

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Let's all try to gain some reasonable insight & perspective in this article below, from our most well known & respected Canadian scientist & environmentalist, Dr. David Suzuki.

As submitted by Don Ross.....RR2, Milford, Ont
Member of CFRE (Citizens for Renewable Energy)

The answers are blowing in the wind

By Dr. David Suzuki

From Spring /08 Windsight Newsletter

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As most of the readers of *WindSight* know, wind power is one of the fastest growing sources of energy in the world. You also know that the wind power industry creates new jobs, encourages innovation, and offsets emissions from fossil fuel-fired power plants. So why don't we all have access to wind power for our daily energy needs? Old traditions, it seems, die hard. Once the business world figured out how to obtain cheap oil, the precedent was set. And we've remained a victim to that old way of thinking ever since. But there's evidence that things are changing. As I write this, oil has skyrocketed to record highs, and there seems to be no end in sight. While this phenomenon is creating great concern around the world, it is also an ideal time for wind energy producers to turn this period of instability into an opportunity.

We've seen this happen before. High fuel prices in the 1970s, for example, inspired innovation on many levels. Inventors and entrepreneurs developed and marketed solar power cells. Car dealers imported fuel efficient autos and manufacturers eliminated huge gas guzzlers from their product lines. Most importantly, governments started legislating fuel efficiency standards, and this created an opportunity for more efficient methods of technology. It's my hope that today's oil prices will usher in a new era for wind power and wind energy producers. I think this is already starting to happen. Wind energy now produces enough electricity in Canada to meet the needs of 560,000 homes—the size of a small city. It is no longer the work of backyard inventors and garage tinkerers.

Wind turbines are firmly in the mainstream and they are as powerful an icon of a clean, sustainable future

as compact fluorescent bulbs and solar panels. Just as with every kind of new technology, wind turbines must be applied with care. Thorough environmental assessments must take into account bird flight paths, and zoning processes must take into consideration issues that might be raised by host communities. Just as solar panels graduated from powering small items such as digital watches and calculators to being incorporated into large-scale, energy-efficient projects, I am confident that wind turbines will also reach a critical mass. As I cross the country and talk to people, I hear about more and more wind turbines dotting the landscapes.

Wind energy is here to stay. And it appears that our elected leaders are beginning to listen. Canada's industrial heartland and most populated province, Ontario, is starting to make inroads with renewable energy producers. This bodes well for other provinces that are starting to incorporate legislation that will protect our quality of life from the ravages of global warming. I've just returned from Germany, an industrialized country whose economy is a global giant and a nation with a conservative government. I was amazed at how far the country has moved with greenhouse gas emissions 20 per cent below 1990 levels—well past the Kyoto target. Scientists at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research showed me that Germany and all of Europe could have electrical grids based on 100 per cent renewable energy in 30 years. A very significant proportion will be wind.

While Canada is not close to the capacities of wind-power leaders like Germany and Spain, wind power is attracting more financial support. And where there is financial support, innovative business opportunities will multiply. Once the business community is involved, investors will join them, and we will see a true wind energy revolution—a revolution that will benefit individuals, communities, the economy and especially the environment.

Letters to the editor are welcome.

Express an opinion, publicize an event, submit an obituary, in memoriam, letter of thanks, etc.

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