

# Toward a Fossil Free Future

(Curt's speech at the 350.org Moving Planet Manitoba rally at the Forks on Sat Sep 24)

I am going to say a few words to give us all some **background on why we are here** and why so many people have put so much effort into making this day happen.

Before I do that, I am going to tell you a little bit about myself and why I'm here.

## Why am I here?

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I work for **Climate Change Connection** along with Ani and Lydia at the Eco-Center above Mountain Equipment Coop. Visit our booth.

I'm a **project manager and a presenter**. If you want a presentation for your group or your company, ask us.

But before I came to Climate Change Connection in 2007, I spent more than 25 years in **private industry**. I am a Professional Engineer. Shortly before 2007, I was vice-president of a successful manufacturing company with over 1000 employees and 4 manufacturing plants in 3 countries. I know the realities of business and of trying to make payroll.

But in 2006 I became aware of climate change. I saw Al Gore's film **An Inconvenient Truth** and it changed my life. I came out of the theatre and said "If that guy's science is wrong he should be spanked. If the science is right, that was the scariest film I've ever seen."

Well, I did a lot more reading and talking to scientists and taking courses and **the science is right, and I am scared**.

I am not scared for myself but I am for my **children and my grandchildren**.

**What kind of world are we leaving for them? What will we have done with our time here on earth if we don't leave a place where they will be able to live and be happy?**

## Why are we here?

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That brings me back to why we are here. The reasons come down to three words that start with the letter "P": **Peril, Promise, and Path**.

The climate is **changing** and it is largely due to greenhouse gas emissions from **human activities**.

The scientists are clear on this - In 2005 the **National Science Academies** of 11 countries wrote a letter to the G8 asking them to take immediate and serious action on climate change.

In 2007 they **reiterated the message** with signatures from the National

Academies of Science of **13 countries: Mexico, South Africa, Canada, Russia, The United States, United Kingdom, France, Brazil, Germany, India, China, Italy, and Japan.**

They are concerned about greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases that come from **burning fossil fuels.**

Scientists like **Dr James Hansen** from NASA insist that "If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted ... CO<sub>2</sub> will need to be reduced ... to at most 350 ppm".

This is where the **350.org** comes from and why you see that number everywhere here today. 350 parts per million - The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere today is at about 390 ppm.

If you want to know more about why the scientists are saying this, you can ask for one of **my presentations.** We can have about an hour long presentation and discussion - I promise you it won't be boring.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH CLIMATE CHANGE?

### WHERE'S THE **PERIL**?

4 things are at risk: **FOOD, WATER, HEAT, TRANSPORTATION**

We are already seeing more **severe weather events** - more severe and more often. The floods Manitoban's experienced this year is consistent with the computer climate model predictions - as are the increased severity of tornadoes and thunderstorms and droughts - and further away - of hurricanes and dust storms and coastal storm surges.

If this was as bad as it was going to get it's not so bad. But this is just the beginning. **We ain't seen nothing yet.**

It's when people can't feed themselves that things get really serious. So that's what's in peril - **FOOD.**

In future years, our farmers may not be able to **get a crop in or get it off** - not just in isolated pockets but in large areas - perhaps across the entire prairies.

This is what happened in **Russia** last year. They had a crop failure that prevented them from exporting any grain at all and **food prices jumped** around the world.

In fact, there are some areas that may soon be unable to grow crops with any degree of reliability - places like **Africa** and **Pakistan**, and **western Australia** and **south-western United States.**

And not just food but **WATER** with droughts and with flooding.

We can lose access to **clean drinking water** not just from droughts but from floods. - From floods when overflowing sewage systems and contaminate our reservoirs and streams and lakes.

Unaffordable fuels due to insufficient supply (Peak Oil), economic downturn or

even economic collapse can put **HEAT** and **TRANSPORTATION** in peril if we are dependent on importing fuel from elsewhere.

## This is where we get to the **Promise**.

Investing in the solutions to climate change are great ideas and great investments even without climate change and the threat of peak oil. **TELL ME THESE AREN'T GREAT IDEAS REGARDLESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: FOOD**

We need to create a year-round and locally accessible system for producing and distributing nutritious **local food**.

We need **community gardens** so our kids can understand where food comes from and so we can all connect with our neighbours. What would happen to crime if we were more connected with our neighbours?

### **WATER**

We need to **protect** our water.

We need to **retain** more early season water for late season use.

We need to conserve and expand **wetlands** to help combat flooding.

We need to stop using drinking water to wash away **waste** and fill up sewage lagoons that overflow in floods.

We need to use **rainwater** and reuse **grey water**.

### **HEAT -**

We need to stop pouring heat into the atmosphere from **leaky**, poorly insulated **buildings** and homes that are **too large** for their purpose.

We need to use energy from the **wind**, the **earth** and from the **sun**. We need to build our buildings and plan our communities to work with their environments instead of requiring huge imports of energy to fight against the natural environment.

We need to **use waste heat** from one process to heat another

In fact - we need to find ways to **eliminate all waste**. There is no waste in nature. Every output is input for something else.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

We need to stop the **sprawl** of our cities.

We need to zone our cities into **cluster communities** so that people can work, shop, worship, learn, and play all close to where they live.

We need to treat **cars as utilities** that we share and only need to use occasionally rather than as status symbols that spend 90% of their time parked and taking up space.

Using **hi-speed Internet** for communication so we don't have to travel as much - remote medicine, remote education, remote conferencing, business opportunities for remote communities - We need affordable access to symmetrical hi-speed Internet for every Manitoban in every part of the province.

Transit is doing a great job with what they are given but we need to make **public transit** safer, faster, more comfortable, and more affordable for everyone.

We need to **start making things here again** instead of importing them from halfway around the world just to throw them away in less than 6 months.

We need to **walk and bike more** for the good of our health and for our communities and for the good of the planet.

## What's the **PATH**? How do we get there?

For all of these things that are at risk FOOD, WATER, HEAT, and TRANSPORTATION, the PATH to solution is the same:

**Reduce demand, Increase efficiency, Increase use of renewables** - renewable energy & renewable materials

**There is no ethical oil** - It is not ethical when you consider the climate change legacy it is leaving for our grandchildren - when it is getting more and more costly and more and more environmentally destructive to find and extract - the tar sands, deep water in the gulf of Mexico, drilling in the Arctic, drilling in wildlife refuges, the Exxon Valdez, the consequences of climate change .. We must get off this treadmill, this addiction to fossil fuels.

There are **lots of terrific groups and great companies** that are here today that are working on alternatives and solutions. They are up at the EcoFair under the canopy. Visit them.

I'd like to point out one group in particular - **50by30** - who want you to help them achieve a 50% renewable energy ratio in this province by 2030.

**This is how we will get to these solutions** - by joining with and supporting these groups and companies and by working together - cooperatively, urgently, energetically, creatively - away from the PERIL and toward a future of PROMISE for us and for our children, for our grandchildren and for generations yet unborn.