

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number thirty-two, May 30, 2021

Do you want to know what local environmental ecological and climate events (on-line and in person) have been scheduled for Grey, Bruce and environs?

**They're listed and described at Grey Bruce Climate Action's event listing:
<https://greybruceclimateaction.ca/events>,
where you can also add your own organization's upcoming events.**

MEAFORD GROUP GIVES POLLINATORS A LEG UP

If you eat every day, you need pollinators – the bees, flies, butterflies, moths, beetles, hummingbirds and small mammals that transfer pollen from one plant to another, allowing plants to reproduce and to grow the fruit and vegetables we eat and the flowers that grace our yards and tables. We have thousands of pollinator species to thank (800 bee species alone in Canada) for doing the work for us.

Pollinators are in trouble world-wide, and Transition Meaford's volunteers want their neighbors, friends and fellow citizens to work with them to do something local about the problem during Canada's National Pollinator Week, from June 21 to 27.

First, Meafordites and guests are invited to visit and enjoy the four public pollinator gardens – four healthy lunch counters for pollinators – created by volunteers from Transition Meaford for display during Pollinator Week. Each garden contains plants that attract pollinators. Each garden will flourish in locations across Meaford, some in a used canoe, decorated, refurbished and reborn as a garden planter. *“Canoes are practical and fun places for these gardens,”* says Transition Meaford volunteer and David Suzuki Foundation Butterfly Ranger Elizabeth Brims, *“but they're also a symbol of the journey we all need to make to preserve the beauty, practicality and necessity of our environment.”*

Meaford's pollinator gardeners want to help others to create gardens for pollinators too. At various locations in town, seed packages, instructions and educational material will be available (donations welcome) for people who want to create pollinator garden plots.

“The bad news is that pesticides, diseases and loss of habitat are killing pollinators everywhere” said Transition Meaford volunteer Simona Freibergova. *“The good news is we can do something about it, starting here, starting now, starting with all of us.”*

These are the sites of the pollinator gardens:

- Bayfield Street behind the fountain
- Grey Heron Nursery
- Meaford Community Gardens
- Meaford Museum.

This is where seed kits and instructions can be obtained by donation:

- Meaford Library
- Grey Heron Nursery
- Chamber of Commerce
- McGinty Café
- Fiddlehead Nursery, Kimberley.

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ONTARIO CLEAN AIR ALLIANCE HOSTS PETITION TO END GAS-FIRED POWER PLANTS

The Ontario Clean Air Alliance has mounted a petition to the leaders of all parties in the Ontario Legislature calling for an end to gas-fired power plants in the province. Says the petition:

“Please protect our climate by phasing out Ontario’s gas plants. We can lower our electricity bills and our climate impact by importing clean water power from Quebec and by investing in energy efficiency and made-in-Ontario renewable energy.”

The petition can be signed at <https://www.cleanairalliance.org/hampipe/>.

According to the Alliance, greenhouse gas pollution from Ontario’s gas-fired power plants will increase by more than 300% by 2030, and by 500% or more by 2040 as the province uses gas to replace aging nuclear plants and to meet growing demand for electricity from population growth and increased electrification for electric cars and home heating. If this occurs, says the Alliance, Ontario will lose roughly 40% of the pollution reduction benefits it achieved by phasing-out its dirty coal plants.

The Alliance also announced that on May 25th, Oakville became the 27th municipality to pass a resolution calling on Premier Ford to phase-out Ontario’s gas-fired power plants. These 27 municipalities are home to just over half of Ontario’s population. A list of the municipalities that have endorsed a gas power phase-out is at <https://www.cleanairalliance.org/ontario-municipalities-that-have-endorsed-gas-power-phase-out/>.

No municipalities in Grey and Bruce Counties have passed such a resolution, but the nearby communities of Orangeville and Barrie have done so.

FEDS FUND LAKE SUPERIOR CLIMATE ACTION FIELD SCHOOL

Thanks to a c\$135,000 grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada, researchers at Algoma University, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, the University of Minnesota at Duluth and the Michigan Technical University will create the Lake Superior Climate Action Field School, giving students the opportunity to learn from climate leaders and take part in 14 workshops and nine site visits across Lake Superior’s watershed. Said Algoma University:

“The field school will be implemented using a hybrid virtual and on-site design that will include hubs in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Houghton, and Duluth. Participants in each hub will meet in person daily, conduct independent site visits, digitally document the experiences, and connect to share across hubs virtually for workshops... Our goal is to connect, learn with, and inspire emerging leaders and their communities to catalyze climate action across the Lake Superior Watershed.”

McMASTER PRESIDENT: DIVEST

McMaster University’s President David Farrar has asked the university’s Board of Governors to put in place a strategy to divest fossil fuels from the university’s institutional investment pool as soon as possible. Climate change and sustainability were consistent themes in consultations held with the McMaster community throughout last year to inform the university’s new vision statement and strategic plan. Said Farrar:

“Students, faculty and staff want to find ways to address climate change through our research, scholarship and academic programming and also through the actions taken on our campus to reduce our carbon footprint, develop and promote clean energy and promote

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clean technologies, reduce waste and engage in energy reduction initiatives. "It is necessary, alongside our carbon reduction activities, to confirm that we want to be a leader in these areas and so today I asked the university's Board of Governors to work with us to put in place a strategy to divest fossil fuels from our institutional investment pool as soon as possible."

