

# BRENDA SLOMKA



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### Kingston Can Innovate on Climate Change Adaptation By Partnering with Post-Secondary Institutions Says Slomka

(Kingston ON) Mayoral candidate Brenda Slomka proposed Saturday that Kingston's local government cooperate with the city's major post-secondary institutions - Queen's University, St. Lawrence College, and Royal Military College/Collège Militaire Royal Du Canada (RMC) - to form an International Centre of Excellence In Climate Change Adaptation for Municipalities.

The Climate Adaptation Centre would focus on developing new infrastructure, technology and maintenance practices for municipalities in Canada and around the world. Commented Slomka: "Our City includes excellent post-secondary institutions that have the specialized knowledge, skills, experiences, and mandates that taken together create an immense opportunity. I don't think we fully appreciate the potential synergy available to us for institutional cooperation on this particular issue."

"Climate change touches our lives economically, socially and environmentally. Extreme weather events like the Calgary Flood and Toronto's torrential rain, are just a foreshadowing that a climate change will cost municipalities around the world not billions but trillions of dollars in damage, loss of property and in some cases loss of life. For this reason, all levels of government need to advance multi-disciplinary research and action to best adapt to it. We have the institutions in Kingston that can play an important role in this area," said Slomka.

RMC - Canada's only federal university - has an engineering, communications, and logistics capability. It also has a mandate to defend national security - which rapid climate change will increasingly threaten. St Lawrence College has a culture of innovation in the development and training of applied skills and a growing capacity in the area of sustainable energy and construction (to help reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions). Queen's University has engineering, environment, geography, geology, urban planning, health care, computing, business and policy programs (that are increasingly impacted by climate change), as well as a vision to further internationalize its influence. And all three schools aim to increase the good career prospects of its graduates.

The municipal government has also much to gain from the development of a high level local expertise in climate change adaptation, as a means to reduce the future capital costs of climate change-induced infrastructure investment, but also, in terms of greater local

employment and retention of graduates and their innovations.

Slomka envisions the new Centre working collaboratively with groups such as the Thousand Islands Energy Research Forum (TIERF), the Great Lakes Sustainable Energy Consortium, SWITCH, and the Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Resources (OCCIAR) - which is a university-based resource hub for researchers and stakeholders on climate change impacts and adaptation.

The proposed Kingston-based Climate Adaptation partnership would focus more on adaptive technology development and engineering maintenance practices rather than primarily policy tools to assist with municipal adaptation, though policy would be a small component. There would also be a special attention given to international application in order to build-up the adaptive capacity of municipalities in countries without the range of resources needed to better adapt to rapid climate change.

Municipal and academic collaborations on a smaller scale have been undertaken in cities such as London, Ontario in partnerships with specialists at the University of Western Ontario. This project produced essential rainfall projections which enabled the city to electively make proactive changes to its flood management system, such as adjusting the engineering standards for its stormwater systems and transferring the responsibility for designing stormwater infrastructure from developers to the municipality.

"Political leaders everywhere will appreciate the need to invest far greater will and effort in significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions when they understand the very high costs of adaptation - especially if status quo practices are maintained. Leadership is seeing challenges as opportunities and bringing the right people together to realize the economic, social and environmental benefits these opportunities provide. That's why I'm proposing the Climate Centre," closed Slomka.

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