

The Great Warming

Local Heroes: Guy Dauncey



The era of fossil fuels is still alive and smoking. Two centuries of carbon overload are driving Earth's atmosphere into uncharted territory. Now, a rapidly changing climate threatens the health of civilization, and we humans have begun to realize... it's time to make some changes.

The challenge belongs to the next generation. What we have handed them is a world that is heating up.

At 56, social entrepreneur and visionary, Guy Dauncey has been developing practical solutions to these problems, and believes it's time to come to terms with the fact that we created this situation: "We're entitled to as much land and as much energy and as much water as we want. Hey, we're North Americans. which is the core of the problem frankly."

And he says that we need to accept that the long road back to a more stable environment is going to take time and effort, and that there is still hope if we put our creativity and our money to work right now: "If the whole world went carbon neutral tomorrow morning, there's at least 30 years, maybe 50, maybe 100, for the chemicals in the atmosphere, for the CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide, the CFCs, and the other ones to come, to get back. We don't know how that stuff's going to pan out, we do know that we've got 50 years of really chaotic time coming up, we do know the world's insurance companies may go bankrupt trying to pay for all the mess, but we're sitting on the solutions and every year we waste is another year of chaos down the road for our grandchildren."

"We have to ask ourselves each one of us where we really stand. What do you want for the future?"

Every country... every community... every person is part of The Great Warming. And just as we are its cause, we must be part of the solution. For example, with what we consume, each Canadian is responsible for the production of about 20 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year. We need to find new ways to solve old problems.

Welcome to the year 2050 on planet Earth. A wild and woolly place where human beings have learned to live with the consequences of The Great Warming. All the signs were there back at the turn of the century. Like the five hundred and sixty-two twisters that touched down in North America 's Tornado Alley in the Spring of 2003. For years, scientists had been telling us that the carbon we were pumping into the atmosphere would change our climate and our lives. And from the vantage point of 2050 it's clear they were right. They said we were accelerating the pace of climate change, and just maybe, pushing Mother Nature beyond her speed limit. That is the legacy we left for the children of the early 21 st century to deal with.

You may not need to imagine it much longer. Extreme weather is becoming common, as is its aftermath. The rising seas of The Great Warming make hurricanes even wilder and more destructive. The repair bills will be in the trillions. somebody's going to have to pay.

Guy believes that good business and a healthy environment go hand in hand and that the right thing to do is often the smart thing to do. With a number of impressive green business projects to his credit, he explains: "My clients want green buildings and they want payback. Sometimes I can justify the costs, and sometimes I can't, but instead give them examples of other very real benefits. For example, there is proof that a healthy work environment increases productivity, decreases absenteeism and staff turnover; and that with fresh air and natural sunlight there is a tenfold payback from your employees."

In some cases, part of the problem in demonstrating savings in dollars and cents is Canada 's relatively low prices for energy. "In Canada , we might pay only 4 cents per kilowatt/hour for electricity, while in Japan the cost is 24 cents for the same service.

As a young man, Dauncey realized that the world was in a mess, and that he wanted to do something about it. But he also wanted a more interesting life. "I looked at traditional jobs and they had boring written all over them. No universities were offering environmental degrees, so I went out and to find my own way. My advice to young people is to get out, get involved and start doing things. You don't need to wait for someone to give you a job. You can make a difference."

He believes in the words of Margaret Mead who said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

He also says that you have treat your approach to the environment in a business like way to convince hard nosed corporations that what you're talking about makes sense because: "If you don't measure it, then they're not going to do anything about it."

Along with co-author Patrick Mazza, their book, *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change* offers practical solutions for all of us, and they explain why business and the environment go hand in hand: "The shift to energy efficiency, clean energy and the

solar revolution is going to require huge amounts of money. The European Commission has said that it wants to attract \$ 30 billion for investment in renewable energy projects within the next year. Where's it all going to come from?

There's no shortage of money in the world - it's sloshing around all over the place. Millions of ordinary people invest in stocks and mutual funds. But do you know where your money is, or what it's doing?

That's where "social responsible investment" (SRI) comes in. Since the 1980s, funds have been set up to serve the needs of people who want to avoid investing their money in investments that involve things such as tobacco, the military, pornography, cruelty to animals, bad labour practices, child labour, or abuse of the environment. There are over 60 SRI funds in North America , and they're doing just fine. In the USA , one investor in eight is contributing to SRI funds that collectively hold nearly \$ 3 trillion dollars in investments; 79% of the portfolios focus on companies' environmental records. With fuel cells, wind turbines and solar technology being so hot, can you invest in them? In the USA , the New Alternatives Fund invests 25% of its funds in renewable energy. In Europe , the Franco-Belgian banking group Dexia has launched an equity fund aimed at reducing global warming, offering investors the chance to earn carbon emission credits in addition to normal equity returns." In Canada , www.socialinvestment.ca is a good place to start.

n author, speaker, organizer and consultant who specializes in developing a positive vision of a sustainable future and translating that vision into action, you can visit Guy at www.earthfuture.com . He is one of the local heroes featured in **The Great Warming**, a three part documentary. The first episode will be broadcast on the Discovery Channel on Earth Day, 22 nd April 2004.