

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

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Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## SIGN UP FOR THE CHALLENGE: 52 WEEKS OF CLIMATE ACTION

Sherri Jackson, communication lead with the Collingwood Climate Action Team (CCAT) and Laurel Hood, the CCAT's transportation lead, have developed a free program to keep climate action in the front of your mind, and in your daily life, each week for the next year.

Called **52 Weeks of Climate Action**, the initiative encourages you to sign up at [52weeks2020@gmail.com](mailto:52weeks2020@gmail.com). In return, each week for 52 weeks (starting the week of April 19) you'll be e-mailed a tip that gives you a climate-related challenge, activity or something to think about for that week. The program will also post a blog that goes into more detail on how that week's challenge helps reduce carbon, and a monthly article will appear in local media that summarizes the upcoming month's challenges. Participants will also be invited to send in notes on their progress, to educate and encourage others.

Although the two founders of the program are Collingwoodians, they stress that the program is not just for people from northwest Simcoe County. Given current interest in climate action in Bruce and Grey counties, folks from those counties – and beyond – are welcome to participate.

The initiative was inspired in part by the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day, which takes place on April 22. Says Jackson:

*“Earth Day's theme this year is Climate Action. Predictions are that 50 per cent of climate action must happen from the top down – that's government, legislators and corporations. But, the other 50 per cent can happen from the bottom up – grassroots movements, and people working together. That's where we all come in.”*

Jackson says that she and Hood want to help grow a grassroots movement that gets people feeling hopeful, empowered and positive – something to combat anxiety and pessimism about the future, something that shares practical ideas to reduce our carbon footprints, in positive and supportive ways (and hopefully have fun doing it).

Many of the challenges and tips will be rated good, better or best, so you can choose the option that fits your lifestyle. Hood and Jackson want to build awareness and give people viable options for changing habits and behaviors, but they don't want it to be intimidating or complicated. It will be inspiring, not daunting, says Jackson.

So – sign up today at [52weeks2020@gmail.com](mailto:52weeks2020@gmail.com) as an individual, a family, or a social or work group. And even though the initiative is based on cooperation rather than competition, Jackson and Hood would love to see groups challenging each other to become the ultimate climate champion in this part of Ontario.

## “FLUSHABLES” CLOG SEWER SYSTEMS

A problem in Collingwood and Meaford is occurring across the world – the problem of potential or actual sewer clogs resulting from facial tissues, paper towels, disposable gloves, disinfectant wipes, baby wipes and towelettes flushed down the toilet. These materials are being used extensively now, either to help disinfect surfaces or as an alternative to toilet paper given the hoarding-induced toilet paper “famine” experienced everywhere. This problem highlights the unreliability of industry statements that products are flushable.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

Said Collingwood's website:

*"Since the COVID-19 pandemic ... our wastewater treatment operators have noticed single-use wipes, paper towels, gloves, and other items in the sanitary system. These items don't break down, even if the wipes are advertised as 'flushable.' Instead, they get stuck in the equipment and can cause damage to the town's infrastructure. In order to deal with clogs, the town's wastewater treatment operators have to shut down the equipment, clean, repair, and replace it. This takes a lot of time, taking operators away from other essential duties and creates an added financial burden to the town.*

*This is not just the town's problem; these same items can clog the plumbing in your home, requiring expensive repairs."*

Said the Municipality of Meaford in a media release:

*"Municipality of Meaford would like to remind you to avoid sewer backups and protect your sewer pipes, please don't flush the following items down the toilet: facial tissues, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, baby wipes, towelettes. Wipes and towelettes should be disposed of safely in the garbage, not recycling, and facial tissues and paper towels can be placed in the green bin. Any wipe that states it is 'flushable' is not, and may cause a sewer backup."*

## SUN'S GOLDSTEIN ATTACKS CLIMATE ACTION

In an egregious example of false equivalence, a March 21 opinion piece in the *Toronto Sun* titled *We Gambled on The Wrong Threat – Climate Change* by Sun columnist Lorrie Goldstein said:

