

Watt's Happening?

by Don Pettit

for Peace Energy Renewable Energy Cooperative

www.peaceenergy.ca ph 250-782-3882



PARIS: Christmas present for planet Earth



Real corporate and government leadership, as agreed to in Paris, will supply the much needed acceleration of the transition to a world powered almost entirely

from renewable sources, but the global power shift is already underway. Bear Mountain Wind Park near Dawson Creek provides power for 30,000 homes.

The Paris agreement is mind-boggling. It signifies a real, worldwide shift. Leaders are waking up (this writer would add “at last”), both to an impending crisis of outrageous proportions, and the biggest business opportunity in human history.

195 countries signed the Paris Agreement. This watershed deal aims to prevent catastrophic climate change by putting the world on a course to a low-carbon economy. That means limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. How? By electrifying the entire world

with renewable power while phasing out fossil fuels, encouraged by some form of carbon pricing.

In large part these leaders are not just waking up, but also catching up. The energy world is already in rapid transition. Cities see the advantages of a cleaner urban environment, countries see the advantages of creating their own renewable energy, and now the world see's the (rather important) advantage of preventing a global climate catastrophe.

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acceleration of this trend, but the global power shift is already underway.

CHINA SETS NEW SOLAR TARGET

China stepped forward as a world leader in Paris, and is already installing wind and solar at a dizzying rate. Its current goal, which it will likely meet or exceed, is 200 GW of solar plus 250 GW of wind over the next (brace yourself) five years! That's the equivalent of adding the output of 100 Site C dams PER YEAR! (but without destroying any pristine river valleys . . .)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA EXCEEDS 50 PERCENT

The state of South Australia will meet and exceed its 50 percent renewable energy target in 2016, a full decade ahead of schedule. The state will close its last coal power station this March, and aims to get as close as possible to 100 percent renewable within 20 years, mostly with sun and wind.

MANITOBA JOINS LARGEST CARBON MARKET

Manitoba has signed with Ontario and Quebec to join the Western Climate Initiative, which will expand the carbon trading system lead by California. This creates North America's largest carbon market.

IEA RELEASES GLOBAL NUMBERS

The International Energy Agency estimates present fossil fuel subsidies at USD \$500 billion per year. Instead of paying people to pollute, we should be investing in clean energy that will power the economy of the future, they say. The IEA calculates that USD \$1 trillion per year invested in clean energy will avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The world is already investing about one third of that per year in renewables, but Paris will accelerate this ongoing

change.

GATES PLEDGES \$2 BILLION

Bill Gates has pledged \$2 billion of his Microsoft fortune to "bend the curve" on climate change. He joins more than 20 other billionaires, including Sir Richard Branson and Mark Zuckerberg, who are pledging private-sector funds to boost clean energy deployment around the world. Why? The reason is simple, said Gates: "We need to move faster than the energy sector ever has."

SOLAR-STORAGE COMBO TESTED

You've probably heard about Elon Musk's "Power Wall" lithium-ion battery for home use. His is just one of many battery systems hitting the market for grid-tied solar arrays. With a combination of solar energy generation and battery storage, homeowners will not only have a high degree of energy independence and protection against grid failure, but with a "smart grid" can also make money by feeding stored power into the grid from their batteries.

Oshawa Power and Utilities, a municipal utility in southern Ontario, has launched a pilot program that will test solar-plus-storage systems in 30 homes. These homes will store power in batteries when sunlight is plentiful for later use, and also sell that stored power into the grid when both demand and price are high. A win-win for everybody.

JUST AN AGREEMENT

Paris is just an agreement, and critics say one without real teeth. If countries don't live up to their promises, there are no real consequences.

Personally, I don't think that matters any more. Now it's clear that those who drag their feet will be the real losers, both economically and politically. That's the difference this time: the world has woken up to reality. Now it's time for action.