

# THE VILLAGE GREEN

Number thirty-four, June 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.**

## GREY HIGHLANDS ISSUES CLIMATE ACTION REPORT

The Grey Highlands Climate Action Committee Task Force, created by Grey Highlands Council on July 3, 2019, has issued its *Grey Highlands Climate Action Report*, available at <https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/FileStorage/D65BBCB89630459583B52CADAB61AE9F-Grey%20Highlands%20Climate%20Action%20Committee%20Task%20Force.pdf>.

After congratulating Grey Highlands departments for a number of climate-related and green initiatives they've already undertaken, the report proposes twenty priorities for the municipality:

1. Expand broadband coverage across Grey Highlands
2. Create an electric vehicle policy and electric charging stations plan
3. Create a no-idle vehicle education program
4. Explore funding opportunities intended to fund initiatives for retrofitting and providing funds for new construction of energy efficient facilities
5. Create and implement policy feedback and evaluation tools to maintain and monitor policy direction
6. Encourage the "wilding" of municipal properties and discourage or ban pesticides for nonagricultural purposes
7. Explore the creation of a municipal policy to ensure that all gardening and landscapes on municipal lands use noninvasive species that are natural to Grey Highlands
8. Implement a policy of no single use plastic bags in local stores (e.g., grocery stores).
9. Complete a Wholesome Energy Audit of all municipally owned facilities
10. Encourage new developments to be built with the best energy conservation and demand management technologies
11. Include, in the Grey Highlands Official Plan, natural heritage protection to protect plant life, shoreline, and other natural features that offset the local impact of climate change
12. Form partnerships between county and municipality to create a comprehensive plan to integrate natural heritage strategies across municipal boundaries, and collaborate with adjacent municipalities and conservation authorities to create a complete natural heritage systems linkage strategy built on recommendations from the Green to Grey study
13. Encourage new developments to be built with the best technologies to help mitigate extreme weather events
14. Harness solar energy on municipal buildings
15. Make settlement areas more walk-friendly and encourage walking and active transportation (paving road shoulders for example)
16. Support and create community gardens – for example, through use of municipal lands (the municipality is already working towards community gardens)
17. Support relationships with groups willing to work on carbon sequestering on municipal lands.

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18. Use pavement materials that produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, based on local climate and traffic
19. Develop an organic waste strategy, including a composting strategy, as part of the Grey Highlands Waste Management plan. A strategy should explore whether collecting organics in our mostly rural municipality would generate more greenhouse gases from transportation than additional benefits. The municipality might also explore composting at home.
20. Find opportunities for Grey Highlands to sequester carbon (e.g. tree-planting, soil remediation and increased use of wood in facility construction) and look at what policies the municipality could create or amend, to encourage landowners to sequester carbon.

The report suggests that when Grey Highlands staff have commented on the report, the public should be invited to submit their reactions to the report and to the staff comments before Grey Highlands Council takes action on the report.

The report also says the Committee Task Force would have liked more time to examine climate opportunities with the agriculture community, and it hopes there will be future consultation with Indigenous communities.

## **“THE LONG GREEN THREAD” BEAVER VALLEY ADVOCATES DEVELOP PRINCIPLES**

The Friends of the Beaver Valley has helped create a coalition of green organizations that plan to put forward a proposal to buy Beaver Valley lands, owned by the Town of Grey Highlands, so the lands can be used for green purposes – an alternative to private sector development of the lands. The coalition comprises four organizations:

- Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy
- Sustainable Livelihoods of Canada
- Elephant Thoughts
- Kimberley Safety Group.

These organizations have adopted a set of principle to guide the Coalition. Say the preamble and the principles:

“Our wealth can be measured by the wellness of our land -- the plant and animal species, the watershed, the unique karst topography, the section of Bruce Trail that ties us by a long green thread to other communities on the escarpment -- and the wellness of our communities. What creates a vibrant community of communities? When do citizens become more than a collection of individuals? The answer: when given the opportunity to foster and share their collective resources for mutual benefit. The Talisman Lands need to be managed as a long term public asset for the best and common good, for the lands themselves, for us as we enjoy them now, and for our children's children. The coalition's decisions on land use will use clearly defined principles that arise from our shared values. This group of conservation bodies, community-based entrepreneurs, educators, organisations and individuals will endeavor to adopt long-term and evolutionary planning, and maintain public control for community benefit through a locally-non-profit development model guided by the following principles:

### **Ownership and Management**

- Maintain land ownership by the Municipality or a non-profit development corporation in perpetuity
- Provide no individual ownership of land, but allow for leases for buildings and lands
- Use an equitable application and lottery system for tenure
- Permit no chain outlets
- Ecological Integrity

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- Support irreplaceable Beaver Valley watershed ecosystems and natural wildlife corridors
- Maintain unique physical landform features
- Protect biodiversity and species at risk
- Restore landscapes where appropriate
- Address short- and long-term impact of changes.