GIZMO CORNER: CANADIANS BREW SYNTHETIC FUEL

Carbon Engineering, a Canadian company, makes a liquid fuel by sucking CO₂ from the air and combining it with hydrogen from water, in a pilot project that has been running since 2015 in Squamish B.C. and described recently in the energy journal *Joule*. The company calls this an engineering breakthrough on two fronts: a potentially cost-effective way to take CO₂ from the atmosphere to fight climate change, and a potentially cost-competitive way to make gasoline, diesel or jet fuel that doesn't add CO₂ to the atmosphere. *"This isn't going to save the world from the impacts of climate change, but it's going to be a big step on the path to a low-carbon economy,"* said Carbon Engineering's founder David Keith.

He said capturing CO₂ from the air and making fuel took eight years of engineering to get the process right, including keeping the costs below c\$100 per tonne of CO₂ removed from the atmosphere. The cost of CO₂ removal through direct air capture has been c\$600 per tonne, too much to be useful in sucking large amounts of CO₂ from the atmosphere. *"Our paper shows the costs and engineering for a full-scale plant that could capture one million tons of CO₂ a year,"* Keith said. Annually, burning fossil fuels globally produces 40 billion tonnes of atmospheric CO₂.

Even at c\$100 per tonne, there aren't enough CO₂ capture buyers yet, so Carbon Engineering decided to make a carbon-neutral liquid fuel, said CEO Steve Oldham. The process uses lots of electricity, and the Squamish pilot plant uses hydro power. The company says when the fuel burns it emits the same amount of CO₂ that went into making it, rendering it carbon neutral.

"It costs more than a barrel of oil right now, but in places with a price on carbon of \$200 a ton, like what's enabled through California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard, we're competitive," said Oldham.

The company is building a larger plant to produce 200 barrels of synthetic fuel a day.

ONTARIO ADDS TOOL TO REPORT POLLUTERS

On May 19 Ontario's Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks announced it will launch a user-friendly online tool so the public can report incidents of pollution in real-time from a smartphone. Using the tool, users will be able to capture a wide range of information from the scene, including photographs, audio files and videos. They will also be able to create a secure login so they can receive real-time status updates on the incident after it has been reported.

The public can also visit www.ontario.ca/reportpollution and fill out a simple form to report immediately if they witness:

- pollution (e.g. solvents, oil, fuels or chemicals) on land, in the water or air
- industrial or commercial noise pollution
- waste being dumped into the natural environment
- improper disposal of commercial waste.

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ASSISTED COLONIZATION: OPPORTUNITY OR RISK?

Humans who claim to be nature's protectors will increasingly face a dilemma as some species, find their homelands uninhabitable because of global warming and can't move to new habitats without our help. A species may need to move north, for instance, to find a cooler place to live, but it might be separated from a new home by mountains, waterways or urban belts.

A recent paper from the Yale School of the Environment titled *Amid Climate Pressures, a Call for a Plan to Move Endangered Species*, point out that people could help species reach suitable environments, but long experience has made conservationists cautious about such actions. Introducing a species into a new area (an action called *assisted colonization*) can damage or even extinguish species already in that area. Yet to simply watch helplessly as a species dies because of climate change has ruined its home doesn't seem palatable.

Recently, some ecologists have proposed that at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, slated for China in October, nations should agree on guidelines for assisted colonization that could be used to consistently and explicitly weigh the risks in potential assisted colonization projects. If we feel the need to play God, we should at least have common divine rules for it. The Yale paper exploring assisted colonization is at <https://e360.yale.edu/features/amid-climate-pressures-a-call-for-a-plan-to-move-endangered-species>.

LITERATE TURTLE ASKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

A public service message from Tutu the Turtle (with thanks to Joyce Hall of the Grey Highlands Climate Action Group, who moves at a much faster pace than Tutu).

The sun's begun its warming.
The trees are leafing green.
I give to you this warning:
We turtles have been seen!

Mothers leaving their abode,
Because it's time, you see,
To lay our eggs by the road...
Please hear my urgent plea!

We turtles need your kindness,
On these perilous days;
And even offer guidance,
To stop and clear the way.

But even just to see us,
When driving in your car,
Needs your close attention,
To see us from afar.

No, we're not a lump of dirt.
We cannot run or hide.
We only want to get to...
Shelter, yonder side.

So good and gentle people,
We urge you, Stay Alert!
Don't let your cars be lethal.
No one wants to see us hurt.

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CHINA'S POST-PANDEMIC EMISSIONS SPIKE

The growth rate of China's carbon emissions in the first quarter of 2021 was the fastest year-on-year in more than a decade, according to an analysis published by Carbon Brief. The surge followed a sharp emissions drop in China last year due to COVID-19. China's post-pandemic economic rebound more than made up for the decline, pushing emissions to a record high. The findings came after seven Chinese regions were criticized by China's state planning body when their energy intensity (energy use per unit of GDP) had increased rather than falling: authorities instructed all officials to meet their energy-control targets.

