

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

GREY HIGHLANDS TO BUY ELECTRIC VEHICLE, LOOK AT GREEN INVESTMENTS

At its January 15 meeting the Grey Highlands Council authorized \$45,000 from its Municipal Modernization Grant reserve to buy a fully electric vehicle for municipal use (with an offsetting amount of \$15,000 from the operating budget's Mileage category). At the meeting, Council also unanimously passed a motion put forward by Councillor Cathy Little directing staff to bring a draft investment policy to Council that provides for investment opportunities that promote environmental, social and governance factors. If adopted, such a policy would place Grey Highlands within an international wave of "impact" investing that goes beyond merely the avoidance of harm to embrace investments that produce environmental and social benefits as well as good financial return on investment. At this week's conference of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, Councillor Little will attend a presentation by ONE Investments, which handles pool investing for small municipalities, that should help Grey Highlands to develop its socially and environmentally friendly investment approach.

GREY HIGHLANDS CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE CHOOSES CHAIR, VICE CHAIR

The Grey Highlands Climate Action Committee Task Force, a recently created advisory body to the Grey Highlands Municipal Council, will develop a draft fact-based Action Plan for fighting the climate crisis in Grey Highlands. It held its inaugural meeting on December 12 and its second meeting on January 9. The Task Force elected Tess Winget as its Chair and Janine McGowan as Vice-Chair. It is developing a public engagement survey and its members are reviewing *Climate Conscious Grey* (a climate action planning document issued by Grey County in April 2019) to help ensure that Grey Highlands and Grey County climate planning efforts are coordinated. *Climate Conscious Grey* is at [https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/FileStorage/38BBF7FC32FB43E08A314A7963944746-Grey%20County%20CCAP_Report_\(final\).pdf](https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/FileStorage/38BBF7FC32FB43E08A314A7963944746-Grey%20County%20CCAP_Report_(final).pdf).

GRANT FOR YOUTH IN NATURE

On January 13 the Blue Mountain Village Foundation announced a grant of \$2,500 to Elephant Thoughts School in Nature to enable it to offer youth from low income families the opportunity to participate in its School in Nature located at Kimpercote Centre in the Beaver Valley. The School in Nature helps develop resilience and confidence in students through hands-on outdoor exploration and learning that complements what the Provincial education system offers.

MELDRUM CLIMATE SPEECH TO BE AIRED IN MEAFORD

On December 22 climate scientist and activist Mark Meldrum gave a speech on climate issues to a large audience in Collingwood under the auspices of the Collingwood Climate Action Team. We summarized the speech in the last issue of *The Village Green*, but our summary didn't do justice to Meldrum's presentation. Fortunately his speech, entitled *Making Sense of Energy Transitions: What Can You Do?*, was videotaped and will be presented at Meaford's Community Film Night on **Tuesday January 21 at 7:00 pm** at Christ Church Anglican Church, 34 Boucher St E, Meaford. There is no charge for admission. A discussion will follow the video. Wednesday January 22 is the backup date in case of stormy weather on the 21st. Our thanks to Rob Smith of Transition Meaford for alerting us to this must-see presentation.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

LECTURE SERIES ON WATER HOSTED BY SIMCOE-BASED EDUCATIONAL GROUP

The Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute (a not-for-profit group focusing on “mature learners”) has launched a series of lectures entitled *Water Issues in Ontario*. Each lecture is held on a Friday morning from 10:00 am to noon:

- **January 10:** Ontario’s Hydrology (an introductory lecture) (already held)
- **January 17:** Surface Water (already held)
- **January 24:** Groundwater and Aquifers - Are they at risk?
- **January 31:** The Legal Framework for Water Management and Governance
- **February 7:** Hydrometeorological and Biological Events
- **February 14:** Water issues in the Georgian Triangle.

Series tickets must be bought in advance at \$50 for the set of lectures. Folks can only buy tickets for individual lectures by turning up at one of the lecture sites hoping there is a vacant spot and paying \$10. Many lectures are fully booked, but there are occasional “no shows” that make seats available.

Each lecture can be viewed simultaneously at three locations. “Live” lectures are held at the New Life Church, 28 Tracey Lane in Collingwood. Live-streamed lectures are held at the Simcoe Street Theatre in Collingwood and at the Station on the Green in Creemore. Tickets can be bought through the Institute’s website: <https://qtlli.ca/>.

BGOS CLIMATE ACTION TEAM: LEARN ABOUT RECYCLING

Have you ever wondered if that bag of thingmahooeys at your back door can be recycled – either the thingmahooeys or the bag? You can find out on January 23 by attending the Bruce-Grey Owen Sound Climate Action Team’s public meeting on recycling – its challenges and opportunities. Jamie Grimoldby, Operations Manager of Miller Waste, will be the guest speaker.