*"One of the key lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic is that for at least the past decade, we focused disproportionately, or rather our governments did, on one potential global threat – to human-induced climate change – to the exclusion of all others. Anthropogenic climate change became the issue that sucked up all the oxygen in the room when it came to a global crisis. At the expense of, for example, a contagious and deadly virus becoming a pandemic, which public health experts have been warning us about for decades... But while human-induced climate change contributes to human suffering and death, it has never been a so-called 'existential' threat to humanity, meaning, a threat to human existence."*

Goldstein's column was illustrated with a photo of climate protesters, accompanied by the caption, "a recent demonstration for climate change in Bordeaux, France, despite government recommendations to limit gatherings amid the outbreak of COVID-19" – implying that climate activists are willing to congregate dangerously to espouse their beliefs.

Goldstein's full column is at <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/goldstein-we-gambled-on-the-wrong-threat-climate-change>.

His column may be a taste of a renewed narrative emerging from climate change deniers and discounters – the argument that climate activists have hijacked public agendas, thereby limiting the ability of governments to concentrate on "real" problems like pandemic preparation, economic growth, crime, immigration and national defense. Such a portrayal of climate activism helps move the needle for a portion of the population toward seeing climate activists not as slightly potty tree-huggers, but as actively malevolent purveyors of societal doom.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## GREEN MINERALS: NO FREE RIDE

Lithium-ion batteries and other mineral-laden devices are a mainstay of green energy systems but they pose hazards as disparate as heightened social inequity, environmental degradation from mining the materials that comprise them, and recycling and disposal challenges.

At least 23 key minerals are critical to the development and deployment of solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles and energy storage technologies. Demand for these minerals will greatly increase as the world transitions to a low-carbon economy.

Many of these are what the European Union defines as “conflict minerals” – minerals that “*finance armed groups, fuel forced labor and other human rights abuses, and support corruption and money laundering*” (European Commission, 2017). An overview of conflict minerals is in the report ***Green Conflict Minerals: The fuels of conflict in the transition to a low-carbon economy*** published in 2018 by the Winnipeg-based International Institute for Sustainable Development. The report is at <https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/green-conflict-minerals.pdf>.

Reserves of these minerals are found in states considered to be both fragile and corrupt as defined by Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index and the Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index. Hotspots are concentrated in South America, sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Cobalt, graphite and rare earths are of particular concern: sizable deposits of these minerals are most common in vulnerable regions (“rare earths” refers to 17 different elements, including dysprosium and neodymium that are critical for wind technologies and energy storage, and praseodymium for electric vehicles and energy storage). Fifty-six per cent of cobalt reserves are located in the very fragile and corrupt Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 100% of chromium and graphite reserves are in corrupt or very corrupt countries.

In desperation to retrieve these minerals, the world may overlook or condone the violation of indigenous rights as mines are opened, environmental destruction in and around mine sites, and social inequities. Local profits from mining and processing industries in some corruption-laden countries may be siphoned to graft-ridden political elites or may be “captured” by insurgent groups to fund civil wars and domestic terrorism. Slave labor or child labor may provide core or adjunct workforces in mines, and rights and opportunities for women may be sacrificed. Highly hazardous and unregulated small scale mining operations may provide tenuous work for disadvantaged populations in some countries at horrendous costs in terms of their personal health and the health of their environments.

All of these injustices, inequities and environmental degradations have already occurred in one country or another and for one mineral or another. For example, much of the world’s lithium supply comes from Chile’s Salar de Atacama region, where lithium is prevalent in its vast salt flats. Water is pumped into salt flats, and lithium is extracted from the brine after the water evaporates. It takes 1,900 tons of water to produce a ton of lithium. About 65% of the region’s available water supply is consumed by lithium extraction, leaving local farmers water-starved, forcing them to import water from other regions or to give up their now virtually worthless farms.

Ongoing research tries to find ways to rely less on rare minerals and conflict minerals in green technology manufacturing, but for the foreseeable future the world will rely on immense amounts of mined minerals from dubious or destructive sources to fuel the green transition.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

Some of the building blocks needed to ensure the responsible sourcing of the minerals required for green energy technologies are in place or are starting to emerge through international agreements, national laws and industry ethical practices, but supply chains are often murky and enforcement of rules for ethical sourcing of minerals is often weak or non-existent.