ONE HUNDRED NOBEL LAUREATES: "KEEP FOSSIL FUELS IN THE GROUND"

One hundred Nobel Prize winners recently signed a letter condemning the continued extraction and use of fossil fuels. Said the letter, in part:

"As Nobel Laureates from peace, literature, medicine, physics, chemistry and economic sciences, and like so many people around the globe, we are seized by the great moral issue of our time: the climate crisis and commensurate destruction of nature. Climate change is threatening hundreds of millions of lives, livelihoods across every continent and is putting thousands of species at risk. The burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil, and gas – is by far the major contributor to climate change..."

Qualifications for being on the right side of history are clear. For far too long, governments have lagged, shockingly, behind what science demands and what a growing and powerful people-powered movement knows: urgent action is needed to end the expansions of fossil fuel production; phase out current production; and invest in renewable energy... Egregious industry practices have led to human rights violations and a fossil fuel system that has left billions of people without sufficient energy to lead lives of dignity.

For both people and the planet, continued support must be given to tackling climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement... Yet, the Paris Agreement has no mention of oil, gas or coal. Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry continues to plan new projects. Banks continue to fund new projects. According to the most recent United Nations Environment Programme report, 120% more coal, oil, and gas will be produced by 2030 than is consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C. We call on world leaders to work together in a spirit of international cooperation to:

- *End new expansion of oil, gas and coal production in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and United Nations Environment Program;*
- *Phase out existing production of oil, gas and coal in a fair equitable way, taking into account the responsibilities of countries for climate change and their respective dependency on fossil fuels, and capacity to transition;*
- *Invest in a transformational plan to ensure 100% access to renewable energy globally, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable people and communities across the globe to flourish through a global just transition."*

The open letter and list of 100 signatories is at <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/nobel-letter>. A similar open letter was recently launched by scientists, academics and researchers around the world. Several thousand have already signed it.

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Its opening paragraph says:

"We, the undersigned, call on governments around the world to adopt and implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, as a matter of urgency, to protect the lives and livelihoods of present and future generations through a global, equitable phase out of fossil fuels in line with the scientific consensus to not exceed 1.5°C of warming".

STRESSED ECO-MOMS HAVE AN ESCAPE HATCH

Jen Gale, a British environmental activist who provides sustainable living advice (with a dollop of humor) through her website, "sustainable(ish)", found at <https://www.asustainablelife.co.uk/>, has added a new feature for beleaguered women, **The Knackered Mums Eco Club**, at a cost of £99 per year. Gale defines the audience for this new initiative this way:

- **Knackered?**
- **Want to 'do something' to help stop the planet from going to hell in a handcart but not entirely sure where to start?**
- **Put off from joining 'eco' groups for fear of being hit over the head with the big green judgy stick for not being perfectly green?**

COME JOIN THE KNACKERED MUMS ECO CLUB!

Gale says the Club provides these services to its members:

- a virtual clubhouse (a FaceBook group)
- monthly action themes
- monthly webinars
- monthly small group coaching
- downloadable planners
- a book club
- an online library.

The Club webpage is at <https://www.asustainablelife.co.uk/knackered-mums-eco-club/>

VATICAN LAUNCHES GREEN ACTION PLATFORM

In June 2015 Pope Francis issued *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*, an encyclical published as a book in which he critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, decries environmental degradation and global warming, and calls for "swift and unified global action". The Vatican recently announced an unfolding Action Platform to implement *Laudato Si's ideas*, with the intention of eliciting concrete climate actions from Catholic parishes and institutions this autumn. The work of the Action Platform, whose website is at <https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/action-platform/>, is driven by seven goals drawn from *Laudato Si'*:

1. **Response to the Cry of the Earth** (e.g. greater use of clean renewable energy, reduce fossil fuel user to achieve carbon neutrality, protect and promote biodiversity, and guarantee access to clean water for all)
2. **Response to the Cry of the Poor** (e.g. defense of human life especially vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants and children at risk through slavery)
3. **Ecological Economics** (e.g. sustainable production, fair trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any harmful economic activity, and investment in renewable energy)

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4. **Adoption of Simple Lifestyles** (e.g. sobriety in using resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation)
5. **Ecological Education** (e.g. re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform to create ecological awareness and action, and promote the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education)
6. **Ecological Spirituality** (e.g. recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, and develop ecological prayer and retreats)
7. **Emphasize Community involvement and participatory action to care for creation at local, regional, national and international levels** (e.g. promote advocacy and people's campaigns, and encourage rootedness in local territory and in neighborhood ecosystems).

The Vatican's renewed emphasis on climate change action may be in part a defensive reaction against increasing pressure from conservative Catholicism – a revolt against what some Catholics see as too much church involvement in worldly matters. In the words of leading Catholic conservative David G Bonagura Jr. in his recent essay *On Being In, Not Of, the World*:

"Modernity, however, has embraced 'the world' as its god, a consequence of its repudiation of the things that are above. Salvation now is indulging in the world's allurements and political causes. What was once immoral now is promoted actively in schools, while evil has been reduced to 'systemic injustices' remote from most people's daily lives. With this fatal shift has come the absorption of many Catholics into 'the world' so that there is seemingly little difference between them and everyone else in terms of how they live."