The event will let you know what happens to the things you recycle and it will include a “show and ask” component – bring something that puzzles you in terms of its recyclability and the expert will let you know (but you still have to take the crud home with you). The event will be held on **Thursday January 23 at 7:00 pm at the Harmony Centre in Owen Sound.**

BGOS CLIMATE ACTION TEAM STARTS PUB GET-TOGETHERS

In what seems like a pleasant way to build bridges, share ideas and dream together, the Bruce-Grey Owen Sound Climate Action Team is hosting “Pints for the Planet” get-togethers at the Mudtown Station Restaurant and Brewery, 1198 1st Avenue East, Owen Sound. These will be held on the **last Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m.** The inaugural pub-fest will be on **Thursday January 30**. All are invited to attend these instructive sessions on the creative social application of hops and barley to produce carbon dioxide and plans for a better future.

Perhaps our colleagues in Collingwood, with its vast array of fine eateries and drinkeries, could tear a leaf from the Bruce-Grey playbook by creating their own pub nights. Greyites and Bruceists would be pleased to attend if invited.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

BRUCE PENINSULA PUBLISHER JOINS OTHER MEDIA IN PRAISING CLIMATE ACTION

Several media outlets in this area have taken a lead in supporting climate action. Anne Finlay-Stewart, Editor and Publisher of the **Owen Sound Hub** (an on-line news source) frequently publishes climate action stories and commentaries. She is a founding member of the Bruce-Grey Own Sound Climate Action Team and is a frequent contributor of articles to the CAT's Facebook page.

Barbara Pearn and Ron Barnett, Editors and Publishers of **South Grey News**, also publish climate change stories (sometimes re-printing stories from **The Village Green**) and they recently expanded their commitment by introducing a green ads/green events feature, donating funds to cover the cost of planting a tree for each paid ad or event announcement published in **South Grey News**.

John Francis, Publisher of the **Bruce Peninsula Press**, recently showed his support as well in a December 19 "Publisher's Rant". Commenting approvingly on the decision of the Northern Bruce Peninsula Council to create a Climate Action Committee, Francis said:

"This is wonderful news. I would like to jump-start the process with a bit of background. Councillor Megan Myles suggested that when we are constructing facilities that will last for decades, we should consider what changes might occur in those decades. Water level fluctuations and more intense storms are both likely. But cultural and economic changes may also be important, for example carbon taxes and carbon footprint shaming. Will they affect the pattern of activity in our communities?"

These three media outlets can be accessed here:

- South Grey News: <https://www.southgreynews.ca/home>
- The Owen Sound Hub: <https://owensoundhub.org/>
- Bruce Peninsula Press: <https://brucepeninsulapress.com/>

A note to our readers: You may be aware of other media in Bruce, Grey and Northwestern Simcoe Counties – or specific reporters – that are climate action-friendly. If so, please tell us about them.

There are several ways climate activists can work with the media to advance climate issues:

- Advertise upcoming events through the media (fees are quite low for such ads).
- Invite them to attend your events.
- If you have a mailing list for newsletters or announcements, make sure the media are on the list.
- Write climate-related stories for the media (they generally accept timely and well-written stories even though you won't get paid for them).
- Prepare media releases and send them to the media (don't expect them to find you).
- Submit letters to the Editor on climate issues.
- Meet with the Editor in person or by phone to find out how you can best meet each other's needs. In such a meeting (if not before) explain what your group does, how it does it and why it does it.

Media generally welcome photos too. Check with the Editor of each outlet to get their guidelines on who can and can't be photographed without obtaining the person's permission.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

BRUCE PENINSULA & FRIENDS CAN LEARN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND “PEOPLE CHANGE”

Sources of Knowledge Forum, a not-for profit charitable organization providing natural and social knowledge-sharing and advocacy in the Bruce Peninsula, has chosen ***The Climate is Changing. Will We?*** as the theme of its 2020 Forum to be held in Tobermory on the **weekend of April 24 and 25**. The Forum dates were moved forward by a week this year to make it easier for tourist industry workers to participate – but all are welcome to attend.

Presenters will explore how change happens in terms of human consciousness, the economy and political systems, and will consider the implications for National Parks. The keynote speaker at the Saturday night dinner, Captain Mark Taylor of the Canadian Coast Guard (retired), will present highlights of his 30 year career in the Arctic and the changes taking place there.

The Early Bird ticket cost is \$80 (full price is \$90). Tickets at \$35 are also available for the Saturday night “Taste of India” dinner and keynote address only. Registration will open at www.sourcesofknowledge.ca/ by February 1st.

