

Sustainable growth pledge

Norfolk mayor-elect makes speech at Long Point conference

Monte Sonneburg, Simcoe Reformer

Published on: November 9, 2018 | Last Updated: November 9, 2018 10:00 PM EST



The Long Point World Biosphere's sixth annual Research and Conservation Conference in Simcoe kicked off Friday morning with an indigenous smudging ceremony and song by Leon Fleury, a Metis elder residing in Paris. The day-long conference at the Simcoe Recreation Centre featured nearly two dozen presentations of interest regarding wildlife and habitat issues in the local biosphere. MONTE SONNENBERG // SIMCOE REFORMER

The Long Point World Biosphere's sixth annual Research and Conservation Conference in Simcoe kicked off Friday morning with an indigenous smudging ceremony and song by Leon Fleury, a Metis elder residing in Paris. The day-long

conference at the Simcoe Recreation Centre featured nearly two dozen presentations of interest regarding wildlife and habitat issues in the local biosphere.



Norfolk mayor-elect Kristal Chopp spoke of the need to harmonize economic growth with environmental stewardship in one of her first major speeches since the Oct. 22 municipal election.

At the start of a one-day conference in Simcoe regarding sustainability issues in the Long Point biosphere, Chopp delivered greetings on behalf of the new council that will take office next month.

“At long last, even those that have been motivated purely by capitalism and greed – those that have threatened the vitality and future of our planet for years – are even themselves – finally, (they’re) beginning to recognize that it is profitable to protect nature,” Chopp said at the Simcoe Recreation Centre.

“On the flip side, while economic growth and the environment have historically been regarded as contradictory themes, that is no longer the case. We now live in an era where humanity is coming up with the most innovative solutions we have ever seen to some of the most challenging problems we have ever encountered.

“We must source and implement the very best of those solutions. Economic development and growth must be seen not as an end in and of itself, but rather as a means of achieving both social and environmental goals.”

The Long Point World Biosphere’s sixth annual Research and Conservation Conference on Friday featured nearly 20 presentations on subjects related to the preservation and promotion of the Long Point ecosystem. Topics ranged from the multi-species benefits of wetland preservation to a seminar on breeding American chestnut trees for blight resistance.

Delegates and speakers represented a wide cross-section of academics and government officials from the provincial and federal levels. Also represented were Bird Studies Canada of Port Rowan and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, owner of large tracts of ecologically sensitive habitat in west Norfolk.

Over the next four years, Chopp, 37, intends to divide her time between Governor Simcoe Square and her job as a commercial airline pilot with Air Canada.

Chopp spoke of the unique landscapes and ecosystems she has seen during her career as a world traveller. The Long Point biosphere, she said, is as complicated, beautiful and important as any of them.

“As the largest fresh-water sand spit in the world, Long Point is home to the largest variety of plants and animals in Canada as well as the largest numbers of those plants and animals, some of which can only be found here,” she said.

Chopp's speech was warmly received. Rick Levick of Toronto, president of the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation in Port Rowan, said his group is looking forward to working with a mayor that holds environmental concerns as a priority.

"I was pleasantly surprised and encouraged by her comments and perspective about how we can harmonize economic growth with ecological sustainability," Levick said. "I think that's a great objective for this community."

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is based in Paris, France. It bestows the biosphere designation on distinct, important habitats around the world.

The Long Point area is one of 18 biosphere reserves in Canada. The Long Point biosphere received its designation in 1986.

MSonnenberg@postmedia.com