## **Inclusion and Accessibility**

- Seek input and guidance from local Indigenous peoples and First Nations
- Seek to enhance the lives of all members of the community
- Expand social returns and community benefit through coalition member activities
- Support diverse, local businesses who share our principles
- Require tenant and partner businesses to pay workers a living wage
- Prohibit exploitation of land, wildlife or people for personal or corporate wealth.

## **Buildings and Infrastructure**

- Integrate any new building into the Niagara Escarpment and Beaver River landscapes
- Use contemporary best practices in sustainable building, including energy use and wildlife safety
- Maintain harmony with the environment in design and materials.”

The Coalition is also cranking up its fundraising. It can now accept donations through the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (tax deductible) and through its Go Fund Me page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/nature-reserve-on-the-talisman-lands?qid=dde10a1bb217345f73263b5caead666e>.

The funds are initially for foundational work leading to the land purchase. The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy has sent a Letter of Intent to Grey Highlands Council to buy the properties and made a site visit with experts to assess buildings and properties.

## **BLUE MOUNTAINS GROUP: DITCH THE MARKET PLASTIC**

The Climate Action Now Network (CANN), a climate action group in the town of the Blue Mountains, recently sent a letter to the Blue Mountains Council to get its support in eliminating the use of single-use plastic by the local farmers’ market in Thornbury. Said CANN’s correspondence:

*“Since the weekly market is held on municipal property it seems to CANN members that it would be reasonable to request some accommodations to the climate emergency the town has declared. It would also be in keeping with the current ban on single-use plastics in town facilities. For this reason, we ask that the farmers’ market be declared a plastic-free zone,”*

Ron Barnett, manager of the Thornbury and Flesherton farmers’ markets, expressed surprise that CANN didn’t directly approach the Thornbury Farmers’ Market to discuss this issue earlier, and said he would still welcome an overture from CANN on the issue of minimizing plastic use at the Market. He said that he and the Market’s vendors are aware of legislation that will ban use of plastic bags, and the best time for the Market to work with its vendors on the issue is at the beginning of the year, when the Market is developing its annual agreements with its vendors. At this point in 2021 many vendors have already bought their bulk supplies for the season.

## **SCHOOL BOARD: SIMCOE COUNTY HAS 18 ECO-SCHOOLS**

According to a media release from the Simcoe County District School Board, 18 Simcoe County schools were awarded Ontario EcoSchool certifications this school year. Each elementary, secondary and alternative secondary school that participated in the program went above and

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beyond, adapting to the challenges of this school year to achieve certification. Ontario EcoSchools status is earned by implementing environmental initiatives within schools, including recycling programs, waste-free lunches, energy conservation programs and school ground greening projects. Certification promotes hands-on actions that students can take to make their schools more environmentally friendly.

This certification program is offered by EcoSchools Canada (<https://ecoschools.ca/>), a member of an international network of EcoSchools programs coordinated by the Foundation for Environmental Education.

## BILL C-12: ACTION PLAN OR EMPTY PROMISE?

Bill C-12 (*“An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada’s efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050”*) has passed in the House of Commons and Senate. This enactment requires that national targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada be set, to attain net-zero emissions by 2050. The targets are to be established by the Minister of the Environment for 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045. To promote transparency and accountability in meeting these targets, the act also:

- requires that an emissions reduction plan, a progress report and an assessment report with respect to each target be tabled in each House of Parliament
- provides for public participation
- establishes an advisory body to provide the Minister of the Environment with advice with respect to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and matters that are referred to it by the Minister
- requires the Minister of Finance to prepare an annual report respecting key measures that the federal public administration has taken to manage its financial risks and opportunities related to climate change
- requires the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to, at least once every 5 years, examine and report on the Government of Canada’s implementation of measures aimed at mitigating climate change
- provides for a comprehensive review of the Act five years after it comes into force.