GREY COUNTY TO CREATE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

At its January 9 meeting, Grey County Council voted to form a Climate Change Task Force to support the further development and implementation of a Grey County Climate Change Action Plan. In a statement of the highlights of the meeting, Grey County said, “*All levels of government need to show leadership and take proactive steps to combat climate change.*”

The motion to create the Task Force was moved by Grey Highlands Deputy Mayor Aakash Desai and seconded by Alar Soever, Mayor of The Blue Mountains.

The full text of the motion reads:

“Whereas all levels of government need to show leadership and take proactive steps to combat climate change; and Whereas Grey County, through a partnership with the University of Guelph Masters of Rural Planning and Development program presented a report titled “Climate-Conscious Grey: Developing a Climate Change Action Plan for Grey County, Ontario” to Council April 25, 2019; and Whereas County staff are currently working on developing a Grey County climate change action plan; Now Therefore Be It Resolved that a Climate Change Task Force be established to:

- *Provide input into the development of recommendations in support of Climate-Conscious Grey, the climate change action plan*
- *Provide input into measurable impacts for improved County operations related to the environment; and*

That the Climate Change Task Force include Councillors Desai [Deputy Mayor, Grey Highlands], Woodbury [Mayor, Southgate], Hutchinson [Deputy Mayor, West Grey], Gamble [Deputy Mayor, Chatsworth], Clumpus [Mayor, Meaford], Hicks [Deputy Mayor, Hanover] and Warden McQueen [Mayor, Grey Highlands]; and That staff be directed to draft a Terms of Reference for review following the first meeting”.

It’s interesting that Owen Sound, the largest population centre in the County, doesn’t have a representative on the Task Force, nor does the Township of Georgian Bluffs.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

OSHKOSH DUDS: CUT UP AND DUMPED

A dear reader recently told us about bags of cut up children's clothes found in a dumpster outside Toronto's Dufferin Mall – all of them with a Carter's Oshkosh store tag on them.

The finder, appalled at the waste of good clothes that could have been donated to families in need, publicized the issue through social media (replete with photos of destroyed clothing), drawing the attention of CBC News. When questioned by the CBC, Carter's spokesperson Lindsay Rider said the company's policy is to dispose of "*damaged or unusable product to prevent any potential harm to our customers. We contacted our store in Canada and determined the items in question were damaged or unusable and disposed of properly for safety reasons.*" She also stated that in the last five years the company has donated tens of millions of dollars' worth of product to children's organizations in the U.S. and Canada.

A follow-up story by Global News interviewed former retail store employees from Carter's and other firms who said the destruction of unsold or slightly flawed garments is common.

Said Helen Harakas, executive director of Brands For Canada (a registered charity that takes surplus or unsold retail merchandise): "*They don't want their items sold in second-hand stores and ... they're afraid people are going to take them back to the store and get money for it.*"

On January 15, Brands For Canada announced that it is now involved in talks with Carter's OshKosh B'gosh Canada to provide a sustainable solution for surplus goods at stores across Canada. Clothing will be donated through Brands For Canada to local communities, for families below the poverty line. The Brands For Canada website is at <https://www.brandsforcanada.com/>.

Your enterprising **Village Green** editor took a look at Carter's Oshkosh statement of social responsibility, at https://www.cartersoshkosh.ca/en_CA/cs-socialresponsibility.html to see if anything in the statement covered re-purposing of unsold merchandise. The statement appears to be a well-constructed set of social justice policies on the acquisition of materials going into the company's processes and products, but it says nothing about corporate social responsibility to eliminate product wastage and to facilitate re-purposing.

If Carter's Oshkosh's statement of social responsibility is typical of other clothing makers, then climate and environmental activists have a job to do, working with these manufacturers to help them to improve their policies to eliminate post-production wastage.

WELLINGTON COUNTY GREEN LEGACY PROGRAMME: TWO MILLION TREES!

A dear reader with a penchant for leafy things recently told us about Wellington County's award-winning Green Legacy Programme and suggested it might be a good model for counties in our neck of the woods.

In 2004, The Green Legacy was a plan to plant 150,000 trees to celebrate Wellington County's 150th anniversary. It has grown to over two million trees planted in Wellington by community partners, making it North America's largest municipal tree planting program. The County fosters local initiative by providing trees free to residents and community groups.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

In 2010, Green Legacy was recognized by the United Nations for its help under the Billion Tree Campaign in the fight against climate change. Its website (with a link to a video) is at <https://www.wellington.ca/en/discover/greenlegacyprogramme.aspx>.

ONTARIO SENIOR WILL START FRIDAY CLIMATE SIT-INS

Starting on January 10, Dale Colleen Hamilton, a senior from Eden Mills Ontario (a playwright with an activist profile stretching back to the sixties) will hold climate sit-ins in front of the Ontario Legislature **every Friday from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm**. Hamilton invites “senior citizens, old hippies and baby boomers” to join her but she welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds. These senior citizen sit-ins are meant to complement the Fridays for Future climate strikes that mobilize young people globally (and in our area too).

