

# What You Can Do Personally About Global Warming

by Robert H. Barrigar

**Y**es, you personally can take constructive action to mitigate the impact of global warming.

Environmental scientists have reached an almost universal consensus that global warming will be a reality if (i) the “tipping point” has already been passed; or (ii) unless active immediate measures are taken to halt the rise in global temperatures. But if (ii) applies, and possibly even if (i) applies, humanity can take measures to prevent eradication of the human species. Such measures include water conservation measures, especially for agriculture; curbs on energy consumption; curbs on fossil fuels; curbs on population increase; consumption of locally produced goods, including agricultural products; improved standards for residential buildings, provision of cisterns for collection of rainwater, superior insulation, sunshades, and spacious useful basements; better public transportation.

But the foregoing measures require widespread government laws, regulations and implementation. What can you as an individual do, other than applaud the environmentalists?

You can promote local initiatives. You can champion local improvements that would facilitate implementation of some of the measures listed above. And you can promote local experiments that could lead to prevention or mitigation of some of the most serious consequences of global warming.

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Innovation Senior Fellow Dr. Barry Carin expressed doubt about the eventual success of international agreements intended to prevent irreversible global warming. As a more promising policy, he urged that governments initiate incremental changes, each having a positive effect helping to reverse or impede global warming, and each to be accomplished on a relatively small scale using limited resources. The cumulative effect of a number of such changes could constitute a significant impediment to irreversible global warming. The recommendations in this present paper are compatible with his advice.

Here’s an example: Help to restore and revive 19th-century farming on a local experimental basis. Such revival could, in the event of crisis, be expanded to apply to most available farmland. The restoration almost certainly would require some government funding, but it is a reasonable expectation that such funding will be forthcoming. Such farming requires much smaller acreage than typical modern farms; given the need for workhorses to pull plows and other farm implements, there is an upper limit on the amount of land that a farmer could work. Using workhorses and windmills, and (depending upon location) water mills, and wood for fuel, it is possible to eliminate the need for fossil fuels, and even, in some cases, electricity. A side benefit is creation of more employment opportunities in an age when employment opportunities are decreasing.

Such farming remains possible in the 21st century. Owner and founder Richard D. MacKenzie of Atlantic Draft Horse Supply in Hants County, Nova Scotia, started working with horses and farming with them in 1995. Mennonite and Amish communities have never stopped such farming, although there are reports of increasing use of tractors by such communities.

Small-scale farming with horses requires the use of farm equipment sized to that objective. In Saskatchewan alone, more than 30 manufacturers of farm equipment exist. Degelman Industries Ltd. is noted for its innovative farm equipment designs; its manufacturing operations are flexible and would be expected to accommodate an increased need for horse-drawn machinery.

Production of horse harnesses is a viable industry in Canada. What started out as a small business venture for Ontario manufacturer Aaron Martin Harness Ltd. has grown into a company that serves the draft and driving horse industry worldwide.

In short, there are ample supporting facilities in Canada for 21st-century renewal of 19th-century farming. Clearly adjustments would have to be made as experience may dictate, and many of those are unlikely to be reliably predictable. So beginning such renewal experimentally on a small number of farms and adjusting the renewal program from time to time as experience dictates, with expansion of the program as success builds upon success, is a sensible approach, and more likely to attract government funding than attempts to begin immediate start-up of a large number of such farms.

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Further, initiating the renewal program on a local basis in a number of different Canadian locales would permit widespread local participation by individuals familiar with what may be possible in their own or nearby communities.

You may not be in a position to be a farmer yourself. But you may well know people, especially younger people without good jobs, who might well be interested. And you might know local political leaders who could arrange to obtain government funding. And you might know other orga-

nizations and individuals in your community who would be willing to support an initiative of this sort.

Following Dr. Carin's recommendation, please consider what you personally could do to improve the chances of success for continuation of a viable human civilization.

*Bob Barrigar has served in a number of environmental capacities, including on the national executive of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (at the time known as the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada) and as President of its Ottawa-Hull Chapter. These were not mere passive roles but involved negotiation with the Government of Quebec as to highway routing to avoid sensitive areas and to provide underpasses for deer to avoid their direct crossing of roadways, and similar negotiation with Ontario Hydro to adjust the routing of a planned high-voltage line from Cornwall to Ottawa, again to avoid environmentally sensitive areas. He has written articles for the magazine Nature Canada. He operated a 400-acre farm in Pakenham, Ontario, for 10 years. He has taken a particular interest in global warming and related problems.*