

The Future is NOW – so take the money and run!

By Vittorio Sbrocca

Global warming, greenhouse gases, ozone layers and “fine particulate matter” are just a few “catch phrases” most Windsorites are quite familiar with. We hear references to these terms more and more each and every day. As we move into the future these terms will become more prevalent as the effects of global climate change affect our lives more dramatically.

Spreading the word about global changes to our environment in order to educate the masses is a good thing, right? I mean the reasoning behind this is that as people become more aware of these problems they will act in such a way as to minimize the effects of these hazards, correct? It’s common sense. Tell people bad stuff is happening and will continue to happen until we change this and that and they’ll change for the good of humanity and the health of our planet for future generations, right? Wrong.

Even though we may know what’s right and what’s wrong when it comes to global climate change very few of us are taking the plethora of warnings around us to heart. It’s not in our nature. We’re wired to deal with more immediate issues in our daily lives, not concern ourselves with the future state of the planet. Things seem to be okay for us today and even tomorrow so why worry about the future?

Of course the only problem with this point of view is that the future is *now*. The ice-caps are melting *now*. The ozone holes in the atmosphere are increasing *now*. The amount of greenhouse gases in the air has been increasing yearly for centuries and these gases are affecting global climate *now*. The future is here today and we must act *now* simply because we have a “now” to act within. There may not be a “now” in the future because our inactions today may not provide for a future at all.

I apologize if I sound a little too apocalyptic, I don’t mean to be. In fact, not everything “environmental” has to be a struggle against human nature and our personal pursuit of happiness. Sometimes it pays to do something good for the environment. Take vehicle emissions, for example.

I think we all know by now that sucking on a tail pipe is not a good idea. Start your vehicle in a closed garage and you’ll be *sleeping with the fishes* within the hour. Not a good way to start your day. If we extrapolate this macabre scenario into the world at large, we can consider the earth’s atmosphere itself as everyone’s own two-car garage. It’s a limited enclosed space (albeit very large) that can fill up at some point with enough bad gases to affect the quality and even survival of life on this planet.

The solution is apparently quite simple - stop driving cars. This is not simple at all, of course. We’re too dependant on our vehicles, in fact they shape the way we live. I know I won’t stop driving my car completely, and I’m the author of this article. What we can do, however, is limit our driving and minimize the amount of time our vehicles are actually

running. It's a pretty easy thing to do and it will save you money. It may not change the world on its own but it's a start in the right direction.

Did you know that idling your vehicle for more than ten seconds costs more money and damages your car more than if you just turned it off and started it again? It's true – ask any mechanic. Today's fuel-injected starters and state-of-the-art design do not require any warm-up time between starting your engine and driving off to your destination. With most cars today you just need to turn the key and go.

Even in cold weather idling is not a good idea. Idling your car in winter warms up your engine but not other parts of your car that need warming up too, like the suspension, transmission and motor oil. These things only warm up through driving your car. This means the best way to warm up your car in winter is to drive it. Drive slowly for the first few kilometers so as not to push your car parts too hard, but after that it's smooth sailing (I mean driving).

A good *rule of thumb* to go by is this: If your car isn't moving, it doesn't need to be running. The exception to this rule is when you're in traffic, of course. You should never stop your vehicle in traffic, even at a stop light. It's unsafe for you and your vehicle. Any other time is a good time, though.

In fact, if you decrease your total idling time by 5 minutes a day, you'll save well over a thousand dollars a year and decrease your greenhouse gas emissions by over a ton or more. That's right, you can decrease your harmful vehicle emissions and save money doing it. It's a great way to help the environment while keeping money in your pocket. And you don't have to stop there. You could decide not to drive at all some of the time.

Instead of driving you could walk, ride a bike or make use of public transit. Our dependence on our vehicles won't stop until we change our driving habits. It doesn't have to be so bleak. Start with little baby steps like walking to the corner store instead of driving, or riding your bike instead of driving when traveling only a few kilometers. Eventually you may try riding to work, who knows, maybe you'll like it.

The point is every little bit helps. And every little bit you do to decrease noxious fuel emissions is literally money you can stuff right in your pocket. So remember, the future is now so take the money and run, or walk, or bike or just shut your car off when it's not running.