PETITIONERS OPPOSE ENBRIDGE GAS PIPELINE THROUGH HAMILTON

The Ontario Clean Air Alliance (OCAA) says Enbridge Gas plans to build a pipeline through Hamilton (and through an ecologically sensitive wetland) to import fracked U.S. gas. OCAA argues that gas imports would add to our CO₂ emissions and that less harmful energy options should be adopted. A two-page background, and a petition folks can sign to oppose the pipeline, can be accessed through OCAA at <https://www.cleanairalliance.org/stop-gas-pipeline/>.

TWENTY-SIX WEEK CLIMATE PLAN

Recently Guy Dauncey, a Canadian who describes himself as “*an anthropological economist who works to develop a positive vision of a sustainable future, and to translate that vision into action*”, has written an impressive speculative piece – an imaginary and highly detailed 26-week plan supposedly developed by the Government of Canada to meet Green New Deal climate targets adapted to Canada. The plan is at <https://guydauncey.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/climate-emergency-a-26-week-transition-program-for-canada.pdf>. Says Dauncey, “*This is a work of imagination. But the urgency of the crisis is real, the need for the suggested programs is real, and the data included in these proposals is real.*”

BREAKING DOWN RUBBER TIRES: POSSIBLE BUT EXPENSIVE

A team of chemists at McMaster University has discovered a new way to break down the sulphur-to-sulphur bonds in rubber tires, allowing the material in them to be more readily dissolved and recycled. Although the process is currently too expensive to be used commercially, further work on the process may help us to make a dent in the world’s mountains of discarded tires. About three billion new tires are manufactured each year, and discarded ones usually end up in landfills or storage sites.

TIRE CRUMBS STILL ALLOWED IN CONNECTICUT’S PLAYGROUNDS

Grinding up tire rubber to produce rubber crumbs is one of the few practical things that can be done to old tires. Crumbs can be used as paving material additive and some is used as mulch in playgrounds because its resilience helps prevent child injuries. But a controversy in Connecticut points to problems that occur when recycled material is both useful and dangerous.

In 2019, researchers from Yale University tested nine samples of rubber mulch from nine different new bags of playground mulch. Samples contained 11 carcinogens and 20 irritants

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

(many of them respiratory irritants that endanger children with asthma). This material was not tested by government or any other designated agency before it was sold for use in playgrounds. In fact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had promoted using shredded waste tires in playgrounds as a way to get rid of waste tires.

Subsequently a bill was introduced in the Connecticut legislature to impose a moratorium on the use of crumb rubber mulch as surfacing material in municipal and public school playgrounds in the state. However, the Connecticut Chapter of the Association of Landscape Architects came out against the bill, in apparent violation of its own code of ethics. The bill didn't pass.

BAD-CRUD-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB: PLASTICS: BPA REPLACEMENT IS BAD TOO

In 2010 the Canadian government declared that the hard clear form of plastic called BPA (bisphenol A) is toxic. It ordered that sale of all baby products containing BPA should cease.

Industries stepped in, replacing BPA in their products with bisphenol S. However, University of Guelph researchers warn that bisphenol S seems to have the same biological effects as BPA, which is an endocrine disruptor, able to interrupt normal process of human growth processes. It may also be linked to poor neurobehavioral functioning, obesity, and cancer.

A 2019 study published in the journal *Toxicology* reviewed hundreds of studies on two dozen different BPA substitutes and concluded that some have health or toxicological effects at concentrations similar to or lower than BPA. Said Muhannad Malas, toxics program manager at the advocacy organization *Environmental Defence*: "*This is something that the scientific community has been warning regulators about for a very, very long time.*"

Health Canada says that some bisphenols have been identified for "further scoping and further information gathering" and that future releases of the Canadian Health Measures Survey will measure the most common BPA substitutes to assess their impact on Canadians.

MOST UK UNIVERSITIES DIVEST FOSSIL FUEL INVESTMENTS

According to the UK's student-led environmental and social justice advocacy group People & Planet, 78 of the UK's 154 public universities have divested their investments in fossil fuel industries or have promised to do so in whole or in part (some have only promised to divest from the "dirtiest" fuels such as coal and oil from tar sands). Several large and prestigious institutions (University College London and the University of York for instance) have divested all fossil fuel investments, but Cambridge University has not agreed to divest (leaving it open to the likelihood of massive and sustained student protests over the coming year).

