

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE PART ii

The Effects on Nanaimo and the Club

Log line 2013-01-17

Last month, I outlined the case for accepting that global climate change is a real threat to our way of life. Let us, for the moment, forget about what the unmitigated effects of global climate change are going to have on the rest of the world. How might this new phenomena affect us in Nanaimo? We are already familiar with extreme weather: the recent wind storm that knocked down many trees on the Island and devastated Stanley Park; flooding regularly occurs on the Nanaimo river; and summer water restrictions occur on years with little rain fall and increase the occurrence of forest fires. These are nothing new, but the frequency and intensity are increasing. Although high winds make sailors happy, the storms can wreak havoc on ferry schedules, planned outings, even the Southern Straits race of 2011 was a bit much for many racers. But the real problem comes with property damage. Both here and abroad, extreme weather causes billions in damage each year. Most recently, Hurricane Sandy caused some \$70 bil. in Eastern US alone. And this is much less than the total cost of Hurricane Katrina. The cost of cleanup is high, and the two major sources of funding are government and insurance companies. And their major sources of funding are the people who pay taxes and insurance. So far, I haven't been able to avoid either! Yes, the costs get spread out over a wide range of folk, but global climate change is going to bring more extreme events, which will increase funds required for remedial action, and we are all going to pay. Even now, 80% of the US agricultural lands are seeing a major drought and the number of cattle is at the lowest level in years. This is going to cost us at the supermarket, for sure; as well as causing a ½ - 1% drop in the US GDP.

Besides extreme weather, rising ocean water levels are also predicted in our lifetimes. It's definitely not an exact science but likely to be a rise of a ½ m by 2050 and a full meter by 2100. This puts tremendous pressure on our sea walls and dikes, as well as creating greater possibilities of flood damage from heavy rains. Recently, the BC Engineers magazine featured an article on "Preparing for Sea Level Rise in BC". It predicts flood damage to increase by 1 – 8 billion in BC by 2050. Another study released in October 2012 indicates costs to rebuild dikes and update flood control measures will cost in the range of \$9.5 bil. These reports are commissioned by the BC government and completed by competent engineers; not Greenpeace, the Suzuki foundation or other group dedicated to the environment. Those figures don't include costs for Nanaimo; just the lower mainland. With a 1 m sea level rise, much of our seawall and walkway may be vulnerable to erosion, some of the housing in Departure Bay and similar low lying areas may be subject to storm damage. We are fortunate not to be too bothered directly by gales but not so for some other communities on the Island.

In short, global climate change is not likely to end our way of life in the next 100 years, but it will have a significant effect on our costs. Climate change deniers often cite the costs of alternative energy solutions, public transport and similar, but they neglect the fact that money spent now will be offset by savings in the future. By the time the ice sheets have fully melted, it will be too late, and we will end up spending billions trying to mop up, as well as billions to stop further global climate change. So as the saying goes, you can pay me now, or you can pay me later. Cleaning up our CO2 emissions will have

many positive side effects as well. Some day we will run out of fossil fuels, so the sooner we wean ourselves from them, the better all around.

Next time, what can we do about it?

