

## **Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA)**

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Column: AS I SEE IT

### **Worcester takes a leading role in future of green energy**

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The Chinese written word for crisis is composed of the words for danger and opportunity. Worcester cannot escape the danger and must not ignore the opportunity inherent in the looming world energy crisis.

Competition is heating up for the world's remaining oil and the Earth is heating up because of skyrocketing greenhouse gas emissions. (Greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, mainly carbon dioxide and methane, trap the sun's heat, causing global warming.) At least 20 recent "peak oil" books describe an era, beginning this decade, when there will be less oil produced in the world each year than the year before. Almost all these authors predict growing hostility against the United States, growing world conflict, inflation and a long world recession or depression. Former CIA director James Woolsey warns that the war in Iraq is the first battle in World War IV. The Department of Defense is just one of the organizations that! have published dire climate change scenarios. Events depicted in these scenarios will compound the world's oil depletion woes.

But, in this crisis there is opportunity. In Boston on March 16, at the Climate Change Forum of the annual Northeast Sustainable Energy Association conference, Mark Sinclair, British consulate general, said the United Kingdom has, in the last 10 years, reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 14 percent while growing its economy by 35 percent. U.K. Trade and Investment sponsored the forum because it serves the England's strategic goals to stimulate business development in clean energy technologies such as wind turbines and solar panels.

England is worried about climate change because global warming could divert the Gulf Stream, which would change the climate in the British Isles from temperate to sub-Arctic.

The tone of the forum was upbeat, despite a sense of urgency. Forum panelist Greg Kats of Capital E said that green building is the major trend in

architecture, growing at more than 150 percent per year. Panelist Daniel Goldman of New Energy Capital Corp. said that some of the biggest institutional investors are asking Wall Street analysts to develop expertise in clean energy, asserting that companies that ignore oil-depletion and climate-change risk are neglecting their fiduciary responsibility, never mind their social responsibility.

Investment and growth in clean energy markets is good news locally. Rob Pratt, director of the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust, reported at the conference that well over 6,000 jobs in Massachusetts are in the clean energy and energy- efficiency sectors, and this number is growing rapidly. Three solar manufacturers are based in Massachusetts. The biggest online clean-energy store east of Texas is based in Worcester. Almost every town on Cape Cod is siting onshore wind turbines. Unlike the Cape Wind offshore wind farm, these siting efforts generate little news-making controversy because the townspeople are involved in the planning process and the townspeople will profit.

As you read more about the burgeoning clean-energy industry in coming months, remember that commercial activity in clean energy reduces the flow of oil dollars from our country and, through Saudi Arabia, to al-Qaida.

Worcester is on the right track. On March 29, the City Council agreed unanimously that by 2010, 20 percent of all electricity for Worcester municipal facilities shall come from clean sources. This follows from the City Council's commitment last year to participate in the Cities for Climate Protection campaign.

As reported in the Telegram & Gazette on March 30, Carissa Williams, whose master's thesis at Clark University was titled "Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the City of Worcester," is coordinating a Clean Energy project with the Regional Environmental Council and Clean Water Action. The project's first task is to promote the "Green Up" program. Two days after voting for the "20 percent by 2010!" resolution, Mayor Timothy P. Murray and a group of city councilors each signed up for the Green Up program. Now they will personally pay, as I do, a small premium on their electricity bills so their families' electricity comes from wind farms, solar arrays and landfill gas turbine generators. This stimulates the clean energy industry and reduces the demand for electricity from oil-fired, coal-fired and nuclear power plants.

Worcester gets a bonus: If 2,000 Worcester households sign up by June 30, the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust will give the city \$100,000 toward clean energy projects.

We Americans, 5 percent of the world's people, use 25 percent of the world's oil and produce 25 percent of all human-generated carbon dioxide emissions. Individually, we have a fantastic amount of good will, entrepreneurial savvy, curiosity, love of nature and concern for our children's future. Let's not leave it up to our kids to build a sustainable world from a war-torn, environmentally degraded and oil-depleted planet. Let's "Green Up" Worcester and begin working toward our greenhouse gas reduction goal. This effort will contribute to our nation's security. It will also, in the medium and long term: reduce our energy expenditures and risks; improve public health; bolster home, small business and municipal net worth and cash flow; and create new businesses and non-exportable jobs.

Lance McKee is a Worcester resident.

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