

Vehicle charging station dominates council discussion

By Jim Eadie

If Wollaston Township council has their way, you may soon be able to charge your electric car at a charging station in the municipality.

On Dec 8, the Province of Ontario announced their new Climate Change Strategy, which carried \$20 million from the Green Ontario Investment Fund (GOIF) for this year to support the build-out of a public electric vehicle charging station network across Ontario. Now, council has learned, the province is looking for public or private partners to submit proposals which, if approved, would be supported by grants from the \$20 million made available for this year.

‘Everybody is going to have to get in on this eventually,’ said Councillor Michael Fuerth.

‘Cottagers come here, and need to get charged up. People would come here just to plug in. You laugh about it, but people in the horse and buggy age laughed at cars ? but we never went back.’

‘We should get ahead of the game,’ said Councillor Bob Ireland.

‘Travellers would see where the charging stations are, and would plan their trip accordingly,’ said township clerk Jennifer Cohen.

‘Let me find out more about it ? maybe it would be us helping somebody else set up. The portal is open.’

‘The point is, there will come a time soon when we will need a charging station here,’ concluded Fuerth. ‘Let’s get ahead of it, especially while there is a grant available.’

The Ontario government memo notes that a total of \$325 million is set aside in the GOIF for projects to fight climate change.

‘The investments are part of the government’s plan for securing a healthy, clean, and prosperous low-carbon future by transforming the way we live, move, work and adapt to our environment while ensuring strong, sustainable communities.’

On a recurring matter, council received further information on the status of proposed changes to an area of The Old Hastings Road known as ‘Devil’s Elbow.’

Council had earlier hoped to straighten a sharp curve on a steep hill at that location, but was unhappy with the Jewell Engineering firm’s design, and what they felt was excessive cost for the engineering work done. A new engineering plan was received, which also received poor reviews.

‘Now they just put the road in a straight line,’ said Cohen. ‘We would have to take nine metres of rock off the top of the hill. This was a bit insulting. At least they cancelled the last invoice to us ? but this is the work we got.’

‘We have to re-evaluate then,’ said Reeve Graham Blair. ‘It looks like the road is going to keep its same configuration. The cost for the proposal from Jewell will be substantial.’

‘The culvert at the bottom of the hill still needs to be changed to a bigger one, and we still need to raise the elevation of the dip in the road there,’ said Cohen. ‘That was phase one, and should be done regardless of what else we do or don’t do.’

Work has already begun on phase one, with the contractor moving earth and rock from the top of the hill to the bottom. The actual replacement of the culvert will wait until after the spring this year.

Cohen advised council that staff has submitted the application to the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund for reconstruction and resurfacing of The Ridge Road and part of North Steenburg Lake Road and the Nicholson’s bridge.

Wollaston had expressed an interest in making this proposal, and had made the provinces short list to pitch the project. ‘We hope that funding recipients will be announced within six weeks,’ Cohen said.