Bill C-12 doesn’t tell Canadians how the federal government will require provinces to implement targets in the legislation – many drivers of climate change lie within provincial jurisdiction.

## SEWERS AS SAVIORS?

Denver is building the largest sewer heat-recovery project in North America, according to Enwave, a Canadian energy company set to operate the system. A sprawling complex of buildings will be heated and cooled using an adjacent sewer main whose wastewater stays at mild temperature – warmer than outside air in winter, and cooler than outside air in summer. That consistent temperature will be tapped to heat and cool aboveground buildings, using a massive heat pump housed in a nearby central plant. The device works like a reversible air conditioning unit. In winter it will transfer energy from the sewage into a clean-water loop connecting the buildings, adding heat to indoor spaces. The process can then be flipped to keep things cool in the summer.

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## NATIONAL HEALING FOREST INITIATIVE

Recent horrific public disclosures of gravesites adjacent to now-closed Aboriginal residential schools helps shine a light on one green healing movement – forests that are meant to heal. The National Healing Forest Initiative website (<https://www.nationalhealingforests.com>) outlines the organization's *"invitation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, institutions, and individuals to create green spaces across Canada to honour residential school victims, survivors, and their families, as well as murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, and children who have been removed from their families and are now caught in the welfare system."*

While the impetus to create healing forests is at the local level, the National Healing Forest Initiative provides community organizers with an electronic file to be used to create and install a National Healing Forest plaque and maintains a map of existing and future projects where stories and public outreach efforts can be shared. Healing Forest projects are in place or are being planned in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and PEI. Ontario's projects are in Toronto, two locations in Ottawa (Westboro and Manotick) and the town of Perth.

Given that the Old Durham Road Black Pioneer Cemetery Committee and its supporters have asked Grey County to buy property adjacent to the Cemetery in Grey Highlands for the purpose of establishing a commemorative and interpretive space for Grey County's historic Black settlement and settlers, perhaps (if it's not cultural appropriation) part of that commemorative space could become the site of a healing forest to honor both the Indigenous and Black components of our community heritage of suffering and achievement. The beloved shadows of their forbearers lie across this patch of land.

## SWEDEN: GEOENGINEERING TEST CANCELLED

In Issue #29 of *The Village Green* we described a planned geoengineering test that would involve launching a huge balloon into the stratosphere, carrying 600 kg. of calcium carbonate (chalk) which would be sprayed 12 miles above the Earth's surface. The chalk would, in theory, reflect some sunlight back into space and thereby slow global warming.

The proposed experiment, led by Harvard University researchers and supported by Bill Gates, has been cancelled by The Swedish Space Corporation because of concern about solar geoengineering itself, the implications of its deployment and the moral hazard it presents by detracting from global efforts to address climate change through emissions reduction. The project had been opposed by the Saami Council (an Indigenous organization) and Swedish environmental groups.

This cancellation lies within the context of continuing high-level debate about both the promise and perils of geoengineering to address climate change. In March the US National Academies of Sciences released *Reflecting Sunlight: Recommendations for Solar Geoengineering Research and Research Governance*, a report that proposed U.S. government investment of up to us\$200 million over five years in solar geoengineering research. This report calls for the US to develop a transdisciplinary research program, in collaboration with other nations, to advance understanding of solar geoengineering's technical feasibility and effectiveness, possible impacts on society and the environment, and social dimensions such as public perceptions, political and economic dynamics, and ethical and equity considerations.

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## STUDY: EUROPEAN OIL/GAS /SITES LEAK METHANE

The European office of Clean Air Task Force (CATF), an environmental advocacy group, recently used optical gas cameras to detect the typically invisible methane leaking from oil and gas infrastructures in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Romania. Europe doesn't have many oil and gas wells, but as a massive importer of fossil fuels, it has many storage tanks, pipelines and liquefied natural gas import terminals. These are the main sites where leakage occurs in Europe. The examination showed significant methane leaks at 123 of 150 sites visited. The problem was worst in Italy and Hungary. Said Alessia Virone, government affairs manager at CATF:

*"The footage reminds us that methane emission is very much a European problem, that it concerns all member states. None of the countries visited so far was exempted from it. So, if we want to really see a solution, we need to look at the European level."*

Currently, methane pollution from energy companies is not regulated by the European Union, but the EU plans to pass legislation giving it that power.

