

Toronto CREW Green Pages Climate Change and Innovation: Leave a Legacy

The Conference Board of Canada recently released two highly researched pieces of data: indices of international *environmental protection practices* and *science and technology innovation* positioning. Canada – historically a comfortable top place-holder in these two areas - has slipped dramatically to failing grades on both fronts and a position of 14th in the world in both areas. There a saying among experts in technology, R&D and environmental management: “Canada has the best reputation and the worst track record”.

Every member of CREW can assume some measure of responsibility for this. None of us is doing enough. If the excuse for our inertia is the responsibilities of family lifeperhaps that requires a second thought. What kind of lives are our children are going to have? What kind of future are we complicit in leaving them? And how are we going to feel when, later in our lives, we see their suffering and diminished quality of life and know that we were in positions of influence and did... what?

Most experts predict that the U.S. will quickly pass Canada in virtually every area related to the reduction of carbon emissions – particularly in the areas of energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy. Renewable energy is President Obama’s “Apollo Mission” – integral to the legacy he wants to leave.

Canada uses 50% more energy than Sweden to produce the same amount of goods and services as measured by GDP. Sweden has had a carbon tax since 2001 and the Swedish government’s robust investment in their renewable energy sector has created a thriving industry and plenty of new jobs. The country will be 50% powered by renewable energy by 2010.

A recent report by the Pembina Institute shows that Ottawa can no longer argue that fighting climate change means job losses and declining standards of living. It shows that:

- Our economy can still grow by almost 20% in the next decade while we reduce greenhouse gas pollution to 25% below the 1990 level and
- Meeting the 25% reduction target requires a significant price on carbon pollution as well as targeted regulations and investments to expand the use of clean technology.

In Ontario government support of the renewable energy industry is stumbling. Just one example:

The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) launched the RESOP (Renewable Energy Standard Offer Program) in November 2006. The RESOP program guarantees CAD\$0.42 for every kWh of solar PV created and was designed to help ease the strain on Ontario’s electricity system while promoting system reliability. As a result of this unique North American initiative, many firms have invested in jobs and projects in Ontario and the OPA has executed many MV of contracts with more waiting. **However:** this past May the program was suspended so that regulators and policy-makers could make some revisions to the program. A stop/start approach to a fledgling renewable energy industry is anathema. Commercial investment in solar technologies in Ontario has been profoundly affected. Some companies have gone away and aren’t coming back.

If you still doubt that your corporate carbon footprint and your corporate valuation are connected – ask the \$55 trillion of investors in the Carbon Disclosure Fund. Most experts in the field are dismissive of a cap and trade system and are advocating for the “cleanest” possible method of controlling emissions: carbon taxation. And you do not need to be a genius in free market economics to see that when carbon taxes come – and they will – the costs for corporations to mitigate their environmental damage to be in compliance will sky-rocket. It’s a question of “pay me now or pay me later” in the most dramatic sense.

If you don’t think that climate change is affecting your business right now – talk to your insurance or re-insurance colleagues. You will quickly get a sense of how dramatically the catastrophic losses from climate change are affecting the cost of your premiums. The two largest climate-change-related payouts in Canada were:

- The payout resultant from the 2005 tornado outbreak in Southern Ontario that produced two F2 tornadoes
- The \$500 million payout from the break of Finch Avenue just east of Jane, not for road repair or the two gas mains that broke, but to compensate the hundreds of people whose basements were filled with sewage as a result.

As extremes in temperature become the norm in Toronto there will be more disasters like this more often.

Premier McGuinty reveals his Green Energy Act on February 17. Attention should be paid to this.

Go to the Green Energy Act Alliance website to find out what should be in it: www.ontario-sea-org

It’s very likely that in the time and place we find ourselves – here and now – in this country, with this standard of living and access to information and ideas, in these jobs, with these families, at this stage of our careers, during this particular February of this year 2009 – we are able to effect maximum change for the good that we may ever be.

Churchill said that we shape our buildings and forever after they shape us. That has never been truer than it is right now. As stewards of the built environment, nothing less than the future of your children and grandchildren is in your hands. What is your legacy going to be?

Good news:

On January 29th, 2009, Zerofootprint announced an architectural competition based around re-skinning buildings in Ontario. <http://zfp-website-images.s3.amazonaws.com/ZFPSkinRenewal.pdf>

It's a model for the kind of groundbreaking initiative governments, associations and corporations should be launching.

Good ideas:

The OPA wants us to promote Energy Conservation Week from May 17-23

<http://www.energyconservationweek.ca> Watch the video.

ThinkTORONTO – Spacing Magazine's urban design winners – online at www.spacing.com and on display at 401 Richmond February 8-27 - a hopeful, creative, hugely talented group of young urbanists offering superb ideas for our city's future

Good tools:

Information is a utility. Enterprise Carbon Management is becoming mainstream.

Check out: <http://www.e3solutionsinc.com/contact>

There is a new touch-screen kiosk that illustrates real-time energy use info with an animation program to make data easily understandable to building users. The word is that they are now partnered with Siemens.

<http://www.qualityattributes.com/greentouchscreen>

Good built environment ideas within a short drive of downtown:

The Fifth Town Artisanal Cheese Factory in Picton - a current candidate for LEED Platinum status

The Chinguacousy Skatepark in Brampton - an 18,000-square-foot skateboard plaza made entirely of EcoSmart concrete, which contains a high proportion of fly ash.

Good invention:

Carbon Sense Solutions in Halifax is an example of real Canadian innovation:

<http://www.carbonsensesolutions.com/index.html> - including carbon-eating cement

Good planned buildings:

Bridgepoint Health Centre in Riverdale: designed jointly by Stantec/Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg

First Leaside Securities in Uxbridge: designed by RDH Architects

Good urban green space:

<http://www.raretome.ca/default.aspx>

Good resources:

<http://www.onelesstonne.ca>

<http://www.Ren21.com>

<http://www.powerupcanada.ca>

<http://www.pembina.org>

<http://www.environmentalleader.com>