TWO U.S. ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CALL FOR CARBON TAX

At a May 15 online conference held by Citizens Climate Lobby, a nonpartisan climate advocacy organization that for years has pushed the U.S. Congress to put a price on carbon, two Roman Catholic bishops argued that a carbon tax is necessary.

Bishop John Stowe of Lexington Kentucky said a carbon tax is *"one very concrete and effective way of bringing action that will have an impact...It is a fair way of placing the burden on those who are responsible, as well as offering incentives for changes to a more green economy,"* Stowe pledged to study various carbon tax initiatives and to write his congressional representatives on the issue. He encouraged other Catholics to do the same.

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego also backed the idea of a carbon tax on coal, oil and gas companies, to be redistributed to Americans as a dividend. McElroy said it is the responsibility of people of faith to "raise the alarm" about climate change and demand solutions from public officials. *"The carbon tax is a central element of that, because it's a way of ensuring, in an economically sound manner, that the carbon we put into the atmosphere is reduced in the years to come. It's entirely doable"* he said. As well, Fr. Joshtrom Kureethadam, head of the Vatican's ecology and creation sector, called divestment a moral imperative:

"Fossil fuels are causing the climate crisis and destroying our planet. Still, we keep on investing in the dirty fossil fuels. It is a physical imperative that we change course, that we divest. Science dictates us this course. It is also a moral imperative. Our own brothers and sisters around the world are already suffering due to the climate crisis, and we cannot push them to greater sufferings. It is also a theological imperative. Earth is God's creation entrusted to our stewardship. We need to take care of God's creation. So let us be courageous. Let us divest."

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CATHOLIC BISHOPS IN ENGLAND AND WALES CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales have added their voices to the climate action movement. Said the bishops in their joint *Pastoral Letter on the Environment for Pentecost* (<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/pastoral-letter-environment-pentecost/>):

“For all too long we have either been ignorant of, or ignored, the systematic exploitation of our planet and the unsustainable consumption of its resources. While accepting the crucial need and demand for energy for the benefit of the poorest of our brothers and sisters, the provision of our energy must, nonetheless, be by means which radically reduce the use of carbon-based fuels. In our political thinking, there must be a new global understanding of our world, where nations recognise our common responsibility for the dignity of all people and their rights to sustainable livelihoods, in authentic freedom... But we cannot leave the healing of our common home and the wellbeing and care of our brothers and sisters merely to a response from industry and governments. Our own local concern and action is necessary and has far-reaching consequences. We all have a part to play, each and every one of us, in the routines, choices and decisions of our everyday lives and our aspirations for the future. The actions of parishes, families, schools, and individuals will have a significant impact on our efforts to restore our common home. There are now many resources, freely available, to advise us on our choice of food, saving of water and electricity, suggestions about travel, waste, and re-use.”

AMAZON OWL NAMED AFTER ENVIRONMENTAL MARTYR

Researchers from Brazil, Finland and the U.S. recently discovered a new species of screech owl in the Amazon forest. Dubbed the Xingu screech owl, the little creature was given the scientific name “*Megascops stangiae*” in honor of the late Sister Dorothy Stang, a U.S.-born Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. Sister Stang was assassinated in 2005 in Anapu, Brazil, while fighting for the Amazon forest and its people. Her congregation and the researchers who discovered the species say naming the owl after the woman who dedicated her life fighting for Amazonia is fitting. Said Sister Stang’s friend, Sister Judith Clemens:

“She liked everything about nature, but at night, we would sit outside the house, look up at the sky and listen to the music of nature. I think it is so beautiful that an owl, which is a nocturnal animal and a symbol of great wisdom, is the animal to honor her. Dorothy had that kind of wisdom. The tribute is symbolic of her life, her insistence on (fighting) deforestation and what deforestation did to all animals. She used to cry when she heard a monkey crying because there was no forest for them anymore.”

A SUSTAINABLE AMAZON?

In the last half century an area in the Amazon bigger than Texas and Pennsylvania combined has been razed, reducing the forest’s area by some 20%, mostly to make room for cattle ranches, soy farms and illegal mines. Describing this devastation, a recent article in *Americas Quarterly* says

“Today, we know this was a disastrous growth model for the planet – but also for the 35 million people who live in the Amazon basin, which includes parts of eight countries. Whatever profits came from destroying the forest went to a miniscule number of ranchers and companies. In the Brazilian Amazon, residents have incomes 40% lower than the

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national average, while suffering higher rates of unemployment and health issues. Meanwhile, a resurgence of the slash and burn model under President Jair Bolsonaro, a former Army captain still enamored by some of the former dictatorship's ill-advised ideas, has put Brazil's entire economy at risk of consumer boycotts and sanctions from a world no longer willing to tolerate such devastation."