Mineral recycling could alleviate some of the pressure placed on extractive operations, but the necessary minerals have poor end-of-life collection and recycling rates. Retrieval and recycling technologies are not yet economically viable. There is no standardization of design for battery packs, modules or cells within the automotive sector, and batteries in other battery-reliant products such as mobile phones come in different sizes, shapes and types, making it uneconomical or impossible to use automated processes to disassemble the batteries and harvest their minerals. Batteries in consumer products are often hard to remove: the devices, batteries and all, often end up in the garbage. Research indicates that only about 5% of lithium-ion batteries are recycled. At present, every one million electric vehicles sold will produce 250,000 tons of battery pack waste that the world's recycling infrastructure isn't equipped to handle. While these vehicle batteries can last for up to 20 years, the potential battery waste as electric vehicle sales grow is enormous. An interesting article on recycling lithium-ion batteries from electric vehicles, published by *Nature* in November 2019 is at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-019-1682-5>.

A first-of-its-kind bill introduced in the U.S. Senate this month may produce world-wide progress in recycling metals essential to greening the world's energy. Sponsored by Maine's Senator Angus King, the "Battery and Critical Mineral Recycling Act of 2020" calls on Congress to spend us\$150 million over five years to support research on innovative battery recycling approaches and to create a national collection system that harvests spent batteries.

## INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY BOSS: CREATE GREEN STIMULUS PACKAGES

Dr. Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, has made a strong plea for countries to develop green stimulus packages, rather than business-as-usual packages, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Said Birol in a March 14 op ed piece on the IEA website:

*"Large-scale investment to boost the development, deployment and integration of clean energy technologies – such as solar, wind, hydrogen, batteries and carbon capture (CCUS) – should be a central part of governments' plans because it will bring the twin benefits of stimulating economies and accelerating clean energy transitions. The progress this will achieve in transforming countries' energy infrastructure won't be temporary – it can make a lasting difference to our future. The costs of key renewable technologies, such as solar and wind, are far lower than during previous periods when governments launched stimulus packages. And the technology for both solar and wind is in a much better shape than in the past. Meanwhile, hydrogen and carbon capture are in need of major investment to scale them up and bring down costs. This could be helped by current interest rate levels, which were already low and are declining further, making the financing of big projects more affordable."*

But Birol points out that the sharp decline in oil prices may undermine clean energy transitions by reducing the impetus for energy efficiency policies: without measures by governments, cheaper energy always leads consumers to use it less efficiently and reduces the appeal of buying more efficient cars or retrofitting homes and offices to save energy.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

Birol says the pandemic brings other dangers for clean energy transitions. China, the country most heavily affected by the virus initially, is the main global production source of many clean energy technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and batteries for electric cars. The Chinese economy was severely disrupted during the government's efforts to contain the virus, especially in February, causing potential supply chain bottlenecks for some technologies and components.

Birol has a point, but in their haste to inject stimulus money into economies as quickly as possible, countries may invest in traditional declining fossil fuel sectors rather than developing tailor-made new green investments. And to quell taxpayer resentment at the size of stimulus packages, governments may choose what they perceive to be unimaginative but safe stimulus investments.

On the other hand, governments may be forced to make second-wave stimulus investments, with enough lead time to develop green components to their plans. All governments will also be aware that they will have to pay for stimulus packages by curtailing spending after the stimulus takes hold, and that eliminating huge subsidies to the fossil fuel sector will save them money.

So one can imagine three-phase stimulus/recovery strategies:

1. Initial massive investment in traditional economic sectors, including fossil fuels
2. A second and more modest wave of investment in the green energy sector
3. Big cutbacks to fossil fuel subsidies once the second wave of green stimulus investments have solidified the alternatives to fossil fuels. IEA estimates that annual fossil fuel consumption subsidies are worth us\$400 billion worldwide, 40% of which are used to make oil products cheaper.

