Watt's Happening? #282

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BELIEVE IN BETTER



What we have to gain in moving to a world powered by clean energy greatly outweighs the costs.

"Believe In Better." That's the new BC Green Party slogan, and I could not agree more. Creating a sustainable world will be a better world, a much better world, and we know exactly how to do it.

THE PROBLEM

In August 2021, a United Nations led report, drafted by hundreds of climate scientists and signed off by the 195 member countries of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that it is undeniable that carbon-emitting human activity has caused unprecedented change in global climate patterns. The world's scientists and governments agree: the facts are clear, the evidence is all around us now – climate change is happening, it is happening rapidly, and it is being caused by humans.

Burning fossil fuels, questionable agricultural practices and land clearing are releasing huge amounts of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere and oceans, rising average global temperatures and causing our climate patterns to shift dramatically.

These are not "wild theories." This is what's happening and we know why.

Climate change is transforming the way we live. Some regions are becoming dangerously hot and others will be made uninhabitable by rising sea levels. Extreme weather events, such as heat waves, floods and storms are becoming more frequent and intense. We've all seen the headlines. We've all felt the heat and many of us have been directly and tragically affected by the fires and storms. It's happening.

But it is definitely not too late to take action. Every tenth of a degree of heating that is avoided

makes a huge difference. And every step we take, as individuals, provinces and nations will help slow the change, and build a better world at the same time!

A BOOST TO OUR ECONOMIES

Decisive climate action will boost our economies. A 2018 report by the United Nations Global Commission on the Economy and Climate showed that a climate-friendly economy would generate roughly $26 trillion USD and create 65 million jobs by 2030, mostly in renewable energy, electric transportation and building upgrades.

As well, the International Labour Organization has stated that a global low-carbon economy would create four times as many jobs as it would destroy. For example, in the electricity sector, 400,000 fossil fuel jobs would be lost, but 2.5 million renewable energy jobs would be created, offsetting job losses by a factor of six.

Yes, huge investments will be needed to make this transition: some $60 trillion between now and 2050. But in reality, that is really about the same as the cost of business-as-usual. In other words, we can spend the same amount of money to save the world as destroy it. Add in the devastation and disruption climate change is bringing, and the cost of this transition becomes a genuine bargain.

Ignore the campaign of fear. Choose the campaign of hope.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS GREAT!

Well, not climate change, but fixing it will be.

Let's be clear. 80 to 90% of our carbon pollution problem is around energy: where we find it, what kind it is, how we use it and how we waste it.

Right now, each Canadian uses about 6000 kg of fossil fuel per year. This fuel is burned once and then gone forever.

Replacing this energy we each use with cleaner alternatives will require about the equivalent of 50 kg of solar infrastructure, about 50 kg of wind and about 50 kg of batteries (source: "Electrify" by Saul Griffith). And the materials used for this new infrastructure can be recycled back into more of the same, making possible the goal of a "circular economy," where all used products are recycled back into new ones. That's a lot better than using once and then gone forever. The net gain of moving to clean energy will be immense.

MY CHOICES MATTER TOO

Although government and industry must take the lion's share of leadership in our energy transition, our day-to-day choices as individuals and households can make a massive difference too.

In our homes and lifestyles, all of our major appliances, from washing machines to automobiles, are replaced roughly every 15 to 20 years, on average. So, when your furnace or air conditioner needs replacing, consider switching to a heat pump (and yes, the work just fine in the north). Water heater: a heat pump water heater. When your car is ready to move on, switch to a hybrid, plug-in hybrid or a fully electric vehicle. And to top it all off, put solar on your roof and a battery in your garage to power it all with free sunlight for fuel.

Yes, the up front costs will be high, but so are the savings, now estimated at $2 to $3 thousand dollar per year saved per household in repairs, maintenance and fuel costs. Lots of us will need help to do this, of course, and this is where governments must step in, especially for lower-income families.

The world is waking up. Actions are being promised and taken like never before, spurred on by the evidence that is now appearing before our eyes and the record-breaking low cost of renewables.

So ignore the campaign of fear we hear so much: what we have to lose and oh my, it's too late. No it's not.

Instead, choose the campaign of hope: what we all have to gain and the much better world that lays now well within our grasp. Believe in Better!