People & Planet compiles and maintains a set of "league tables" that ranks all UK universities based on how they rate (as a percentage) on 13 sustainability variables:

1. Environmental policy
2. Sustainability staff
3. Environmental auditing/management systems
4. Ethical Investment
5. Carbon management
6. Workers' rights
7. Sustainable food
8. Engagement
9. Education
10. Energy sources
11. Waste management and recycling
12. Carbon reduction
13. Water reduction

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

The highest-ranked UK university is the University of Gloucestershire. It scores well over 50% on all categories except workers' rights (20%) and energy sources (37.5%). The lowest ranked university is the Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance (London) that scores zero on seven of the 13 categories. The People & Planet website is at <https://peopleandplanet.org/>

YOUNG PEOPLE DEMAND WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM CLIMATE ACTION

In preparation for this week's World Economic Forum meetings in Davos Switzerland, twenty-one young climate activists, including Greta Thunberg, co-authored an article demanding climate action from Forum participants:

"We demand that at this year's forum, participants from all companies, banks, institutions and governments immediately halt all investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction, immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies and immediately and completely divest from fossil fuels. We don't want these things done by 2050, 2030 or even 2021, we want this done now – as in right now.

We understand and know very well that the world is complicated and that what we are asking for may not be easy. But the climate crisis is also extremely complicated, and this is an emergency. In an emergency you step out of your comfort zone and make decisions that may not be very comfortable or pleasant. And let's be clear – there is nothing easy, comfortable or pleasant about the climate and environmental emergency."

The 21 co-signing young people come from 17 countries on six continents (none of them are Canadian).

BLACKROCK GOES GREEN

BlackRock, a massive investment firm that manages nearly us\$7 trillion in assets, acknowledges the need for the world to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and warns CEOs that it will stop investing in the fossil fuel business, preferring "sustainable investing" instead. Says BlackRock founder and CEO Larry Fink in this year's annual letter to CEOs:

"Our investment conviction is that sustainability- and climate-integrated portfolios can provide better risk-adjusted returns to investors. And with the impact of sustainability on investment returns increasing, we believe that sustainable investing is the strongest foundation for client portfolios going forward. In a letter to our clients today, BlackRock announced a number of initiatives to place sustainability at the center of our investment approach, including: making sustainability integral to portfolio construction and risk management; exiting investments that present a high sustainability-related risk, such as thermal coal producers; launching new investment products that screen fossil fuels; and strengthening our commitment to sustainability and transparency in our investment stewardship activities. Over the next few years, one of the most important questions we will face is the scale and scope of government action on climate change, which will generally define the speed with which we move to a low-carbon economy. This challenge cannot be solved without a coordinated, international response from governments, aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement."

Fink's annual letters are influential enough to change the conversations inside boardrooms around the globe. His statement two years ago, for instance, that companies needed to have a purpose beyond profits, has helped further movement towards socially responsible business and investment practices.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

SIEMENS TO STAY IN AUSSIE COAL SUPPLY BUSINESS

Despite protests by hundreds of climate change protesters at rallies outside Siemens' offices across Germany and at the Australian embassy in Berlin, this Munich-based engineering company has said it will not pull out of involvement with a coal mine project in Australia amid concerns over global warming. Siemens has a €18 million contract to supply signalling systems for a rail link between the Indian-owned Carmichael coal mine in Australia and an Australian port. The Carmichael mine will be the largest coal mine in the world when fully operational, and the coal mined there will add greatly to CO₂ emissions when it is burned to generate electricity in India. Australia, battling massive wildfires following months of drought and above-average temperatures, is one of the world's biggest coal exporters with the full support of its government. Says Siemens CEO Joe Kaeser, "*We should have been wiser about this project, but we need to be a supplier who sticks to its commitments*".

BRISBANE EDITORIAL: THERE ARE NOT TWO SIDES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Columnist John Birmingham, writing in the *Brisbane Times* on January 8, presents one Australian's voice on how the media, in pursuit of fairness and balance, have too often allowed the voices of climate deniers to be heard, as if their perspective had legitimacy. In his column ***We, the media, must take some of the blame as Australia burns***, Birmingham says:

"We have made it possible for powerful commercial interests and the political parties they have captured to pretend we are not entering a death spiral. We are, and now we know what that looks like. But every time a legitimate journalist or editor or producer calls on a denier 'to put the other side' of the climate change case they make it so much more likely another half-billion kangaroos and wallabies and koalas will burn next year, and dozens more people along with them.

The denial of climate change is not a 'side' in an argument. It's not a rhetorical exercise. Climate-change denial is a complex, protean phenomenon that is as much about the genuine convictions held in good faith by deeply misinformed individuals, as is it about preserving the vast and mostly untaxed profits of fossil fuel corporations. It is also a clear and present danger to human civilisation and life on this planet.

We in the news media, or what's left of it, cannot simply treat climate-change denial as we would disagreements over tax or health policy. Even serious and violent disagreements over social and economic policies can still be legitimate differences. But there is nothing legitimate about climate change denial. It has the backing of a trillion-dollar industry sector, but no actual credibility. There are no experts to hear from. No counterpoints to be made. It is all lies in the service of profit and power."