## DO-THEY-MEAN-WHAT-THEY-SAY DEPARTMENT: G7 MAKES CLIMATE COMMITMENT

In the traditional communiqué at the end of their recent meeting, G7 leaders has this to say about climate action and biodiversity:

*"The unprecedented and interdependent crises of climate change and biodiversity loss pose an existential threat to people, prosperity, security, and nature. Through global action and concerted leadership, 2021 should be a turning point for our planet as we commit to a green transition that cuts emissions, increases adaptation action worldwide, halts and reverses biodiversity loss, and, through policy and technological transformation, creates new high quality jobs and increases prosperity and wellbeing. Ahead of the 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP26) and the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD COP15), we commit to accelerating efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions. We have agreed to a shared G7 agenda for global action to protect our planet by supporting a green revolution that creates jobs, cuts emissions and seeks to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees. We commit to net zero no later than 2050, halving our collective emissions over the two decades to 2030, increasing and improving climate finance to 2025; and to conserve or protect at least 30 percent of our land and oceans by 2030. We acknowledge our duty to safeguard the planet for future generations."*

Not specific enough? Not enough? One disappointment – the G7 leaders didn't identify a date by which to end the use of coal for electricity.

## LEAKED REPORT: A GRIM FUTURE

A leaked draft report prepared by UN climate advisors for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and slated for release next year, points to a dire future. It says that global temperatures are already 1.1 °C above mid-nineteenth century levels, and even if the world meets the Paris climate agreement target of keeping temperatures below 1.5 °C, *"conditions will change beyond many organisms' ability to adapt... The worst is yet to come, affecting our children's and grandchildren's lives much more than our own."*

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According to the report, the goal in the 2015 Paris Agreement, adopted by nearly 200 nations, to collectively cap warming at below two degrees Celsius – and 1.5 degrees if possible – looks unattainable anyway, and the world is likely headed for three degrees Celsius at best.

The leaked report also points out that staggering adaptation expenditures will be required in our likely future – for instance, *“Adaptation costs for Africa are projected to increase by tens of billions of dollars per year with warming greater than two degrees.”*

The report also warns of the possibility that the world will reach tipping points beyond which disaster is irreversible – tipping points such as the melting of Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, releasing enough water to raise sea levels by 13 metres.

The leaked report suggests conditions are not hopeless and that much can be done to avoid worst-case scenarios and prepare for unavoidable impacts. Achievable actions include conservation and restoration of blue carbon ecosystems (kelp and mangrove forests, for example), and adopting more plant-based diets. It says decarbonizing transportation and massive afforestation projects aren't enough – *“We need transformational change operating on processes and behaviours at all levels: individual, communities, business, institutions and governments. We must redefine our way of life and consumption.”*

Last month, the World Meteorological Organization projected a 40% chance that Earth will cross the 1.5-degree threshold for at least one year by 2026.

## OIL SANDS COMPANIES: WE WILL ACHIEVE NET ZERO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

On June 9, Canadian oilsands producers announced they have created an alliance to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from their operations by 2050, through what the alliance calls the Oil Sands Pathways to Net Zero initiative. The alliance includes Canadian Natural Resources, Cenovus Energy, Imperial Oil, MEG Energy and Suncor Energy. A media release announcing the alliance says:

*“This collaborative effort follows welcome announcements from the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta of important support programs for emissions- reduction projects and infrastructure... The Pathways vision is anchored by a major Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS) trunkline connected to a carbon sequestration hub... The proposed CCUS system is similar to the multi-billion dollar Longship/Northern Lights project in Norway as well as other CCUS projects in the Netherlands, U.K. and U.S., all of which involve significant collaboration between industry and government... The companies involved look forward to continuing to work with the federal and Alberta governments, and to engaging with local Indigenous communities in northern Alberta to make this ambitious, major emissions-reduction vision a reality,”*

## SHANGHAI EMBRACES HYDROGEN

Shanghai has announced plans to promote hydrogen as an alternative to fossil fuels, focusing on hydrogen-fueled vehicles. The municipality has planned multiple "hydrogen new towns" and pledged to become a regional hydrogen hub. The news came amid China's national push to develop the hydrogen industry under its climate goals.

