



The Daily Gleaner

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Would you change?

This is the final Green Matters column for 2007 and with the New Year a few days away, it is “resolution time” for many of us. Given our individual power to change not only our community, but the world, I thought I might do my best to provide some inspiration for the effort ahead.

We’re now only two years away from our target of reducing Fredericton’s community greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 6 percent. Early in 2008 we will be able to tell you where we are relative to our goal.

Why should this matter to you? Most actions you take have a GHG-producing consequence. Running late, you drive to work instead of walk. You keep your heat on 24 degrees. You continue to use plastic bags. You forget to recycle. You keep your lights on all the time. You run water when you are washing dishes or brushing your teeth. It is the sum total of our actions that will ensure we either reach our goal or not.

One thing we do know today is that we – as a City - must be revolutionary if we are to meet our goals; that we are curbing climate change in our little corner of the planet; that we are ‘green’, enlightened, and environmentally responsible; that our citizens, acting together, are inspiring others elsewhere to do the same.

The debate over human-caused global warming and climate change continues to rage, but opposition is dwindling as the evidence becomes more apparent. Many of the world’s leading scientists are exposing how climate change is impacting people’s lives, their homes, their culture, their food sources and water supply.

Several weeks ago someone sent me a video called “The most terrifying video you will ever see”. If you choose to watch it, go to www.YouTube.com and search on this phrase. It clarifies the global-warming debate in a very logical way. The author breaks down how our future is likely to fall within one of four scenarios; think of a square cut into the following four quarters:

1. **Global climate change is false and we still acted to prevent it.** It costs to act – so we have increased taxation and burdensome environmental regulations. Worst case scenario is global economic depression.
2. **Global climate change is true and we acted to prevent it.** Climate change happens and we have all of the above ‘costs of action’, but we curb climate change, manage to adapt to its consequences, and our world is different but still livable.
3. **Global climate change is false and we don’t act.** The best case scenario - we didn’t take action, and we didn’t need to.

4. **Global climate change is true and we don't act.** The worst case scenario - climate change happens and we've done too little to prevent it. There are economic, environmental, social, political, and public health catastrophes on a global scale.

As you can see – in Scenario 4, we get the global economic depression, but some additional bonus features that make Scenario 1 look like a cakewalk.

The argument leads to one inescapable conclusion - when faced with uncertainty about our future, the only responsible, defensible choice is to act. The risks of not acting far outweigh the risks of acting.

Are you betting on Scenario 3? Maybe you're right. How lucky do you feel?

If you're on YouTube.com, have a listen to the lyrics of a beautiful song, "Change" by Tracy Chapman. Hopefully, it will be an inspiration as you set out to make change in the New Year. Here's a poignant piece of it;

How bad, how good, does it need to get

How many losses, how much regret

What chain reaction would cause an effect

Makes you turn around, makes you try to explain

Makes you change

If you knew that you would be alone

Knowing right, but being wrong

Would you change?

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