This is messier than a single stage green-focused stimulus package, but it may be the only way democracies feel they can get to a greener future while surviving a pandemic. On March 26 Canada's Finance Minister Bill Morneau said Canada's COVID-19 stimulus won't "discriminate" between businesses, after he was challenged by a senator to ensure the money wouldn't rescue declining and high-polluting industries. In short, Canada seems committed to the first of the three steps. Whether it takes the next two steps will depend in large measure on whether a loud enough public voice is raised demanding them.

Environmental groups say the stimulus law's broadening of Export Development Canada's mandate will make it easier to direct more public money to oil and gas companies without sufficient oversight.

## ANOTHER U.S. COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT CLOSES

Despite efforts by President Trump and Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell to stop it, the Tennessee Valley Authority power plant at Paradise Kentucky burned its last load of coal last month. The plant closed in a county that once mined more coal than any other in the U.S. The coal industry has been in accelerated decline because of tougher environmental regulations, a major push toward renewable energy and a rise in the extraction of natural gas. In the U.S. since 2010, 500 coal-burning units, or boilers, at power plants have been shut down and nearly half the nation's coal mines have closed. No U.S. energy company, big or small, is building a new coal-burning plant.



# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## CANCEL GLASGOW CLIMATE TALKS?

Officials in many countries – including the host country, the United Kingdom – have privately discussed the possibility of postponing the COP26 talks scheduled for Glasgow this November. At COP26 – the 26th conference of the parties – countries are supposed to come up with more stringent plans to curb greenhouse gas emissions, because current plans under the Paris Agreement are inadequate. The U.K. hopes to bring many countries to the table with pledges to hit a net zero carbon target by 2050.

Those who favor postponing COP26 argue that in the face of the pandemic, countries don't have time to do the preparatory work, individually and collectively, to forge enhanced greenhouse gas reduction commitments by November. They feel a postponed conference is better than a failed conference.

Others argue that preparatory work has become difficult because of the virus, but not impossible. They say that postponing the summit now would put brakes on at a time when acceleration is needed.

Yvo de Boer, former chief of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, who led acrimonious climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009, says it's vital to keep working towards a November COP26. *"If it is going to be canceled, that should only be done at the last possible minute – in October,"* he said.

## OIL GLUT: TOO MUCH OF A BAD THING

Global oil demand and production are around 100 million barrels per day. The economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic will curtail demand by up to 20%, yet Saudi Arabia and Russia, locked in a price war, irrationally keep pumping the stuff out. This is creating a 20 million barrel-per-day surplus of oil in the market that will rapidly exceed storage capacity, forcing some oil producers to pay customers to buy the commodity – hence, in effect, negative oil prices. The prices of oil have already fallen to the lowest level in 17 years. The combination of excess supply and low prices may be the death knell for many small oil companies and has already doomed mega-achemes such as Alberta's Teck oil sands project.

Oil Inventories will likely swell to 900 million barrels in the second quarter of 2020. The world currently has about 1.5 billion barrels of available storage space, but the storage capacity is often not located where the oil is extracted, creating huge problems in terms of shipping the low-priced oil from production sites to storage sites – a problem made worse by high shipping costs. And since the overall future of oil is increasingly in doubt, companies and countries are reluctant to build more storage capacity.

All oil storage facilities in the Caribbean are already sold out. In many places, oil tankers full of oil but with no buyers for the oil sit idle, becoming for the time being storage facilities for oil rather than transporters of the product. Off the coast of Nigeria, for example, about 50 tankers sit idle, full of oil but with nowhere to go. Relatively weak countries that are over-dependent on oil exports and with little else to prop up their economies face disgruntled populations as the quality of economic and social life deteriorates. Iran, Nigeria and Venezuela are particularly vulnerable.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## MARCH AFTERNOON WITH SUN

In the parkette  
(Please read: "*We can't afford  
to build a park*")  
The mummified thatch  
Of last year's lawn  
Lies glass strewn  
Shit strewn strewn  
With skeletons of meals.

