

# Watt's Happening? #181

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## ACHIEVING *Climate Success*



*Myth's about climate change make it seem more difficult to deal with than it actually is.*

**B**eating climate change may not be quite so difficult after all. OK, so we've been dilly-dallying for thirty years now, putting off the inevitable until the last minute, so changing the primary drivers of climate change (mostly our energy systems) will have to be done quickly now. Very quickly.

The trouble is that there are lots of myths floating around that make it seem more difficult than it actually is. Lets have a look at some of these myths so we can put them aside and get on with the job at hand.

### **MYTH: It's too expensive**

A 2015 Simon Fraser University study calculated that

deep decarbonization of the U.S. economy (80% carbon reduction by 2050) would cost the equivalent of just a year and a half of lost economic growth.

When compared to other day-to-day expenses, that comes out to a bit more than Americans spend on cosmetic surgery, less than they spend on gambling, and much less than they spend on going out for lunch.

Many of the things we will have to do, like electrifying everything we can think of, will actually keep more money in our pockets over the long term.

Running an electric vehicle, for instance, costs about one third of the cost of the equivalent amount of gasoline. Plus the electric vehicle is safer, faster, more powerful, much lower maintenance, more reliable and

more fun.

We can make our own electricity now, with carefree solar energy that costs less than grid power. A solar array on your roof, shop, garage or in your backyard can make all of the electricity you need to power your home, all your gadgets, and your car, all at a cost LESS than you are now paying for grid electricity.

Plus, the cost of grid electricity will always be going up, while the cost of your own solar electricity will always stay the same. And it's a great long-term home improvement investment that pays for itself and retains its value over the long term.

De-carbonizing our economies will also clean up the environment, big time. Less pollution in our air, our water, our land and food will reduce health care costs significantly. Pollution kills and sickens more people around the world each year than the Covid-19 pandemic will kill and sicken this year. Factor that in to the cost of "business as usual!"

**MYTH: we must change our whole economic system**

Classic free-market capitalism has its problems all right. An economic system that puts profits ahead of the well being of people and treats the environment as an unimportant "externality" is headed for a dead-end, literally.

But saying we have to change the whole works from the bottom up to solve the climate problem simply insures that it will never happen. Because time is so short now, we will have to work within the existing system.

Norway's astounding and rapid shift to electric

vehicles is a good example of how this can be done. Their electrical grid is largely hydroelectric, but as of 2001 their fleet of vehicles was powered, like most countries, by gasoline and diesel fuels.

So they took action at a policy level. A combination of targeted taxes, incentives, regulations, education and a network of publicly funded charging stations changed this very quickly.

EV and plug-in hybrid sales grew exponentially, up to 22% by 2015 and 50% by 2018. Norway has now committed to 100% electric vehicle sales by 2025. They will probably get there sooner.

This remarkable change has greatly reduced their carbon footprint, saving their citizens money on fuel while improving their health with cleaner air. And the electric vehicles are great!

(Speaking of EVs, Tesla Inc.'s market capitalization last week surpassed Toyota to become the world's most valuable auto company. Just so ya know . . .)

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### **SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK**

We must decarbonize a few key sectors in our economy (transportation and energy generation, mostly) and there are non-monumental ways to do that are already working. The change will create countless jobs, generate real wealth and well being, improving quality of life today and for those generations who follow us.

Beating climate change is simpler than you think.