By 2023, Shanghai aims to have nearly 10,000 hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles on the road and 30 hydrogen refueling stations in operation. More refueling stations are due to be planned in residential districts, around airports and near the Shanghai Disneyland.

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Shanghai has also launched a joint program with six other cities to "popularize" 5,000 fuel cell cars by 2025 under a wider scheme from the central government. Apart from Shanghai, 15 other Chinese regions have introduced plans to develop hydrogen or fuel-cell technology. Shandong province, for example, intends to have one million fuel-cell vehicles up and running by 2035 and introduce hydrogen as a fuel to ten million customers.

## OUR READERS KNOW A THINK OR TWO

### 1 What Are Things Really Worth?

Bob Hope of Owen Sound is known to **Village Green** readers for his passionate and informed advocacy of natural burials. Recently Bob told us about a letter he had sent to *The Owen Sound Hub*, on another matter dear to him. This is the letter, reproduced thanks to Bob and *The Hub*:

*"I own a 50-acre forest south of Williamsford and I'm trying to make it as worthless as I can. You may ask, 'Why would you do that, Bob?' It turns out that the value of my property is measured in what you could strip from it. As a result, I'm in the process of selling those rights immediately. I'm selling the rights to strip it of all its lumber; dig and remove all of its gravel which is substantial; and strip it of all its commercially wanted leeks and plants. When exploited, there will be nothing left.*

*There is one catch to this money-making racket. The company that I'm donating (effectively selling) these rights to, is a Conservation group who plans on enforcing and holding these legal rights and will make sure future owners (including myself) never violate the rights that were sold to them.*

*Although this should provide the protection I want, I find it annoying that our capitalist system doesn't seem to have a way of either describing or valuing the inherent worth of the property. That worth being that it is a living healthy natural forest. This 'worthless' feature should have far more value than what I'm 'giving away', but alas, gravel for roads and lumber for houses appear to be more important and are worthy reasons to turn it into a stripped hole in the ground."*

The fifty-acre forest and the caring community thank you, Bob.

### 2 A New View of Plastic

Alan Cooper – a retired mathematics teacher from Vancouver, an incisive thinker, and my esteemed Trinity College roommate in 1964/65 – had this to say about plastics:

*"From strangled seabirds to trapped turtles to the giant floating island and the discovery of nano-particles in the flesh of the fish we eat, we are all aware of the horrors of widely distributed plastic waste, and so it is only right that we refrain from the use of plastic bags and wrappings – at least so long as there is not an effective system of collection and consolidation of such waste. But I take issue with some of the ways this is interpreted.*

*As I learned from the May 30 issue of **The Village Green**, an Australian group called the Minderoo Foundation has produced a report which names and shames the companies responsible for plastic pollution. But I am surprised by their emphasis on 'the base of the supply chain that make 'polymers – the building blocks of all plastics – almost exclusively from fossil fuels.'*

*The greenhouse gas emissions attributed to plastics by Zheng & Suh in a letter at Nature Climate Change (cited as a reference by Mindaroo) are mostly from the energy used in their*



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*production, and from the assumption that they will end life in incinerators (which are the same for all kinds of polymer sources, since plant based polymers could otherwise serve as a carbon sink if not used for plastics and then burned).*

*But a proper energy transition (which is essential in any case) should resolve the former, and the current practice of burning waste is certainly not what I would recommend as the most climate-friendly alternative. In fact, collecting and burying plastic waste seems to me to be a potentially significant means of carbon sequestration. So, contrary to many who expound on this topic, I would suggest that what we need to do is not reduce our use of plastics but rather increase it – with the proviso that all plastic waste be separated and stored in a secure burial place (such as may be provided, for example, by fossil carbon extraction – e.g., old coal mines and oil wells).*

*Please let me know if you see anything wrong in the above analysis.”*

## SCIENTIST: GLOBAL HEATING AFFECTS FUNGI

A recent article in *The Scientist* profiles the work of University of New Mexico soil microbiologist Adriana L. Romero-Olivares, who studies how global heating affects fungi – an often unnoticed form of life that decomposes dead vegetation, causing the emission of carbon dioxide.