A quirky winter tantrum  
Will return  
Reinterring all the spoor of us  
In shapeful white –  
And yet I sit  
Breathing autumnal dandruff  
Acting in a simple play  
Of spring.

John Butler

## UK SEAGRASS MEADOW RESTORATION

Seagrass meadows were once common along the British coast, but 92% have disappeared because of algae-boosting pollution, anchor damage, and port and marina building. Seagrasses occupy 0.1% of the seafloor, yet are responsible for 11% of the organic carbon buried in the ocean. Seagrass meadows, along with mangroves and coastal wetlands, store carbon 35 times faster than tropical rainforests. Seagrass meadows harbor up to 40 times more marine life than seabeds without grass. These facts are driving an effort the effort to bring them back.

Modestly spearheading seagrass restoration activities is Seagrass Ocean Rescue, a charity that is restoring seagrass in an experimental two hectare area in collaboration with local people in Dale in West Wales. Over the coming years Seagrass Ocean Rescue aims to inspire future major projects in other areas to restore the UK's seagrass meadows for the sake of climate, fisheries and coastal livelihoods. The charity is highly collaborative, working closely with its founding partners Sky Ocean Rescue, the World Wildlife Federation, Cardiff University, Swansea University and Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum,

Seagrass Ocean Rescue has also developed Seagrass Spotter, a conservation and education tool that could lead to new discoveries about seagrass. The tool allows "citizen scientists" such as scuba divers, snorkelers, beachcombers and fishers across the world to identify seagrass habitats and to monitor seagrass growth or decline. What will emerge is a more comprehensive picture of seagrass meadows around the globe. The global reach of the project is important in part because seagrass meadows provide vital nutrition for close to three billion people, and 50% of animal protein to 400 million people in the third world. Seagrass Ocean Rescue's website is at <https://www.projectseagrass.org/seagrass-ocean-rescue>.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## SURPRISE SURPRISE: ELECTRIC CARS ARE GOOD

Fears that electric cars could actually increase carbon emissions are unfounded in almost all parts of the world, new research shows.

Media reports have regularly questioned whether electric cars are really "greener" once emissions from production and generating their electricity are taken into account. But a study by the universities of Exeter, Nijmegen and Cambridge has concluded that electric cars lead to lower carbon emissions overall, even if electricity generation still involves substantial amounts of fossil fuel.

The researchers carried out a life-cycle assessment in which they not only calculated greenhouse gas emissions generated when using cars and heating systems, but also in the production chain and waste processing.

Under current conditions, driving an electric car is better for the climate than conventional gas-fueled cars in 95% of the world, the study finds. The only exceptions are places like Poland, where electricity generation is still mostly based on coal.

Average lifetime emissions from electric cars are up to 70% lower than gasoline cars in countries like Sweden and France (which get most of their electricity from renewables and nuclear), and around 30% lower in the U.K.

In a few years, even inefficient electric cars will be less emission-intensive than most new gasoline cars in most countries, as electricity generation is expected to be less carbon-intensive than today.

The study projects that in 2050, every second car on the streets will be electric, reducing global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 1.5 gigatons per year – equivalent to the total current CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of Russia.

The study also looked at electric household heat pumps, and found they too produce lower emissions than fossil-fuel alternatives in 95% of the world. Heat pumps could reduce global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2050 by up to 0.8 gigatons per year – equal to Germany's current annual emissions.

Said Dr. Florian Knobloch of the Environmental Science Department at the University of Nijmegen (The Netherlands), the lead author of the study:

*"The idea that electric vehicles or electric heat pumps could increase emissions is essentially a myth. Even in our worst-case scenario, there would be a reduction in emissions in almost all cases. This insight should be very useful for policy-makers. Taking into account emissions from manufacturing and ongoing energy use, it's clear that we should encourage the switch to electric cars and household heat pumps without any regrets,"*



# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## CRUD-SHIFTING HAS A HISTORY

The practice of trying to solve our environmental problems by simply moving them somewhere else has a hoary history, evidenced by this news item from a smoky March, 117 years ago:

**Markdale Standard, March 19, 1903 (page 6):**

### **“SMOKELESS LONDON**

***The curious suggestion that it may be practicable to remove the smoke of great cities in a manner somewhat resembling that in which their sewage is disposed of has been recently made by Dr. W. N. Shaw. He calculates that about 7,000,000 tons of smoky air would have to be removed from London every day in order to keep its atmosphere clean. It takes 1,000,000 tons of water a day to carry off the sewage of London. Five hundred electrically-driven fans, each delivering 200,000 cubic feet of air per minute, would carry off all the household smoke.”***

A few weeks later, on April 9, that same newspaper cited a much more local form of pollution:

***“If you want to see a genuine set of rubber necks take notice to the tobacco-expectorating line-up that hold down McFarland, Stafford & Co.’s corner next Sunday night as the people are passing from church.”***

## FACTS THAT HELP YOU CHANGE THE WORLD

A year ago, Chesapeake Energy, a leading producer of natural gas in the U.S., was showing signs of financial stress and its stock price was near an all-time low of us\$2.60. The stock is now worth less than us\$0.20 a share.

source: Desmog Blog, March 15, 2020

Aviation represents 1% of the global economy but it's 8% of global oil consumption.

source: Fatih Birol, CEO, International Energy Agency

Sustainable investment funds – called Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) funds because they screen investments for ethical and social standards and transparent governance practices – have outperformed conventional funds this month. With a crash in oil and stock prices battering the value of financial assets, ESG funds seem to be faring better than traditional funds that might previously have been considered safer bets. According to a Bloomberg analysis, the average ESG fund fell by about 12% this year – about half the decrease seen by the S&P 500 Index over the same period. An analysis of about 200 U.S. funds by Morningstar, a financial services firm, found that ESG funds have taken a hit but are faring better than their conventional counterparts and are overrepresented in the top quartiles of their peer groups in terms of their performance.

source: Naveena Sadasivam in *Grist*, March 23, 2020

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## OUR READERS KNOW A THING OR TWO: TURNING “ME” INTO “WE”

Nicholas (Nick) Clayton, a reader from The Blue Mountains, has been thinking about questions many climate activists are asking – **“Why not us? Why does the world pull out all the stops for one threat but not the other?”** Nick’s analysis (below) is well worth a careful read:

### A Tale of Two Crises

The coronavirus pandemic is a crisis with global economic, political and public health implications.

Climate change is a crisis with global economic, political, environmental and public health implications.

Despite their similarities, the response to each of these crises could not be more different. With each unprecedented announcement from government and health officials in response to the pandemic, the stark contrast in the response to each of these two crises is thrown into sharp relief.

Many countries are on a wartime footing over COVID-19, with governments seizing emergency powers, redirecting resources, closing borders, shutting down economies, and directing the way citizens behave. This level of intervention is necessary and proportionate to the potential severity of the problem. The response to the climate crisis is comparatively weak, its defining characteristics being doubt, denial, and delay.

In Canada, it is encouraging to see government and health officials being guided by evidence, experience and expertise. This crisis may well serve to reestablish trust in institutions and evidence-based policy, as the coronavirus will prove indifferent to misinformation, populist sentiment, and conspiracy theories.

The evidence and expertise also exist in support of climate action, yet the emergency response has been comparatively weak, hindered by widespread disinformation and ideological opposition.

Public support for the government’s response to the coronavirus pandemic is notably split along party lines. This disagreement is not at all reflected in the unified, non-partisan response from political leaders, who have consistently demonstrated leadership by doing what is in the public interest, even though it may be unpopular.

The same partisan dynamic exists in popular opinion regarding climate change, yet the necessary non-partisan response to the climate crisis in Canada does not yet exist, the lone holdout being the Conservative party.

In an attempt to reduce the financial consequences of effective public safety measures of self-isolating and social distancing, a multi-billion dollar aid package for businesses and workers has been announced.

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

There is no multi-billion dollar aid package attached to a timely energy transition to renewables that includes compensation for affected oil industry workers. The carbon tax is a step in the right direction, but even it is significantly offset by massive fossil fuel subsidies.