But the article strikes a note of hopeful possibility:

"The good news is that another model is possible; one in which the standing Amazon forest is treated as a one-of-a-kind, priceless economic asset, rather than an obstacle to progress. Recent technological advances, as well as changing global consumer preferences, point to a future in which Brazil and other countries could become green superpowers, harnessing the Amazon's natural wealth to export everything from sustainably cultivated cocoa, açai and fish to promising new inputs for cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Such business, if managed the right way, could generate millions of green jobs inside and outside the region."

The article is at

<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/new-aq-the-case-for-sustainable-development-in-the-amazon/>.

PLASTIC WASTE BADDIES TRACKED BY MINDEROO FOUNDATION

Plastic Waste Makers Index, a recent report from the Minderoo Foundation, names and shames the companies responsible for plastic pollution, and the banks and investment funds that feed them. The report says single-use plastics account for most of the plastic thrown away globally – more than 130 million metric tons in 2019, almost all of which is burned, buried or discarded directly into the environment, ending up in oceans where plastics break down into tiny particles that impact wildlife health and the ocean's ability to store carbon. They also contain chemical additives such as plasticizers linked to reproductive health problems. Yet the plastics industry faces little regulation and transparency. Government policies focus on the many companies that sell finished plastic products, not on the few businesses that make five polymers (the building blocks of plastics), overwhelmingly from fossil fuels, not from plastic waste.

The report has five major findings:

1. **In 2019, just 20 polymer producers accounted for more than half of all single-use plastic waste**, and the top 100 accounted for 90%. U.S.-based ExxonMobil and Dow and China-based Sinopec topped the list. These three account for 16% of single-use plastic waste. They continue to produce virgin polymers rather than recycled polymers,
2. **Major global investors and banks are enabling the single-use plastics crisis.** Twenty institutional asset managers, led by U.S. companies Vanguard Group, BlackRock and Capital Group, hold over us\$300 billion worth of shares in the parent companies of these polymer producers. Twenty of the world's largest banks, including Barclays, HSBC and Bank of America, have lent almost us\$30 billion for production of these polymers since 2011.
3. **The collective industry hasn't transitioned from fossil-fuel-based feedstocks.** The 100 largest polymer producers rely almost exclusively on virgin (fossil-fuel-based) feedstocks. In 2019, production of recycled polymers from plastic waste – a "circular" model – accounted for only 2% of output. Over 50 of these companies received an "E" grade – the lowest possible – when assessed for circularity, indicating a complete lack of policies, commitments or targets. A further 26 companies, including ExxonMobil and Taiwan's Formosa Plastics Corporation, received a "D-" due to their lack of clear targets and timelines.
4. **Planned expansion of virgin polymer production threatens to overwhelm hopes of a circular plastics economy.** In the next five years, capacity to produce virgin polymers for single-use plastics could grow by over 30%, and up to 400% for some companies.

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5. **Single-use plastic waste is an entrenched geopolitical problem.** Ending single-use plastics will take more than corporate leadership and enlightened funders. It will require immense political will, given the high degree of state ownership of polymer producers – about 30% of the sector, by value, is state-owned. Saudi Arabia, China, and the United Arab Emirates are the top three. International action is also needed to resolve deep-rooted regional inequities. High income countries supply low and low-middle income countries with lots of polymer but these latter countries create far less single-use plastic waste per person.

The report is at <https://www.minderoo.org/plastic-waste-makers-index/findings/executive-summary/>.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING: A VULNERABLE FUTURE?

Building a charging network may require even more of a focus on cybersecurity than pipelines. The energy sector is already the third-most targeted industry when it comes to cyberattacks, according to an IBM report from February. Charging infrastructure could make matters even more dangerous because it links up two vital systems: transit and electricity. And a handful of analyses have found that breaking through charging infrastructure's cyber defenses could do widespread damage to the grid by allowing hackers to manipulate electricity flows. Hackers have already done it, most infamously crippling Ukraine's power grid in 2016, and charging infrastructure could offer more points of entry and attack options.

The International Energy Agency issued a report in October 2020 (available at <https://www.iea.org/reports/power-systems-in-transition/cyber-resilience>) warning of the risks to electric infrastructure as cars and more smart devices get integrated. It recommends that utilities ramp up cybersecurity and that government agencies dealing with energy, transportation and consumer protection work together to protect systems from cyberattacks and plan coordinated responses. It says this would be in contrast to the current approach to fossil fuel infrastructure, which includes outdated regulations, poor funding and a lack of expertise.

The need for distributed power like rooftop solar and microgrids that serve communities is vital to ensure electric vehicles and electrified public transit can continue to run. There's also a flip side: fully charged electric vehicles can function as batteries and provide power and warmth during blackouts (some Texans did this during their state's February cold-related blackouts).

