

For what it's worth



July 30, 2019

By Nate Smelle

When thinking about the future and how our governments seem to be content with the status quo it is easy to get oneself wrapped up in a doom-and-gloom scenario. Around the world people from nearly every nation are facing record heat temperatures that are killing off the most vulnerable on a daily basis. The Centre for Disease Control recently reported that over the past 30 years, extreme heat has become the leading cause of weather-related deaths worldwide.

Unlike humans, the climate crisis knows no borders. Due to a lack of rainfall over the past six years, record numbers of Guatemalans have been migrating north to escape the food shortages and famine will inevitably arise on a more frequent basis from the climate crisis in the years to come. According to the United Nations, more than 840,000 people have been affected by this famine in Guatemala. Already, since last October the United States has apprehended more than 167,000 environmental refugees at its southern border. Considering only 23,000 were rounded up in all of 2016 the numbers fleeing the impact of the climate crisis are clearly on the rise.

Yet when it comes to taking meaningful action on climate change the overwhelming majority of the scientific community (97 per cent) would agree that not nearly enough is being done. With more than 100 wildfires burning in the Arctic at the moment one cannot deny the terrible truths of a changing climate that occupy the present. Ranking 54th among the 60 countries listed on the Climate Change Performance Index in 2019, Canada remains one of the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases, and poorest performing countries in terms of renewable energy and energy consumption. Rather than embracing apathy and going down with the ship, luckily we still have the opportunity to turn things around and start to build a more hospitable future.

While Canada lags behind, leading the race to the bottom with the U.S., other countries are stepping up to the challenge.

Earlier this week, as part of a tree planting initiative that aims to plant 4-billion trees between May and October of this year, Ethiopia set a world record planting more than 224 million trees in a single day. In only the first three months of the program alone, the country has already planted 2.6-billion trees. Tree planting is just one part of the country's #GreenLegacy strategy which the government's website says is designed "to raise the public's awareness about Ethiopia's frightening environmental degradation and, educate society on the importance of adapting green behaviour."

Another place I find hope when thinking about the frightening outcomes of the climate crisis is in the youth and their passion to create a better world. Through their own campaigns for peace, equality, democracy and environmental justice youth from around the world such as Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, Emma González, Autumn Peltier and Ta'Kaiya Blaney have inspired millions of others to stand up for their shared future. Locally there are plenty of young leaders taking action as well. For instance, Michael Marentette, has been fighting alongside his mother Grail Springs owner Madeleine Marentette to protect the environment and save his family's business. Since March, Brynn Kilpatrick has been leading the charge to raise awareness of the climate crisis through her

weekly Climate Strike. And most recently a coalition of youth from North Hastings High School's Youth Advisory Board have taken the initiative to celebrate inclusivity and the LGBTQ2S community by creating a rainbow crosswalk in downtown Bancroft. Although each of these youth are fighting for their own specific cause, the common message they are sharing with the community through their actions is loud and clear. That being ? their future, our future is worth fighting for.