U.S. YOUNG PEOPLE'S CLIMATE LAWSUIT IS DISMISSED

In the last edition of ***The Village Green*** we described lawsuits across the world in which individuals or groups are suing governments and industries for failing to protect citizens from climate change. We pointed out that many of these lawsuits fail, but nonetheless raise the profile of climate action.

On such failure with undertones of success took place in the U.S. when 21 kids received the results of their lawsuit launched five years ago against the United States to try to force the

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

government to do something about climate change. They argued that the government's reliance on fossil fuels jeopardizes their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A panel of judges of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the case, known as *Juliana vs. the United States*, on the grounds that the courts don't have the power to order the kind of emissions reduction plan sought by the plaintiffs, who want their government limit atmospheric warming to 1 degree Celsius. The decision reads, "*The panel reluctantly concluded that the plaintiff's case must be made to the political branches or to the electorate at large.*"

One dissenting judge wrote a minority opinion, however, which is a blistering attack on the U.S. Government's arguments presented to the Court. Said Judge Josephine Staton:

"In these proceedings, the government accepts as fact that the United States has reached a tipping point crying out for a concerted response – yet presses ahead toward calamity. It is as if an asteroid were barreling toward the Earth and the government decided to shut down our only defenses. Seeking to quash this suit, the government bluntly insists that it has the absolute and unreviewable power to destroy the Nation."

It is interesting that the majority opinion to dismiss the case pointed out that the judges reached their majority opinion "reluctantly" and that the plaintiffs "made a compelling case that action is needed".

IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: TWO CLOCKS, TWO GODS – KHRONOS AND KAIROS

The clock in the kitchen ticks away incessantly. The pages of the calendar are torn off or deleted inexorably, revealing another month to be lived and left behind. Year follows year. Each of these markers of time takes on greater significance when we know that we have x years left to us to avert climate catastrophe.

Each of these markers is precise. Each comprises equal units. Each belongs within the territory of the ancient Greek proto-god ***Khronos*** (or Chronos), personification of Time, devourer of his own children, wielder of the scythe. He and his consort Ananke (the goddess of inevitability) drove the rotation of the heavens and the eternal passage of time. They were beyond the reach of the younger gods whose fates they controlled.

Yet the ancient Greeks – terribly flawed and terribly clever – had another god of time – ***Kairos*** – an odd-looking fellow to be sure, because he had a lock of hair hanging over his face – but the back of his scalp was bald. Since he was the personification of opportunity, Kairos could be grabbed by the forelock by those wanting to seize the opportunity. But once he had passed, the bald back of his head gave folks no way of seizing him by his hair. The opportunity had passed.

Kairos in modern terms has come to mean a time when it is opportune to get something done. As the writer Stephen Chamberlain put it:

"When we ask, 'What time is it?' the answer is expressed in chronological terms. But when we ask, 'What is it time for?' the answer brings us closer to the meaning of kairos... If chronos is about measuring time, then kairos is about judging it – not its seconds or minutes, but its significance."

Within the future of climate activism there will be a series of opportune moments – ***kairoi*** (if my Geek plural is correct) – periods in time that we can exploit if we are aware of them.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

The time immediately before and during an election campaign is a *kairos*. The time during which a municipality will accept public comments on its strategic plan is a *kairos*. The time leading up to an international climate conference is a *kairos*. The time in a school curriculum during which students will learn about climate change is a *kairos*. The window of opportunity during which a charitable foundation will accept funding applications is a *kairos*.

Too often though, we miss the chance to exploit a *kairos* because we've forgotten that the opportunity will occur, or we never knew about it in the first place. Perhaps we need a special kind of calendar-keeper in our communities – a person or group responsible for letting us know what *kairoi* are on the horizon so we can get ready to exploit them – a resource that knows what recurring times each year, or each electoral or bureaucratic or civic cycle, are the best times for fertile activism. We need calendar-keepers that also focus on provincial, national and international levels.

There is a whole other set of *kairoi*, though, that are usually unpredictable – the *kairoi* born out of tragedy and disaster. Some have argued that the Chernobyl nuclear disaster was a *kairos* that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Australia's massive wildfires coupled with the blinkered field of vision of that nation's freshly unpopular national government is another *kairos* – for Australia and perhaps for the rest of us.

But disaster-fed *kairoi* can be used against climate activism as well. Newfoundland's recent monumental blizzard spawned hundreds of social media posts claiming the blizzard proved global warming doesn't exist (with few rebuttals from climate activists).

To wish for disaster so we can exploit it would be wrong. But to ignore the role of disasters as *kairoi* – as “teachable moments” – would also be wrong. To exploit these disaster-wrapped *kairoi*, climate activism requires the resilience and durability to grab the forelock of Kairos even as we grieve.