She finds that when fungi are stressed by rising temperatures, they break down more recalcitrant carbon, a type that normally resists decomposition, remaining locked in the ground. Warmer fungi's decomposition of recalcitrant carbon could weaken soil's ability to store carbon, Romero-Olivares says. The article about her and her work is at

[https://www.the-scientist.com/scientist-to-watch/adriana-l-romero-olivares-tracks-fungi-s-response-to-climate-change-68817?utm\\_campaign=TS\\_DAILY\\_NEWSLETTER\\_2021&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=134172243&hsenc=p2ANqtz-vgONtZ2N-SrFODvcCwQ8hH\\_CWAq0ryzylw8D9Er2uQVA4PFPpt2O\\_e2-QM47Tv1YrHfbcl1U05Lpk\\_kz4c11v9ihwA](https://www.the-scientist.com/scientist-to-watch/adriana-l-romero-olivares-tracks-fungi-s-response-to-climate-change-68817?utm_campaign=TS_DAILY_NEWSLETTER_2021&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=134172243&hsenc=p2ANqtz-vgONtZ2N-SrFODvcCwQ8hH_CWAq0ryzylw8D9Er2uQVA4PFPpt2O_e2-QM47Tv1YrHfbcl1U05Lpk_kz4c11v9ihwA).

## BIDEN: LET'S BUILD A CIVILIAN CLIMATE CORPS

Earlier this year, US President Joe Biden announced his plan to create a Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) to address urgent environmental challenges through economic recovery. Today's CCC would revive the original CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) initiated in 1933 by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to provide millions of Americans with good, well-paying jobs during the Great Depression.

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) an organization that calls itself America's largest, most experienced national youth conservation service organization, is bucking to play a role in shaping the CCC, saying SCA “offers an updated outline of how to build and scale this initiative... SCA is ready to deploy our youth to advance this important initiative and build upon the work we have already accomplished: generating jobs, sustainability, and environmental justice.”

Is it time for Canada to consider creating the environmental equivalent of the Company of Young Canadians? A green Katimavik?

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## IN MY HUMBLE OPINION: THE BROAD STREET PUMP

Sometimes a small event acts as an imageable analogy to a much larger movement. Such is the story of Dr. John Snow and the Broad Street pump in London England.

John Snow, born in 1813 into a working class Newcastle coal mining family, witnessed cholera epidemics early in life. He came to believe cholera was spread by infected water rather than bad air (the prevailing “miasma theory”). During a cholera epidemic in London’s Soho district in 1854, Snow meticulously mapped the place of residence of cholera victims and saw that they clustered in an area around a public well and pump on Broad Street. He took his evidence to skeptical public health officials who initially rejected his findings, but finally agreed to remove the handle of the Broad Street pump on a trial basis. The epidemic abated shortly after. It was later discovered that the well shaft was within a metre of a disused cesspool.

Today we live with the equivalent of the Broad Street pump, magnified an incalculable number of times. It’s a pump that spews the equivalent of poison through billions of spouts, from cars, factory chimneys, and deliberate rainforest fires. Everywhere. We’ve been taught that the fossil fuels that carry the poisons taste pretty good and even if they don’t, we need them anyway. And the poison builds and spreads. We don’t merely live near the poison – we live *within* the poison.

Yet we don’t remove the handle of the pump. We don’t stop producing and using fossil fuels. Mind you, voices with the ring and trappings of authority tell us they will remove the handle of the pump – someday. They give us promises and timelines, even as they fail to meet the promises and timelines they gave us yesterday. The voices tell us to be reasonable. They tell us the people who own the well and the pump shouldn’t be victimized by the removal of the pump handle. Better, the voices say, to continue to poison the rest of us rather than inconvenience stockholders. The voices tell us we can’t shut down the pump until we’ve dug alternative wells to drink from, but they nickel-and-dime the government investment needed to dig alternatives. They tell us they’ve slowed down the action of the pump handle, so each stroke delivers less poison (as if half a cup of strychnine rather than a full cup is a virtue) – but at the same time the voices allow the number of spouts spewing poison to proliferate.

Most insidiously, some of the voices tell us it’s all the fault of the people who drink from the well – if only they buckled down and changed their self-indulgent ways, we wouldn’t need the pump and we wouldn’t need to remove its handle. Bad victim – no soup for you!

As a result, when we wake up each morning, daybreak after daybreak, we wake to a world with more filth in it than when we went to bed.

Right now, this doesn’t have to be. We still have a chance to remove the pump handle, but a chance that’s slimmer every day. Unless we take that chance, we will soon wake up to the fact that even if we remove the pump handle, we will have pumped enough equivalent of poison to destroy us anyway.