EXXON BOARD: GETTING GREENISH

In a development that may be more symbolic than substantive, the activist hedge fund Engine No. 1 – an Exxon shareholder – has managed to get two climate change activists elected to Exxon's 12 member board. Engine No. 1 may have gotten two more greenies elected, but the votes have been too close to call. Engine No. 1 holds only 0.02% of Exxon's shares, but it won backing from major institutional investors including the New York Common Retirement Fund, the Church of England, the California Public Employees' Retirement System and the California State Teachers' Retirement System. Said Engine No. 1 in a recent investor presentation:

"[Exxon's] refusal to accept that fossil fuel demand may decline in decades to come has led to a failure to take even initial steps towards evolution, and to obfuscating rather than addressing long-term business risk."

The votes were hailed as a milestone in the climate battle – the first proxy campaign at a major U.S. company in which the case for change was built around the shift away from fossil fuels. Said Mark Campanale of the Carbon Tracker Initiative, *"Investors have sent a shot across the bow of Exxon, but its impact will ricochet across the boards of every major fossil fuel company."*

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DUTCH COURT: CUT EMISSIONS MORE, SHELL

The global oil company Royal Dutch Shell has been ordered by a Dutch court to slash its emissions harder and faster than planned, a blow to the company that could have far reaching consequences for the rest of the global fossil fuel industry. Shell has pledged to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 20% by 2030, and to net-zero by 2050, but the court in The Hague has ruled Shell must reduce emissions by 45% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels. The ruling is only legally binding in the Netherlands, but it may be a harbinger of what happens in other countries during an era of intensified climate change litigation. According to the www.climatecasechart.com database, there are 1,800 lawsuits related to climate change being fought in courtrooms around the world.

In another legal setback for Shell and tentative victory for the victims of corporate negligence, Britain's Supreme Court issued a unanimous judgment in *Okpabi and others v. Royal Dutch Shell* that a claim brought by 40,000 residents of two Niger Delta communities against two Shell companies over oil spills can proceed to the merits stage. The case concerns claims against the U.K. parent of the Shell group and its Nigerian subsidiary, the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC). The claimants sought compensation for oil spills from oil pipelines and associated infrastructure operated by SPDC near their communities.

CANADA AND ONTARIO RENEW GREAT LAKES PROTECTION PACT

On May 27 the Governments of Canada and Ontario announced that they have signed the new Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health. It is the ninth such agreement between the governments since the first one was signed in 1971. It sets out actions each government will take to protect and restore the Lakes, such as preventing toxic and nuisance algae, improving wastewater and stormwater management, reducing plastic pollution and excess road salt, restoring native species and habitats, and increasing resilience to climate change. The Agreement is organized around five priorities:

1. protecting waters
2. improving coastal areas
3. protecting habitat and species
4. enhancing understanding and adaptation
5. engaging communities from awareness to action.

The Agreement includes a renewed commitment to completing environmental clean-up actions with an emphasis on six historically degraded areas, conserving key habitats around the Great Lakes, and continuing to restore Lake Erie. It also includes a new focus on protecting Lake Ontario, supporting nature-based recreation opportunities, and strengthening First Nation and Métis engagement in the Agreement's implementation. The Agreement can be accessed at https://www.ontario.ca/document/canada-ontario-great-lakes-agreement?utm_source=newsroom&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=%2Fen%2Frelease%2F1000209%2Fcanada-and-ontario-mark-50th-anniversary-of-great-lakes-agreement-by-signing-ninth-agreement&utm_term=public

The Great Lakes contain 20% of the world's surface fresh water – the world's largest freshwater lake system. But population pressure is a constant threat to the Lakes. Almost 99% of Ontarians live in the Great Lakes Basin and 95% of Ontario's agricultural lands are in the Basin. The region is home to 33% of Canada's population, it contains seven of Canada's twenty largest cities, and municipal sources around the Lakes provide drinking water to 60% of Ontarians.

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IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: THE BANALITY OF CLIMATE EVIL

With egregious exceptions, I try to be charitable toward my fellow fragile humans. I have tried to think that most people who are skeptics or who are downright hostile to climate activism are merely misinformed. But I also see a civilization habituated to actions that, unabated, will kill our planet as a habitable home, and I see something that's a monstrous travesty: I see a vast cluster of sociopolitical actions that are evil – yet I've met hardly any fellow humans who I would call evil. So where does the evil lie?

I'm not the first to ask this question. It has been asked as far back as the time of the author of the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

The question *Where does evil lie?* Is asked in every movement for social reform. It lay in the movement for the abolition of slavery – a movement virtually split in two by the question, “*Are slaveholders evil, or can slaveholders be a good people living within an evil social institution?*” It lay in the temperance movement as its adherents argued whether the evils of drink lay in the brewer, the bar owner, the sot, the government sharing in liquor revenue, or “demon rum” itself.

Horrifyingly enough, the century in which I was born offers a case study in the locus of evil – the Holocaust. One of its most perceptive students was German Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, who was given almost unlimited access to former Third Reich official Adolph Eichmann while he awaited trial in Israel (Eichmann was the bureaucrat responsible for ensuring trains efficiently carried their human cargo to the death camps). Arendt had expected she would interview a monster, but finally concluded that the only extraordinary thing about Eichmann was how very ordinary he was. From this experience she coined the phrase “banality of evil” to describe the everyday, almost humdrum human actions that constitute systemic evil.

