

Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit www.islandtides.com for more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics

Reprint from Volume 19 Number 4

February 22, 2007

Editorial: 'Net Zero'

It seems that this newspaper has been publishing articles about global climate change for as long as we can remember. We're delighted at the way our governments have suddenly caught up to us, and our readers.

We enthusiastically applaud the announcement of ambitious GHG emissions targets and the unexpected new expressions of belief. But we're concerned that the hasty adoption of 'best practices' from elsewhere will not do the job for Canada or its provinces.

It Depends on Us

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projected, most responsibly, several ranges of global temperature increases and sea level rises which depended on alternative scenarios of governmental, corporate, and human behaviours. These scenarios ranged from the utopian immediate achievement of a standstill in GHG emissions, to the unthinkable, their continuing and accelerating growth.

Combined with the possibility that some of the physical effects of climate change might themselves accelerate global warming, there seems to be no alternative but to aim for the standstill situation. This is the only way we could possibly come close to achieving the best of the IPCC's projected outcomes.

The IPCC projections make it clear that, in order to achieve long-term atmospheric stability, we must aim at zero net emissions from as many human activities as we can. BC's Premier Gordon Campbell, in his throne speech last Tuesday, showed he understood this, pledging 'Net Zero' GHG emissions

from electrical production, landfills, truck stops, container ports, trees, and the government. A good start.

Carbon Credits Don't Cut It

Yet our targets, and our current 'best practices' aim only to slow the growth of emissions, and not arrest it. They assume the continued growth of the world's economy, and particularly our economy. The recent report by Sir Nicholas Stern attempted to reconcile the impact on today's economy of meeting GHG targets (modest) with the impact on the economy of the future if we don't meet them (massive).

The European Union has set 'caps' on the amount of greenhouse gases that may be emitted by industrial enterprises. These constitute continuing licenses to emit. Buying 'carbon credits' from elsewhere doesn't help; all that proves is that the enterprise you bought them from claims to be able to get closer to 'Net Zero' than the government that set the 'caps' thought they could.

Rather than setting 'caps' that reflect what present technology might achieve, we will have to seriously question whether some alternative means exist which can approach 'Net Zero.' Some activities, such as crossing oceans, are going to prove particularly difficult to tackle; airlines in particular will require incredible technological innovation to reduce emissions.

All the more reason why we must aim for 'Net Zero' now, in every possible activity. ☺

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with the following attribution, in its entirety, and notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

'This article was published (February 22, 2007) in 'Island Tides', an independent, regional newspaper distributing across the Southern Strait of Georgia from Tsawwassen to Victoria to Nanaimo.'

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com. Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>