

Pay attention to climate change

It was with considerable surprise and disappointment I read the results of the two polls the Weekly Sentinel conducted in late August. In summary, only 9% of the respondents believed we should actively pursue alternative sources of energy such as wind and solar, and only 36% were concerned about the effects of climate change.

In other words, 91% appear to support the status quo when it comes to energy and the generation of electricity ? continued use of fossil fuels to power vehicles, heat homes and buildings and to generate electricity, along with the continued use of nuclear power. I'm guessing people were expressing their opposition to large-scale wind turbine projects, and so simply dismissed looking at any alternative forms of energy.

From my perspective, I believe it is vitally important to move forward with new technologies in sensible ways along with cleaner and safer, renewable energy sources. Air pollution continues to have a very negative impact on human health and the natural environment today. And nuclear energy is very expensive and concerns with its safety have grown significantly over the past three years following the devastation at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant in Japan.

However, I'm even more concerned about the response to the poll on climate change. It appears many people are either not aware of the huge, growing effects of climate change on the earth and countries throughout the world, or do not want to look beyond our present-day relatively comfortable lifestyle in Canada. Already there are dramatic impacts on the Arctic polar region with the melting of permafrost and vast areas of ice in the Arctic Ocean along with the quickly melting glaciers in Greenland and other mountainous regions. Ocean levels are rising, large coastal cities are at risk of flooding, and extreme weather events are much more common. Consider the significant flooding in Alberta earlier this year and more recently in Colorado, plus the unusual two-week stretch of warm weather in March 2012 which broke countless records.

The long-term impacts of climate change on human societies, agriculture and animal and plant habitats will likely be very significant and present great challenges to future generations.

Let's all pause to pay attention. What kind of legacy will we leave? May it be one of compassion, responsible stewardship of the earth and great hope and promise.

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