A recent essay from the Centre for Contemplation and Action describes the relevance of Arendt's findings so well that I reproduce most of it here:

“The Modern Disguise of Evil

Reporting on the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the architects of the Holocaust, the Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) used the phrase “the banality of evil.” It is a shocking phrase to many because it flies in the face of our idea that evil is demonic, monstrous, and villainous, something that everybody immediately recognizes as grotesque and terrible. Arendt's phrase actually helps explain how the Holocaust or Shoah (catastrophe) could happen. Somehow evil became commonplace. In his introduction to Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Israeli journalist Amos Elon writes:

‘[Arendt] concluded that Eichmann's inability to speak coherently in court was connected with his incapacity to think, or to think from another person's point of view... He personified neither hatred nor madness nor an insatiable thirst for blood, but something far worse, the faceless nature of Nazi evil itself ... aimed at dismantling the human personality of its victims. The Nazis had succeeded in turning the legal order on its head, making the wrong and the malevolent the foundation of a new 'righteousness.' In the Third Reich evil lost its distinctive characteristic by which most people had until then recognized it. The Nazis redefined it as a civil norm. Within this upside-down world Eichmann seemed not to have been aware of having done evil.’

As both Thomas Aquinas and C. S. Lewis taught, for evil to succeed, it must disguise itself as good, which is apparently much easier to do than we imagine.”

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If, in our world marked by the violation of our planet, evil has become commonplace, we can look for it in the corporate boardrooms of oil companies that have tried to convince us that ordinary Janes and Joes are responsible for the climate crisis because of our wasteful practices. It lies in the offices of government ministers whose policy wonks and political groupies collude to give primacy to re-election over truth. It lies in those corporate or university labs whose scientists maintain a high-minded moral neutrality while spending industry grants to find new ways to foul our nests in the pursuit of three cars per driveway and cleaner toilet bowls. And if evil is disguised as good, it lies in the minds and methods of those who preach the unassailable sanctity of the free market, even when it kills us to sell to us. It lies in the megaphones of those who tout unrestrained personal choice and liberty over collective action and over prudent restraint to save us. It lies in nationalism and provincialism that believe those who are not us are at best irrelevant and at worst the enemy.

One could well ask (and I myself ask), why does it matter whether we see evil as the symptom or product of the humdrum activities of such board members, CEOs, politicians, scientists, media socio-pundits and their ilk? Are we not better off to merely call them incorrect, or to ignore them altogether? Doesn't calling them out give them a visibility they don't deserve?

I have no quarrel with climate activists who choose to see "correct-incorrect" rather than "good-evil." I understand that narrow moralization can burn people at the stake, figuratively and literally. Yet I believe in the importance of bearing witness to evil. I also believe that a reluctance to see or point to evil can lead one to become an impotent bystander at the edge of the unspeakable. I believe we need to make the unspeakable spoken.

Yet when we call out evil, we run the risk of becoming the cult of the climate righteous. The prophetic religious reformer John Wesley put it well as a warning when he wrote *A Plain Account of the People called Methodists* in 1749:

"The thing which I was greatly afraid of all this time, and which I resolved to use every possible method of preventing, was a narrowness of spirit, a party-zeal, a being straitened in our own bowels; that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any work of God but among themselves."

Bearing witness to evil while keeping one's bowels unconstricted can be a tall order. In trying to do this (I often fail), I fall back on a phrase from my Grade Ten Catholic high school religious knowledge class, a phrase I considered ridiculous back then: "*Hate the sin but love the sinner*". I now recast that slightly as "*Hate the evil but love those enmeshed in the creation of evil*".

I'm not good at it yet. I should keep trying.

Respectfully submitted to the polis,
John Butler

SHE SAID / HE SAID

"Within a few decades, between one and three billion people will find themselves in conditions too warm for comfortable survival outside the ecological niche in which most humans have survived for the last millennia."

Philip Jenkins, *Climate, Catastrophe, and Faith: How Changes in Climate Drive Religious Upheaval*, 2021

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“Although Americans may not want to hear this, it might be best if the US is not the country leading the world through the climate crisis; it does not need to be. It can certainly decarbonize and green its economy, innovate, and mobilize both the public and private sectors to spearhead the unprecedented changes that will be required to avert a planetary catastrophe. It can also, in time, develop its normative frame for planetary stewardship and environmental justice. All these actions will be welcomed by the world.

The blinding brightness of the Made in America perspective, however, with its rivalries and contentions, attracts competitors and allies like moths to the flame, consuming time, resources, and the global will to pursue inclusive broad-based solutions. Moreover, not leading does not in any way suggest that the US withdraw from the process of engagement and goal setting. A more neutral, less polarized party would be better equipped to coordinate the effort, de-escalate tensions, and keep stakeholders engaged and transparent about their contributions and plans in response to the climate crisis. The EU has a temperament and institutional capacity much more suited to the task.”

Sofia Kalantzakos, *Energy “Realism” Is Climate Fatalism*, Public Books, May 13 2021

“The number of climate liability lawsuits worldwide and in the U.S. continues to grow. A January 2021 United Nations report tallied 1,200 cases in the U.S. and 350 other lawsuits in nearly 40 other jurisdictions worldwide – nearly double the number of lawsuits underway three years ago by the report authors’ count.”

