

Watt's Happening? #154

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CLIMATE ACTION: *and so we begin*

Climate action: complex; not black and white; risky; must be studied and implemented slowly and carefully...so say the powers that be.

In the words of climate heroine Greta Thunberg, these are all, well, lies. (Greta, age 16, is now nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her fight against climate change). The situation is actually very simple, she says, VERY black and white. Either we take immediate action, or we do not. Either we avert climate catastrophe, or we do not. Either we save the millions of species now under threat of extinction, including our own, or we do not.

And no, we cannot wait for all the Greta Thunbergs to grow up and do it for us. Those who are now in charge must take action now. That's you and me, and our corporate / government leaders. So far, we have NOT been doing a very good job.

WHAT TO DO?

My last few columns have touched on what you and I can do in our daily lives, and how these seemingly small actions add up to big change. Our biggest personal impacts are first the energy we waste in our homes and our businesses, and second our transportation choices. Getting these under control over the next few years will get us a long way toward our goals of radical carbon reduction, while making our homes more comfortable and keeping a lot more money in our pockets.

But this will not be enough. We desperately need basic and aggressive policy changes at the highest levels of government. Is this starting to happen? Yes it is, sort of, depending on where you look.

U.K. DECLARES CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The U.K. is the first country to officially declare a



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“climate emergency.” Their plan to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050 will “amount to the most stringent curbs on greenhouse gases adopted by any major economy.”

Ireland has just become the second country to announce a climate emergency. Will Canada join this call to arms?

L.A.’s GREEN NEW DEAL

“Los Angeles needs to lead, but the whole world needs to act. This plan gives us a fighting chance,” said L.A.’s mayor who launched their new plan last month. That’s 80% zero-emission cars by 2030, 80% of their electricity from renewable sources, and 2,000 fewer driving miles per person per year.

VANCOUVER LEADS

Vancouver officially declared its own climate emergency plan this past January, and has since announced six “big moves” and 53 “accelerated actions” to fight climate change. These include electric bus charging stations and a new network of electric vehicle fast charging stations across the city.

U.S. RENEWABLES OUTPACE COAL

Solar and wind continue to be the fastest growing energy sources on the planet, attracting more investment dollars each year than coal, oil, gas and nuclear combined.

And the price of the electricity they produce continues to fall too. Solar and wind energy are now cheaper than coal and cheaper than nuclear, even without adding in environmental costs.

As technological efficiency improvements continue and mass production continues to ramp up, both solar and wind will soon be the cheapest, most economical and most environmentally benign energy sources ever invented, with more than enough natural fuel (sunlight and wind) to power thousands of high-tech civilizations like our own.

Even in the U.S., despite political efforts to prop up the failing coal industry, renewables are set to generate more electricity early this year than coal, a first for the nation and a sign of more good things to come south of the border.

PRICING POLLUTION WINS BATTLE

Early this month saw a big win in Canada’s fight against climate change. Saskatchewan’s Court of Appeal ruled that a federally imposed carbon price is “constitutionally sound.” This verdict “sends a clear message to Canadians and their political leaders,” says Clean Energy Canada executive director Merran Smith. “Let’s stop fighting each other and start fighting climate change.”

Great advice Merran, but will our crazy politicians, heavily distracted by short-term political gain and corporate influence, ever listen?

It’s up to you and me to make sure they do.

“Let’s stop fighting each other and start fighting climate change.”