerability assessments report prepared by the St. Croix Estuary Project and Eastern Charlotte Waterways together with a community action group is now being copied and discussed worldwide said Abby Pond, the executive director of the St. Croix International Waterway Commission, and a member of the working group.

"Other municipalities are now looking at what's being done here. We have an opportunity to make St. Stephen known as the town that faced challenges, but became resilient," said Pond, during a presentation of the report at a St. Stephen council meeting last week.

"We have the skills, expertise and commitment locally to ask the right questions and get the work going. It's going to be a challenge, but we can do it. We have the opportunity to be an international leader in what municipalities do."

Pond said the report recommends the town work with the agencies involved in its creation by sharing information and developing a plan of action and response.

"The need to do this is urgent, real and necessary," stressed Pond, telling council, "Climate change is here."

In response to Pond's request, the town has agreed to host a public meeting so residents may be presented with the information in this report.

No date has yet been set for the



Kathy Bockus/Courier

Abby Pond, left, executive director of the St. Croix International Waterway Commission, discusses a report dealing with the impact of climate change and St. Stephen's vulnerability with Mayor John Quartermain. The town has committed to hosting a public meeting so the report can be presented to residents.

meeting, but Mayor John Quartermain expects it to take place in the Garcelon Civic Center.

Pond, who earned her Master of Science degree in Climate Change Management at the University of London, Birkbeck College, told council one of the highest priority recommendations in the report was to have the town involved in creating and implementing an all hazards emergency plan, which is part of its required EMO obligations, as well as flood and winter storm specific emergency plans. The report also recommends the town require mandatory registration of citizens with the Sentinel program warning system.

"We can't stress enough the importance of clear communication because of the confusion that resulted in the

community (in the past). We all need to work on that," stated Pond.

Throughout the presentation, Pond emphasized the groups involved in the report's creation and the town could work together to achieve success.

"This is all our problem," said Pond.

The report identifies data, tools and scientific information pertinent to the region and offers recommendations how to make the area more resilient to extreme weather systems.

"The 100-year storm scenario is now every year, standard, in St. Stephen," Pond told council, adding the town must make sure its infrastructure "can handle what we're seeing now as well as what we're going to be seeing in 25 or 50 years."