Sharon Kelly, *New Study Decodes ExxonMobil’s ‘Modern’ Climate Misinformation*
DeSmog, May 14, 2021

"The waking of crows is most like the waking of men: querulous, noisy, raw."

Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, 1965

“Since 2016, the Global Catholic Climate Movement has championed the fossil fuel divestment movement within the church, and its divest-reinvest campaign has played a key role in declarations from roughly 250 Catholic institutions that they will end investments in coal, oil and gas industries or – if they do not invest now – continue to shun them while pursuing renewable alternatives. Catholic institutions are among the most numerous in the divestment movement, which so far has moved an estimated \$14.5 trillion away from fossil fuels. Faith-based organizations, about half of them Catholic, represent 34% of the 1,300-plus divesting groups.”

Brian Roewe, *Inside the campaign to divest the Catholic Church from fossil fuels*,
EarthBeat, May 19, 2021

“In the world we live in, money speaks loudly. Thanks to the growing divestment movement, we have seen cities, universities and entire countries, in the case of Ireland, withdrawing investments from fossil fuel assets. This isn’t only happening for ethical reasons but for practical ones as well. As clean energy continues to expand, those assets could become stranded. When money talks the world listens.”

Canadian climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe
in an interview with *The Guardian*, January 2019

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“The environmental costs of adopting new technologies and habits are often recognized too late, typically when changing the adopted technologies and behavioral norms is difficult. A similar story may unfold if society continues to blindly transition to an unregulated and environmentally unaudited digital world, a transition path that has been facilitated by the fourth industrial revolution and is now accelerated by the global COVID-19 crisis. The newly developed digital lifestyle has major environmental benefits, including the reduction of travel-related CO₂ emissions. Yet, increased Internet use has some hidden environmental impacts that must be uncovered to make the transition to a low carbon and green economy successful.”

Renee Obringer et al., *The overlooked environmental footprint of increasing Internet use*, Resources, Conservation & Recycling, January 8, 2021

“The decline of coal is not going to reverse itself. The glut of natural gas from fracking has been the primary driver that has made our nation’s aging fleet of coal-fired power plants economically uncompetitive over the past decade. And the declining cost of renewable energy is increasingly eating into coal’s market share. Nationally, coal made up only 20% of electricity generation in 2020, down from 46% in 2010. It is projected to decline to as low as 11% over the next decade, according to financial analysts at Moody’s. It is unfortunate that the West Virginia legislature recently passed up the opportunity to start the process of providing resources by rejecting a measure to create a Coal Community Comeback Plan, despite support from the United Mine Workers union and some coalfield legislators. The legislation would have directed the Public Service Commission to create a plan that uses West Virginia’s remaining coal assets efficiently, while bringing new opportunities and new resources to the state.”

newsletter, Institute For Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, May 21, 2021

“Worship in Green Groves: Tree-planting this spring should be regarded as a religious duty by every farmer in Ontario, says *Farmer’s Magazine*. So many trees have been cut down this winter that our Province will soon be a desert unless we replant.”

Markdale Standard, July 13 1921, page 5

“When I travelled to the Galápagos Islands, I met with Paula Castaño and other environmental heroes in Ecuador working day in and day out to save one of the most irreplaceable places on the planet. Around the world, the wild is declining. We have degraded three-quarters of the wild places and pushed more than one million species to the brink of extinction. More than half of Earth’s remaining wild areas could disappear in the next few decades if we don’t decisively act. The environmental heroes that the planet needs are already here. Now we all must rise to the challenge and join them.”

actor Leonardo DiCaprio, who has announced his US\$43 million pledge to implement sweeping conservation operations across the Galápagos Islands

heading straight
to the wildflowers...
sumo wrestler

Kobayashi Issa (1763 -1828)

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“GREEN LEAF FROM OLD RAG” DEPARTMENT

Dear readers,

Small-town newspapers from our past occasionally published poems, penned by local poets or provided by the syndicates that supplied much of the fill for local newspapers. These poems were seldom great art, but they often reveal a sensitivity to the natural world – the same sensitivity we crave today.

So from time to time we will republish some of these poems, drawn from the *Flesherton Advance* and the *Markdale Standard* of yore. The first of this yore-ish inscribed tribe, below, was written by one of the noted English poets of her time.

Moonlight

(*Markdale Standard*, May 31, 1923, page 2)

What time the meanest brick and stone
Take on a beauty not their own,
And past the flaw of builded wood
Shines the intention whole and good,
And all the little homes of man
Rise to a dimmer, nobler span;
When colour's absence gives escape
To the deeper spirit of the shape,

— Then do the clouds like silver flags
Stream out above the tattered crags,
And black and silver all the coast
Marshalls its hunched and rocky host,
And headlands striding sombrely
Buttress the land against the sea,
— The darkened land, the brightening wave —
And moonlight slants through Merlin's cave.

Victoria Sackville-West

For information about *The Village Green*, or to subscribe to it (free), please contact John Butler at 519 923-6335 or agora@xplornet.com