

Watt's Happening?

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Canadian Update



Thanks mostly to the leadership of individual provinces and cities, Canada is moving slowly but steadily into the world of 21st Century clean energy. Here we see Dawson Creek powered by electrons from Bear Mountain Wind Park.

Good news: Canada is moving ahead into the clean energy world of the 21st century in spite of federal government indifference. Provinces and individuals are taking the reins dropped by the feds, creating jobs, and cleaning the environment while reducing health care and energy costs. Lets have a look at Watt's Happening in Canada.

REPORT: CANADA ALL R.E. BY 2035

Canada could be 100 percent renewable by 2035 and

cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by mid-century. So says a team of 70 scientists, engineers and economists in a new study titled "Acting on Climate Change: Solutions From Canadian Scholars," released last month.

The most significant barrier, they say, is not economics or technology, but a lack of political will. (I could have told them that) They recommend a price on carbon, an end to fossil fuel subsidies, and an east-west electrical grid to extend the reach of existing hydropower.

Canada is rich in hydro electricity, which can act as a huge “battery” to store energy from other renewables like solar and wind, but our grid must be reworked to flow east and west, instead of predominately north and south as it is today.

Putting a price on carbon, they say, would produce revenue that could be used to reduce corporate and personal taxes, stimulating growth, not retarding it.

Electrification is the future, they say. Let’s dump the pipelines and get on with it. Norway, another “petro-state,” has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2050. Why not Canada?

BC ANNOUNCES E-CAR SUBSIDY

Buy an electric car in BC today and you get \$5000 off the list price. Trade in a pre-2000 beater at the same time and get another \$3000 off. Sweet deal, but probably for a limited time only. Good time to buy one!

There are about 300,000 electric cars in the US today, and 15% of all new car sales in Norway are electric. The price of electric car batteries is dropping much faster than predicted, about 14% per year, so prices just keep getting better.

And so does e-car performance. Tesla, one of the leading electric manufacturers, now offers free efficiency upgrades for their vehicles: a simple software download. The last one improved the efficiency of their car by about 3 percent. How cool is that?

Oh, and do electric cars make environmental sense? Very much so, as long as you are in a province powered mostly by renewables, like BC, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario and Labrador. Coal-fired Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, not so good.

CLIMATE RALLY LARGEST YET

An estimated 25,000 flooded the streets of Quebec City last weekend to urge Canadian premiers to act on climate issues. Organizers called it the largest climate action in Canada to date.

The message? Premiers should not wait for federal action, but should instead move ahead with their own carbon pricing plans and reinvest the proceeds in clean energy. BC led the way in Canada with their carbon “tax”, and now Ontario and Quebec have joined California under a “cap-and-trade” system creating a carbon market of 61 million people and covering close to two-thirds of Canada’s population.

Now is the time, said protesters, for all the other provinces to put a price on carbon.

GEOHERMAL COMES TO BC

Borealis Geopower will be throwing the switch on BC’s first geothermal power plant within three years, if all goes well. This will be BC’s first fully green, baseload power generation alternative to large-scale hydro.

VANCOUVER COMMITS TO 100 PERCENT

At the end of March the City of Vancouver adopted, in a unanimous council motion, a directive to set a time line to meet all of the city’s energy needs from renewable resources. By so doing they have joined a select club of major urban centres that have committed to a goal of 100 percent clean energy.

The motion’s sponsor, councilor Andrea Reimer, said, “the moral imperative is to act to prevent disaster, but also to act for hope, to provide future generations with hope.”

I couldn’t agree more. See you next issue.