Our borders are now closed to non-essential travel to support our efforts at containing the spread of COVID-19.

Why are we not demonstrating global leadership by imposing a carbon levy on imports to Canada in support of what we are trying to achieve with the carbon tax? It would create a more honest accounting of our emissions and also send a clear signal to our trading partners.

Individuals are making personal sacrifices for the greater good, paradoxically showing care for one another by maintaining distance. How can we rally this sense of self-sacrifice and “caremongering” in support of climate action?

The truth is, all the elements of a proper response to the climate crisis exist within the Green New Deal. We have the requisite evidence to enact an emergency response, and in fact, the number of emergency declarations grows by the day.

What it comes down to, plain and simple, is urgency. The climate crisis won't potentially infect tens of thousands of people in our country, overwhelming hospitals, leading to avoidable deaths in the coming weeks and months. Even though it is officially a crisis, the effects of climate change are always farther along than the next election cycle, effectively decoupling the risks from the benefits of climate action for political leaders and citizens.

Nobody should take any comfort in what is happening in our world now, unless it is something that leads to a better world. One potent example is the spirit that emerges when people answer the call to a common cause, and the intangible feeling that comes with being a part of something larger than ourselves, turning “me” into “we”.

Nicholas Clayton

## Editor's note:

During a discussion with Nick Clayton, your Beloved Editor mentioned a seminal essay from 1906 by philosopher and educator William James entitled *The Moral Equivalent of War*. Nick felt that other **Village Green** readers might find it interesting. James' essay is online at <https://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Pajares/moral.html> .

The core of the essay is James' argument that human urges that we satisfied throughout history by warfare must, in future, be expressed through peaceful mass methods of making the world better – an argument made all the more poignant because it was expressed eight years before the start of the First World War's carnage. Your Editor agrees with a disclaimer at the beginning of the online version – a disclaimer that highlights an unfortunate reality: a good idea, articulated ahead of its time, may come to us wrapped in the prejudices of its time:

*“Though some phrases grate upon modern ears, particularly the assumption that only males can perform such service, several racially-biased comments, and the notion that the main form of service should be viewed as a ‘warfare against nature’, it still sounds a rallying cry for service in the interests of the individual and the nation.”*

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

## OUR READERS KNOW A THING OR TWO: DISEASE AS PARABLE

One of the mantras of climate action is “follow the science”. While this is undeniably true, there is also both necessity and room in climate action for parables couched in literary terms. Today’s horrific juxtaposition of a pandemic and the health of the planet led a dear reader, Jean-Loup Dalle, to translate from the French one such recent parable. Says Jean-Loup, “I translated this story coming from France, which is closely related to St. Exupery’s ‘Le Petit Prince et le Renard’”. Here it is, translated from **Texte de Nana, L’Art d’être soi**:

### A conversation between Planet & Coronavirus in November 2019

**Corona:** *Why would you put me inside a Pangolin?*

**Planet:** *This animal, Corona, is an endangered species. However, humans continue to hunt and eat it... This will be my first step.*

**C:** *Ok, Planet. Why shall I start in China?*

**P:** *China is the symbol of globalization and mass production, dear Little One. This country is overcrowded, and polluted.*

**C:** *That’s true, Planet... But in the same time, many other countries find some financial interests in it, right?*

**P:** *Yes, Little One. That’s why your mission is to spread yourself all over the world, especially in countries that subscribe to this system, like Europe, USA, and the oil producing states...*

**C:** *How would you dress me up, Planet?*

**P:** *I will dress you up as a Virus that will infect the respiratory system.*

**C:** *But why the respiratory system, Planet?*

**P:** *Hey Little One, you see, these days Humans are hurting me. Their pollution is out of control and they don’t grasp the severity of it. What more symbolic than focusing on breathing? You get it, Little One?*

**C:** *Yes I do. But does that mean that I will be dangerous, Planet?*

**P:** *You will not be any more dangerous than all kind of existing diseases, and actually, less than pollution itself, which kills thousands of people! But the difference is that YOU will be visible...*