Respectfully submitted to the *polis*,  
John Butler

## SHE SAID / HE SAID

**“Tell the whole damn truth, in our history, our art, our words, and our memorials.”**

Nikole Hannah-Jones, Pulitzer Prize winner,  
holder of Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism at the University of North Carolina,  
and creator of The 1619 Project. She has been denied tenure by the University.

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**“This Magna Carta Day we celebrate one of the most important items in our care. Written in 1215 Magna Carta gave all free men the right to justice and a fair trial for the first time. It provides one of the foundations of English law and in many ways it is considered a symbol of liberty around the world, famously echoed in the United States Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights... We hold two of the four surviving copies of the 1215 Magna Carta.”**

The British Library website, June 14, 2021

**“While many community gardens rent out plots so individuals or families can grow for themselves, we have decided Skeleton Park beds will be for everyone to work on together. We want everyone to be involved and take pride in our gardens. We see Skeleton Park Gardens as an exercise in educational, experimental and experiential learning and teaching. We intend to plant indigenous perennial vegetables to share with the community and to give to Loving Spoonful for their food distribution program. We plan to incorporate Three Sister’s plantings: corn, squash and beans.”**

Kate Thomas, *The Skeleton Park Community Gardens*, in *The Skeleton Press*, Winter 2021 Issue (Skeleton Park is a neighborhood in Kingston Ontario built on the site of an abandoned cemetery)

**“As electric vehicle (EV) aficionados like to say, the cleaner the grid, the cleaner the EV. That certainly rings true. Unlike gasoline-fueled vehicles, all-electric vehicles don’t emit tailpipe pollution of any kind, smog-forming or climate change-creating. But given that EVs are charged by electricity, they are indirectly responsible for the pollution from the source of that electricity, as well as the emissions from producing whatever fuels those power plants burn. Regardless, when compared to a gasoline car, whose fuel efficiency and emissions will remain the same for the life of the car, an EV will be accountable for less and less pollution over time as utilities transition from fossil fuels to wind, solar and other renewable sources.”**

Elliott Negin, *Ask a Scientist: As Predicted, Electric Vehicles Are Getting Cleaner*.  
The Equation (newsletter of the Union of Concerned Scientists), June 9, 2021

**“The defeat of Keystone XL pipeline doesn’t mean that Canada’s vast tar-sands project, which is generally regarded as the largest industrial project in the world, is over, but the fight has been a gut punch to the fossil-fuel industry. In 2011, when protests began outside the White House, Canada’s National Energy Board was confidently predicting that tar-sands-oil production would triple by 2035—which led the climate scientist James Hansen to explain that pumping Alberta dry would be ‘game over’ for the climate. A decade later, as Karin Kirk reported in *Yale Climate Connections*, fifty-seven major financial institutions have ‘pledged to stop funding or insuring oil sands ventures. Exxon Mobil has declared a loss on the original value of its oil sands assets, and Chevron has pulled out of Canadian oil and gas entirely. Other oil majors, like Shell and BP, are selling off their oil sands assets, leaving it largely to Canadian oil companies and the Canadian government to forge ahead.”**

Bill McKibben, the *New Yorker Climate Crisis* newsletter, June 16 2021

**“In 2013, ExxonMobil was the most valuable company in the world. Today, it ranks 31st. Over the same period, ExxonMobil poured \$61 billion of capital spending into U.S. oil and gas production. So far, even with recent rising oil prices and a small profit in the last quarter, those investments have yielded cumulative losses of \$6 billion. ExxonMobil has gone from one of the world’s premiere enterprises – a blue-chip stock market standout –**

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to a dismal underperformer. Its stock price has rebounded sharply since the worst days of 2020, but today is roughly where it was in 2006. The company was kicked out of the Dow Jones Industrial Average last year. All the while, the company has talked about its bright prospects, while resorting to taking on debt to sustain its dividend payments.”

Clark Williams-Derry, *ExxonMobil investors need to drill deeper to find the truth*, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis newsletter, June 17 2021

“Comics about refugee experiences are not new. After all, even the superhero created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, Superman, is a refugee who landed on Earth after his flight from Krypton. However, recently there has been renewed interest in comics representing migrant experience – namely, that of refugees and asylum-seekers. Since 2011, in particular, and the start of the civil war in Syria, comics and graphic novels have become an important forum for examining global forced migration.”