So we need calendar-keepers that overlay Kairos onto Chronos. And we need the ability to rapidly derive and disseminate lessons from climate tragedies, without losing our capacity to mourn for the creatures and creations ruined or obliterated by these tragic *kairoi*.

Respectfully submitted to the *Polis*,
John Butler

OUR READERS KNOW A THING OR TWO

A dear reader has taken issue with visible protests as a way to build support for climate action, and voices support for a range of “little things we can do”:

“Can you also promote positive things such as community gardens? The South East Grey Community Health Centre has one.

Why don't we encourage folks to plant Victory Gardens thus eliminating packaging, push to support the Farmers' Markets (eliminating packaging, gas fumes and other stuff). Give local folks stuff they can do that's productive. Waving placards around is fun but aggravates folks and puts them off the cause just like Greta Thunberg aggravated me. Love your newsletter anyway but tell us what little things we can do. One can create mountains from many, many mole hills.”

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

Another dear reader makes a case for a comprehensive transition, rooted in how we see ourselves, our world, and ourselves-in-the-world:

"I personally believe that change of the magnitude required can only be driven by what Nietzsche called a transvaluation of values; we can no longer feel and think in the exploitive western tradition where everything (and every body) is just a standing reserve; it's certainly not just about carbon either. Nature is no longer what we thought, nor are we. (Just reading Bruno Latour, Facing Gaia, in which he points out that 'interest' has its root in 'between' so our capitalist economics and even the whole of our social and life sciences with their emphasis on self-interest have overemphasized the 'self' (which has very difficult to discern real boundaries) at the expense of all the incalculable actions between and among. Lovelock and Margulis emphasized that there really is no environment and no self.

One thing I have to learn is how to approach things with greater respect and care, especially those things to whom I'm not used to paying true and honest attention."

To a large extent, the above approach was well expressed by another reader, who attended a January 14 meeting of the Owen Sound Council's Operations Committee, where not all municipal officials were sympathetic toward creation of a municipal climate task force:

"Last night's Operations Committee meeting was a good example of how we (those of us trying to change the world) need to stay strong in the face of opinions and views that don't align with 'ours'. Our response to the global crisis of social and environmental instability needs to result in positive actions that demonstrate the connections between the environment, economy and the social health of our communities."

A READER'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2020

A dear reader was kind enough to share the resolutions for 2020 that she and her partner will pursue (she described them as "a start"). They are an admirable mix of global, local and personal perspectives. With her permission, I share them with you:

1. "Forest Bathe" at least four hours/week
2. Live simply but fully
3. Communicate regularly our concerns, ideas and commitment on initiatives and (in)actions to address global warming with municipal, provincial and federal politicians, friends and fellow citizens
4. Divest from oil and gas companies; review corporate citizenship record of all companies we invest in and change investments, if necessary
5. Eat a plant-based diet, eliminate beef and lamb and reduce consumption of other meats; reduce food waste with goal to zero waste as the goal; start a veggie garden
6. Buy Canadian and organic as much as possible, including alcohol
7. Only drink shade-grown, organic, fair-trade coffee and limit to one mug/day max.
8. Reduce sugar intake by 75%, local honey and maple syrup allowed
9. Avoid all plastic as much as possible, especially single-use plastic; use refilleries; recycle
10. Capsule wardrobe, buy second-hand as much as possible, reduce consumption
11. One car, hybrid; drive less, plan trips to maximize purpose
12. Fly less
13. Calculate carbon footprint and buy offsets at triple the cost

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

14. Practice general energy "hygiene", reduce consumption by turning off lights, using LED bulbs, reducing thermostat (16 degrees nighttime/18 degrees daytime), ensure home is well insulated, etc.
15. Get involved, volunteer.

FACTS THAT HELP YOU TO CHANGE THE WORLD

A 2011 study examining plastic in fish in the north Pacific Ocean estimated that they ingested around 12,000 tons a year. A later study noted that if the number held across the entire ocean, 100,000 tons of plastic could be inside animals at any one time. Nanoplastic research is still in its infancy but laboratory tests show that unlike microplastics, nanoplastics are small enough to accumulate within the bloodstreams and cell membranes of a range of organisms, even passing the blood-brain barrier in a test on Japanese medaka fish, and cause toxic effects, including neurological damage, and reproductive abnormalities.

source: *The missing 99%: why can't we find the vast majority of ocean plastic?*
The Guardian, December 31, 2019

From the start of September through early January, Australia's wildfires released around 400 million tons of CO₂, roughly the same amount the UK emits in an entire year. The year 2019 has been the country's warmest and driest year on record with temperatures 1.52 degrees Celsius above average and rainfall at the lowest since record began in 1900

sources: European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts
and Australian Bureau of Meteorology