**C:** *OK, Planet. But do you really think it is going to work? I don’t really get it!*

**P:** *Wait, Little One. This is why I will make you extremely contagious. You will spread like the wind. The speed of your propagation will be far more superior than you think.*

**C:** *But if I am not that dangerous, do you think they will be afraid of me?*

**P:** *Oh yes! Trust me on that one! That is exactly what I am counting on to change their behavior: FEAR. Fear is the very foundation of human behavior.*

**C:** *Really?*

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

---

Number Twenty, March 27, 2020

**P:** Yes, and I will even add a twist to amplify fear and awareness.

**C:** What?

**P:** You'll see, Little One, Fear will prevail so much that they will be confined in their own home. The world will stop. Schools and public spaces will close. People will stop going to work. Cruise ships, planes, trains will be empty...

**C:** Oh la la! Planet, you are going too far!! What are hoping to accomplish with all that?

**P:** Hoping that the world will change, Little One. Hoping that Mother Nature will at last be respected! Hoping that people will start to understand the human stupidity, the foolishness of their way of living, and, hopefully, they will stop and start thinking about all that... Would they stop rushing everywhere? Would they start discovering they have a family, and spend time with their kids? Would they start to reconnect with themselves, and their love ones? Because, Little One, THAT is essential...

**C:** I understand, but would it create chaos for the economy?

**P:** Oh Yes, for sure, Little One, but we have no choice. We have to hit where it hurts most. And, eventually, they will wake up and become aware of the absurdity of what they have become. People will have to return to a more minimalist way of life, shop local, and help each other.

**C:** Planet, how am I going to spread around?

**P:** Easy. By human contacts, when they kiss and touch each other.

**C:** You lost me now, Planet. You want to bring them together, and now you spread them apart!

**P:** Look, Little One, do you see how humans interact with each other? Do you think there is still a link between them? The link is merely virtual, through a screen. Even when they go for a walk, their eyes are glued to their phone... Apart from kissing each other, there is not much left... So, I will remove that last link, push their limit by confining them in their home, betting that, at the beginning, they will saturate themselves on computer time, but after a few days, they will wake up, open their eyes... Discover they have families, neighbors... and they will open their windows just to observe Mother Nature...

**C:** Yikes Planet! You are hitting them hard! Wouldn't you give them some warning?

**P:** Corona, I tried many times before you, but I guessed, I hit here and there, I was too soft...

**C:** Are you sure they will understand this time?

**P:** I don't know Corona... But I do hope... Mother Nature is in danger... If this is not enough to save her, I have plenty Little Ones up my sleeves... But I trust you, Corona... Your work will have a speedy repercussion worldwide... We will notice a drastic reduction of pollution and the humans will start to think about it. They are smart. I trust their potential for awareness and creativity. They will be forced to witness that, when the world comes to a stop, we can start to breathe easily, our free time is a better luxury than money. We need a crash and burn, Little One, because we must stop this spinning wheel... Go, Little One, go, it's your turn now!

**C:** Thank you Planet... I am on my way to China!

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# THE VILLAGE GREEN

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## SHE SAID / HE SAID

***“The paradoxes pile up today. We're forced to understand our common humanity, an understanding made possible technologically as never before. Yet we are forced to stay away from one another.”***

Tom Roberts, Executive Editor, *National Catholic Reporter*, March 20, 2020

***“If growing up in the shortage-ridden Soviet economy taught me anything, it's that you can't outsmart malfunctioning lines of supply and demand: you never knew what would disappear next, and even with things you guessed right, you'd eke out your supply as you might, but eventually run out.***

***The one thing that's worth stockpiling is decency, that silver lining of our lives back in the USSR, with its near-permanent state of national emergency. Today, where decency has taken a beating over the past four years, it might mean something as straightforward as not buying both of the last two loaves of bread, not forwarding that doomsday chain email, and not going out even if you are healthy.”***

Anastasia Edel, *New York Times*, March 17, 2020

***“Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you  
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,  
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger.”***

From the poem *Lost*, by David Wagoner

**we start the spring  
in our everyday clothes...  
me and the sparrow**

Kobayashi Issa (1763 -1828)

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