

# Watt's Happening? #150

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## Climate Emergency!



*There will be no shortage of jobs or economic prosperity as we address climate change by taking immediate action and moving quickly to a clean energy economy. These workers will be the true heroes of the twenty-first century.*

This is my one hundred and fiftieth *Watt's Happening* column. When I started writing it six years ago, I was dedicated to sticking to a positive message: answers and opportunities, not problems, doom and gloom.

But it has been a difficult six years. It is not easy living in the space between what I know to be true and what I know needs

to be done, and what I see around me every day. What I see is very little change, and that very slow, hesitant, uncertain, controversial. And a lot of business as usual.

### GRETA'S MESSAGE

It is worth taking a few minutes to listen to Greta Thunberg's address at the World Economic Forum (Greta, age 16, is now

nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize). Her message is simple and clear: the adults in charge say it takes time to change, things are complicated and filled with many grey areas. It is difficult.

No, she says, that is a lie. The situation is very simple, very black and white. Either we take immediate action, or we do not. Either we avert climate catastrophe, or we do not.

And no, we cannot wait for the Greta Thunbergs to grow up and do it for us. Those who are now in charge must take action now. Mostly, that's you and me.

Greta's "Students on Strike" initiative calls for a "Green New Deal" that reduces carbon by creating jobs in the clean energy sector on a massive scale. This level of mobilization will require the declaration of a global climate emergency. No single city, province or country can do this alone. The world as a whole must take action.

Some have taken heed. Kingston is the first city in Ontario to declare a climate emergency, joining Vancouver, Halifax and other cities around the world. This follows Kingston's admission that it is currently "not on track" to meet its 2030 emissions reduction goal. The motion commits to protect Kingston's "economy, ecosystem and community" from climate change.

Somebody in Kingston is listening.

## **THE NEW ABNORMAL**

The extreme weather of the last few years has been terrifying. This is being called "the new abnormal."

The climate is changing quickly. Astonishingly, more than half of the carbon exhaled into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels has come in the last 30 years! All this while knowing what we were doing, ignoring the warnings... Is it any wonder the youth of today are getting a little impatient with us?

And here is the big message that Greta and so many others are trying to get into our thick heads: we are in control with only this brief opportunity to act. The formula for success is simple: more carbon, more climate change. Less carbon, less climate change.

## **DON'T BURN. HARVEST**

Now for the good news. Most climate problems can be traced back to how we generate and use energy. We now know how to fix these problems, and we have the tools in hand to do so.

These tools (solar, wind, geothermal, conservation, efficiency, and others) are robust, mature energy sources, quickly and easily dispatched and installed on a global scale. We need no new technologies to do this, just implementation.

With these new clean energy tools, we do not **RELEASE** energy by burning fuels, we **HARVEST** energy from the forces of nature. These forces are wildly abundant, everywhere, inexhaustible, and carbon-free. I have enough solar energy falling on my roof every day to power my home and run my electric vehicle. Forever.

## **AND INEXPENSIVE TOO**

Both wind and solar are now reaching cost parity with all other sources of energy, and as early as next year will be the most inexpensive energy sources ever created.

That's why they are the fastest growing energy sources on the planet, attracting more investment dollars and creating more jobs and wealth than gas, oil, coal and nuclear combined.

But this change to clean energy is slow, far too slow. Powerful vested interests and political ideology are holding us back.

Oh, how I long to see the change we need happening all around me every day, and to be a proud part of it. Perhaps we will, finally, hear the Greta Thunbergs of the world and take seriously the legacy we are leaving them.

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