



Dave Williams

# The “Greening Revolution” for Condos - Sustaining Us and Ours...

**W**e are hearing more and more about Sustainability and ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) lately. The references are to our planet, the spaces we live in and the ability of our governments at all levels to move the needle (Greening the planet) forward in a timely fashion. In fact, we as everyday people must face reality and pitch in.

Make no mistake this is a huge subject. It has expensive considerations; it will affect everyone and that means not only us as we are today, but our children and our grandchildren.

A major concern is the propensity for people to stick their heads in the sand and hope for the best. Worse still, they hope the government will look after the problem. There are even conspiracy theories out there that the whole thing is a hoax!

This in the face of worsening catastrophic events...floods, hurricanes, forest fires and the lists go on. If you are over 50 years of age, you will no doubt realize that in summer months, your skin seems to burn ten times faster than it used when you were 20.

## Where are we going with this?

I think it is time well spent to look at how we can help with the problem as individuals. We will look at what some of the biggest industrial polluters are doing, the big Canadian Banks and commercial establishments.

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## The Question

How are condos affected and what can condo boards and property managers do to help their residents get on board the ship to repairing the problem... indeed before that ship sails.

## The Current State

"Since 1850 (approximately the time of the industrial revolution), global temperatures have risen at around 0.07 Celsius per decade." So, we are not dealing with a new phenomenon. "Rapid industrialization and global growth have increased the level of greenhouse gases (GhG), particularly carbon dioxide (CO2), in the atmosphere at an alarming rate. It took 250 years to burn the first half trillion tons of carbon. On current trends, the next half trillion will be released in less than 40 years."\*

## The Culprits

As outlined above, carbon dioxide emissions are the worst. Here is a list of the biggest contributors according to Mark Carney:

- Industrial process (32% of current emissions)
- Buildings (18% of current emissions)
- Transport (cars, trucks, shipping and aviation) (16% of current emissions)
- Energy generation (11%)
- Food, agriculture/sources (10%) of both crops and livestock. Yes, manure is an emitter.

You will often hear the term "carbon neutral." It means that once we equalize **carbon capture** with **carbon emission** (technically), only then will the planet stabilize.

Of course, plastics are a huge problem. Think of food items, hardware items and water bottles. Many consumer products are packaged in plastic of some form either rigid or otherwise. There is a sad

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side to this packaging as well. Think here of shaving blades in the pharmacy. They are packaged in a combination of hard clear plastic and cardboard for the sole purpose of preventing theft. Many items are similarly packaged for the same reason.

Plastic shopping bags are quickly being phased out by the grocers and shoppers are required to switch to re-usable bags.

Our cars are not helping anything and thankfully, Tesla is leading the way in electric vehicles. That said GM, Ford and others are rushing to adopt the technology in their vehicles. Many started with hybrid (combination of internal combustion and battery), but most are now aimed at fully electric.

As an aside, I had a ride in a Tesla the other day and was impressed. There are 3 charging options which I will categorize as slow, medium, and fast (charging). There is a large information screen on the "dash-board" that not only measures amount of charge but will provide distance to nearest charging station and a list of other stations on the driver's route. The ride is quiet and smooth. What is not to like?

In aviation, experiments are being conducted with bio-fuels and hydrogen-powered engines. The same technology,

once perfected might also be an option for transport trucks. In fact, I believe that Tesla delivered the first of its battery powered semi-trucks to Pepsico this past week.

## Buildings

Yes, big and small are contributors. The Toronto Star of Saturday August 27th provided a great glimpse of what Toronto Councilor Mike Layton has done to zero the use of Fossil Fuels in his home. A roof mounted solar system, new high efficiency windows, an air-source heat pump are but some of the modifications conducted.

High rise apartments should be considering the installation of charging stations either in their outdoor or underground parking lots for the use of their residents and visitors. It is important for two reasons... one is the atmosphere of course but the other is the property value of the individual units. Think of it this way: as more and more cars become electrified, the owners will want charging availability. It begs the question; will they have any interest in a building that doesn't offer vehicle charging?

A similar argument can be made for commercial condo buildings and town home communities.

