

Low Fuel



By Nate Smelle

Living in North Hastings, one quickly becomes accustomed to driving on a regular, if not a daily basis.

In the last month or so, anyone who has attempted to travel north to Bancroft on Hwy 62 from anywhere south of L'Amable can attest to the irritating delays experienced en-route due to the roadwork underway.

Parked at the end of a very long line-up of cars while making the trek north last Tuesday, I could see the greenhouse gas emissions mingling with the waves of heat radiating from the black, freshly paved road. Rolling up my windows to ward off the toxic stench of mixed chemicals permeating the air, and noticed that the 'Low Fuel' light had lit up while I was daydreaming. Remembering that it took more than 10 minutes for traffic to move when I was in a similar position the day before, I turned off the ignition, but kept the radio on.

Listening to the daily news as I enjoyed a uniquely thorough glimpse of L'Amable Lake; the broadcaster updated listeners on what was making the news around the world that day. During his report, he talked about the fragile situation at the Kabul airport in Afghanistan, and how it was growing more dangerous by the hour. Next, he shared how in Alabama over the past weekend, former U.S. President Donald Trump was booed by his supporters when he recommended that everyone get the COVID-19 vaccine. Putting a bow on the broadcast, he then warned the public of another heat wave on its way, that would bring extremely hot temperatures, which could be dangerous to public health, and potentially deadly for some.

Spotting 'I love oil and gas' and 'I love pipelines' stickers plastered on the rear window of the truck in front of me with an Alberta plate; for some reason I thought of a scene in the film Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy, where Brick Tamland professes, 'I love lamp!'

Nevertheless, as my eyes refocused on the tailpipe of the truck spewing toxins into the air and heating the globe, my mind returned to the newsman's warning and the worsening climate crisis. I recalled the edition of The Current that had aired on CBC Radio less than 24 hours earlier, which looked into where each of the major political parties in Canada stand on the climate crisis; and what they plan to do to address it. The program provided insight into the dire state of the global crisis, and how the Canadian federal election factors into the equation. It also served up sound bites from each of the party leaders, revealing their personal commitments to the fight against climate change.

Now that it appears the debate regarding the existence of climate change is finally over, each of the leaders and parties are proudly putting forward their plans. As minimal as it may seem, this is a sign of progress. I have also witnessed this sign locally while speaking with each of the candidates to officially enter the race to represent Hastings-Lennox and Addington. In each conversation, for the first time in almost a decade of covering elections in Canada, the climate crisis came up on its own without the aid of my prodding curiosity.

As we hopefully soon exit the COVID-19 pandemic and begin to rebuild our society, economy, and overall way of life; we need to ensure that our design respects the planet as our life source and home. Now that we are over the strategic and greed-motivated denial of the climate crisis, we can get down to work on actually implementing solutions we have left on the shelf for too long.