The year 2019 was the second-hottest year on record globally. The hottest year, 2016, was only warmer by a mere 0.04 degrees Celsius, and the past five years have had average temperatures almost 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

source: Copernicus Climate Change Service

The average temperature of the world's oceans in 2019 was 0.075 degrees Celsius (0.135 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the 1981–2010 average. The amount of heat added to oceans in the past 25 years (228 sextillion Joules' worth) would be the same as the heat from 3.6 billion Hiroshima atom-bomb explosions (averaging four Hiroshima bombs' worth of energy entering the oceans every second for 25 years). And it's increasing. In 2019, ocean warming was equivalent to about five Hiroshima bombs of heat, every second, day and night, 365 days a year.

source: Lin Zheng, Institute of Atmospheric Physics,
Chinese Academy of Sciences,
http://english.iap.cas.cn/RE/202001/t20200114_229373.html

The longest naturally occurring palindrome in any language (i.e. a word spelled the same backwards or forwards) is the Finnish word **saipukaupias**, which means soap-maker. This has absolutely nothing to do with climate change, but I thought it was interesting.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

SHE SAID / HE SAID

“With Australia burning and Jakarta underwater, the science is clear that every new investment in fossil fuels is committing the world to climate chaos and human rights violations on a massive scale. Fossil fuel producers are already being held accountable in courtrooms around the world. The financial sector should take note, take action or take cover.”

Carrol Moffatt, President,
Center for International Environmental Law

“This terrible disaster raises for us the question of when our citizens and our government are going to officially acknowledge the reality of climate change and the implications this will have for our land and our economy. The traditional people of Australia, besides knowing the importance of back-burning – a fire control measure which they practiced for thousands of years – hold that nothing is more sacred than the land on which we walk, and that the land and its waterways always have to be protected. This surely must be an imperative and top priority for us as a nation!....

This morning, as I was swimming, a few arms' lengths away a beautiful dolphin rose to greet me and the new dawn. In the midst of news of grim fire horrors, I was suddenly filled with joy and hope at the sight of this amazing creature. We hold our beloved land and its people in our prayers, as we ask Our Lady Help of Christians, Patroness of Australia, to protect us and to ask her son to look on us with compassion.”

Sister Karan Varker, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, January 11 2020

“The world has two power centers, political and financial, and we have to go after both if we have any hope of slowing down the pace of global heating. Now truly, it is daunting to take on the sort of central pillars of global capital... These people are huge and strong and powerful. On the other hand, if we can get them to begin to bend, the effects will be rapid and global because all the money in the world is concentrated in a few places.”

Bill McKibben, co-founder of the environmental group 350.org January 9, 2020
(On January 10 McKibben and others were arrested for occupying a branch of JPMorgan Chase)

“What we do – or don't do – in the next few years will quite literally influence the kind of planet our progeny live on. Indeed, it will shape the world for hundreds of generations to come. What an awesome responsibility for a once puny species to possess. What a challenge to face, without hope.”

Writer and climate activist John Atcheson, 2011
(Atcheson, 71, was killed in a traffic accident last week)

“You may well ask: ‘Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?’ You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.”

Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, 1963

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number Sixteen, January 20, 2020

A bronze statue of the God of Opportunity, *Kairos*, created by the ancient Greek sculptor Lysippos, stood at his home in the Agora (the marketplace and place of public assembly) of the Hellenistic city of Sikyon.

The following epigram by Poseidippos was carved on the base of the statue:

"Who and from where was the sculptor?
From Sikyon.

And his name?
Lysippos.

And who are you?
Time who subdues all things.

Why do you stand on tip-toe?
I am ever running.

And why do you have a pair of wings on your feet?
I fly with the wind.

And why do you hold a razor in your right hand?
As a sign to humans that I am sharper than any sharp edge.

And why does your hair hang over your face?
For they who meet me to take me by the forelock.

And why, in Heaven's name, is the back of your head bald?
Because none whom I have once raced by on my winged feet will now take hold of me from behind, though he wishes it very much.

Why did the artist fashion you?
**For your sake, stranger,
and he set me up in the portico
as a lesson."**

For information about The Village Green, contact John Butler at 519 923-6335
or agora@xplornet.com

A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

As a result of an initiative by Joyce Hall, Chair of the Grey Highlands Climate Action Group, and the kind cooperation of Grey Highlands Public Library, hard copies of past issues of *The Village Green* will be available in prominently displayed binders in all three Grey Highlands Library branches. Thank you.

As well, your enterprising Editor is in the final throes of negotiations with a major Hollywood studio to film the blockbuster movie "*Village Green: The Agony and the Ecstasy*". George Clooney and Brad Pitt are quibbling over which of them will portray Yours Truly in the movie.

Or not.