Elizabeth "Biz" Nijdam, *Comics and graphic novels are examining refugee border-crossing experiences*, The Conversation, June 14, 2021

“Contrary to some beliefs, those trying to get into the U.S. are not simply brown-skinned opportunists, they are desperate people fleeing relentless violence and horrific living conditions... Each department in Guatemala producing migrants has its own reality. Whether there is violence or social conflicts due to land disputes, or because of the implementation of the so called 'mega projects' (hydro-electric plants, mining, tourism infrastructure, etc.), or because of the existence of organized crime or narcotrafficking, the result is the same. Young persons, women and children flee from their communities, in order to find a better future elsewhere.”

Tom Roberts, *Guatemalans have mixed reaction to Kamala Harris' Central American trip*, National Catholic Reporter, June 11, 2021

“The giants of the fossil-fuel age, such as Volkswagen and ExxonMobil, are having to shift their investment plans, while clean-energy pioneers are cranking up capital spending fast. Orsted, a wind-farm champion, plans a rise of 30% this year; Tesla, an electric-car maker, a jump of 62. Meanwhile a cool \$178bn flowed into green-tinged investment funds in the first quarter of 2021. This sudden shift in how resources are allocated is causing stresses and strains as demand surges for raw materials and a scramble occurs for the few projects with regulatory approval. We calculate that the price of a basket of five minerals used in electric cars and power grids has soared by 139% in the past year. Timber mafias roam Ecuadorean forests to find balsa wood for wind-turbine blades. In February a British auction of sea-bed rights for offshore wind farms brought in up to \$12bn because energy firms rushed to get exposure whatever the cost.”

The Economist, *How green bottlenecks threaten the clean energy business*, June 12, 2021

“Scrutiny of the hefty carbon footprint of tanks and attack helicopters is long overdue. But the simplest way to decarbonise the military is to have less of it – and that is not in the brief. On the contrary, in the same 2022 budget in which Joe Biden asked Congress for \$2.5 billion in climate aid, he sought to increase defence spending 2% to \$753 bn – more than double the defence budget in second placed China. When John Kerry took the role of climate envoy for the White House, he said ‘humility’ was needed to rebuild trust with the rest of the world. He was right. Offering crumbs to the climate vulnerable while building up America’s arsenal is not it.”

Megan Darby, *What does US climate leadership look like in the Biden era?* Climate Home News Weekly, June 18, 2021

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**“Earth brings us into life and nourishes us. Earth takes us back again.  
Birth and death are present in every moment.”**

Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist  
Thich Nhat Hahn (courtesy of Rosemary Gosselin)

**“I have said Nhat Hanh is my brother, and it is true. We are both monks, and we have lived the monastic life about the same number of years. We are both poets, both existentialists. I have far more in common with Nhat Hanh than I have with many Americans, and I do not hesitate to say it. It is vitally important that such bonds be admitted. They are the bonds of a new solidarity and a new brotherhood which is beginning to be evident on all the five continents and which cuts across all political, religious and cultural lines to unite young men and women in every country in something that is more concrete than an ideal and more alive than a program. This unity of the young is the only hope of the world.”**

Trappist monk Thomas Merton, *Nhat Hanh is my Brother*, Jubilee Magazine, 1966

**“Acres burned [in Nevada] by wildfire in 2020: 200,000  
Fastest warming cities in the US: Las Vegas & Reno  
Consecutive weeks of drought (beginning in 2011): 269 weeks”**

website, State of Nevada Climate Initiative,  
June 2021 <https://climateaction.nv.gov/>

In the rains of spring  
an umbrella and rain coat  
pass by, conversing.

**Yosa Buson (1716-1784)**

## **“GREEN LEAF FROM OLD RAG” DEPARTMENT**

**(In which we resurrect old poems for those in search of new visions of the natural world)**

### **The Magic Name**

Markdale Standard, November 20, 1924, page 2

I heard the wind go crying through the grass  
And making little sounds like any child;  
The yellow leaves would hardly let me pass  
Until I told them why I walked and smiled.

And when I spoke your name to them the wind  
Broke like laughter as a child who stands  
And sees a butterfly, while far behind  
The yellow leaves were clapping tiny hands.

Herbert S. Gorman

**For information about *The Village Green*, or to subscribe to it (free), please  
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