## A pension plan goes "Green"

Here is the scoop. Barbara Zvan is the CEO of the University Pension Plan, one that is new and, in the report detailing its first operational year, a "Climate Action Plan" was included. The plan promised that the pension investments would not invest in coal and other "companies that present a significant risk." Oh! did I mention that Ms Zvan grew up in Stoney Creek and was educated at Mc Master.

The pension fund also committed to a "net-zero" portfolio by or before 2040.

There are tons of examples of large organizations (even a consortium of 6 in the oil patch "Pathways Alliance") that

are moving quickly now to become “more-green.”

The significance of this is quite incredible really. Consider this. The pension plan must perform for its retirees. To do so it must conduct very careful research to select qualified investments that perform while doing so with sound environmental considerations.

## Condominium Participation?

I can already hear the condo community leaders asking what has this got to do with us?

Let’s look at the basics of condo management as it exists today.

## Residents

Residents/owners generally assume that by purchasing/renting a unit that the condo will look after their needs and interests. After all, the grass gets cut, the snow cleared, garbage gets picked up, the outside walls are not to worry about. All pretty much standard stuff... right?

But, what about education or the transfer of new information to these residents. Yes, I am thinking about the environmental issues creeping up on all of us.

In asking questions around the subject, I hear answers like what is ESG? Or I hear board members saying well we are not making any decisions until we know more about the subject.

I even reached out by email to an engineering firm and a law firm to ask what advice they may be passing on to their board clients and got no response from either.

## Low Hanging Fruit

Here is a good use of the monthly bulletin to residents. While I get that condo boards cannot “enforce” environmentally sound practices, they can help a lot by educating their residents. Something as simple as “the Climate Corner” that provides suggestions and indeed alerting readers to the progress or lack of getting

things under control.

One of the worst polluting practices at household level is plastic water bottles. I for one will very soon purchase a water cooler for home. Re-usable shopping bags are another item for consideration. Keeping the family car in good repair (exhaust systems) is yet another opportunity.

The new car industry is working at break-neck speed to update their fleets to electrification. So, progress reports on this conversion process is another subject for the monthly bulletin.

The bulletin writer should not concern himself/herself with repeating some of the points often. Sometimes the repetition helps to build awareness.

Does it take some effort? Absolutely it does. The reading and research can be time consuming to a point but better to be ahead of the curve rather than getting a shock.

This brings me to another point. The “greening” of the planet will be a cost to condo dwellers. There is already a carbon tax which will increase. The whole notion of carbon capture is going to cost... in terms of the technological development. In layman’s terms, your car, your gas stove, your gas fireplace, the heating system in the high rise... the list goes on.

Condo developments, at least the character of them varies by age, by size, by footprint... you name it. I suspect that the “greening” of each will vary as well particularly in terms of cost.

## The Early Solution?

This may be the opportunity for condo boards, their legal advisers, their property managers and their engineering firms to **“think outside the box.”** Why not? It is a chance to get ahead of the proverbial curve and lead the way.

A beginning would be for the CCI itself to establish an “environmental committee,” tasked to build a library of

information on “greening.” This way, individual condo developments could draw the information they need to consider projects to help their residents and in fact to build funding (in the reserve) for the same.

This should not and would not mean that individual condo boards would be absolved of the responsibility to establish their own committees.

The point is this. We all have children and grandchildren that will live on in our place and do you really want to leave them with a worn-out planet? Do you really want to trust that some governmental body will find us a better place to live?

I think most airline pilots will tell you that they really earn their money in bad weather. Well, condo engineers, lawyers, condo managers and condo boards, you may be flying into a storm very shortly; will your community be ready to weather the storm?

*We always invite any readers to critique our thoughts or to send questions on the subject. There will be a follow-up to this article in the spring edition. Please email any thoughts or ideas to: williamsdavem7@gmail.com*

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Our thanks to the following publications:  
*Value (s) Building a Better World for All.*  
Mark Carney former Bank of Canada and Bank of England Governor  
*Saving Us. A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World.*  
Katharine Hayhoe  
*Toronto Star* Saturday August 27th, 2022.  
Insight. “*Going off The Grid*”, “*Your Home will never be the same.*”  
*Globe and Mail* Report on Business  
December 2022 CEO of the Year Barbara Zvan  
Craig Cook - Tesla Owner

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