

TIRED OF HIGH FUEL PRICES?



Part of the  **canada.com** Network

Jump to: Newspapers, TV, Radio

[classifieds](#) [jobs](#) [cars](#) [obituaries](#) [celebrating](#) [shopping](#) [homes](#) [dating](#)



20°C
A few clouds
Detailed Forecast

[Oceanside Home](#)

Search for in the Oceanside Star

Site Index

- News
- Opinion
- Letters
- Adventure
- Arts
- Community
- BC News
- Health & Fitness
- Regional News
- Lifestyles
- Contact Us
- Back Issues
- Live Green

Classified

- classifieds
- driving (autos)
- working (jobs)
- homes
- personals
- shopping

Island Papers

Select...

Spotlight



Advertise with the
Vancouver Island
Newspaper Group

Bookmarks

- City of Parksville
- Parksville Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Qualicum Beach
- Qualicum Beach Chamber of Commerce
- Regional District of Nanaimo
- Oceanside Tourism Association
- Qualicum Beach/Parksville School District
- Vancouver Island Health Authority
- Oceanside Seniors Advisory Network
- Oceanside Volunteer Association
- Oceanside Coalition for Strong Communities

Ever-growing economy cannot be sustainable

Neil Dawe, Oceanside Star
Published: Monday, April 14, 2008

It's one of the single most important and most misunderstood terms in use today. Applied correctly it holds the key to our future survival and that of countless other species on the planet. Yet I can probably count on one hand the number of decision-makers who truly understands what is meant by "sustainability."

The term first gained widespread recognition in 1987, when the Brundtland Commission published 'Our Common Future.' Commissioned by the United Nations in response to growing concerns about the deteriorating state of the world's environment and natural resources, this report continues to affect us to this day.

The most commonly quoted definition of "sustainability" comes from the report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

 [Email to a friend](#)

 [Printer friendly](#)

Font: 

 [BOOKMARK](#) 

When this definition is used today, however, two critical aspects from the report are usually missed. The first is the concept of 'needs,' particularly the needs of the poor. The second and most important is the concept of limitations on the environment's ability to meet those needs.

In fact, the report cautions that sustainable development requires the encouragement and

promotion of consumption standards that are within the bounds of ecological possibility.

A local case in point is one of the RDN's sustainability yardsticks based on the Brundtland definition, which asks the question: "Is there positive economic growth in the region?"

But is a growing economy truly an indicator of sustainability?

Economic growth is an increase in the production and consumption of goods and services. It depends upon an increasing population, increasing per-capita production and consumption, or a combination of the two.

Virtually all our goods – including those required to support the services we require – come directly from ecosystems. The economy only grows by appropriating and, in many cases, liquidating natural capital (including water, soils, timber, minerals, wildlife habitat, etc.). Much of this natural capital feeds our economy, where it is converted to consumer goods and ultimately becomes waste.

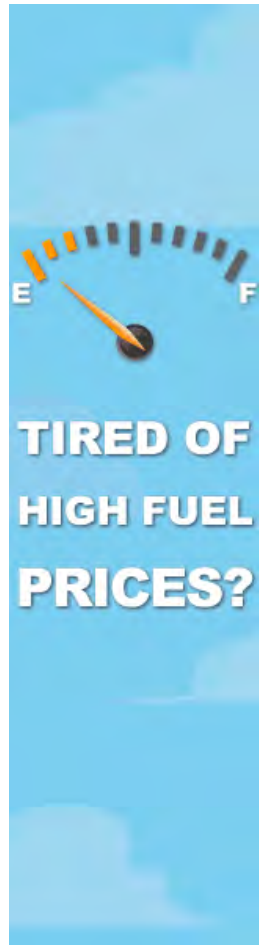
According to the best science to date, we have already exceeded the carrying capacity of our planet. We are harvesting renewable resources faster than nature can replenish them and dumping our wastes faster than dwindling natural ecosystems can assimilate them.

An ever-growing economy is not sustainable because it demands more and more from a limited supply of natural capital.

This doesn't mean that there is a conflict between a healthy economy and sustainability. They can co-exist remarkably well, assuming the economy does not exceed the capacity of ecosystems to regenerate the resources we use and to assimilate our wastes.

So, if anything, positive economic growth in a region is a sure indicator of non-sustainability.

Parksville's Official Community Plan proclaims, "population growth must be accepted" in the city, which also contradicts what it means to be sustainable.



TIRED OF HIGH FUEL PRICES?



Part of the  **canada.com** Network

Jump to: Newspapers, TV, Radio

[classifieds](#) [jobs](#) [cars](#) [obituaries](#) [celebrating](#) [shopping](#) [homes](#) [dating](#)



20°C
A few clouds
Detailed Forecast

[Oceanside Home](#)

Search for in the Oceanside Star

Site Index

- News
- Opinion
- Letters
- Adventure
- Arts
- Community
- BC News
- Health & Fitness
- Regional News
- Lifestyles
- Contact Us
- Back Issues
- Live Green

Classified

- classifieds
- driving (autos)
- working (jobs)
- homes
- personals
- shopping

Island Papers

Select...

Spotlight



Advertise with the
Vancouver Island
Newspaper Group

Bookmarks

- City of Parksville
- Parksville Chamber of Commerce

Ever-growing economy cannot be sustainable

Neil Dawe, Oceanside Star
Published: Monday, April 14, 2008

Why must unending growth be accepted? Do we have no control over how we want to see our community and our quality of life develop?

Qualicum Beach takes another approach. It seeks "Carefully managed growth and development based on a sustainable quality of life and a maximum size of community of approximately 11,000 population based on the build out under the goals and policies of this OCP."

This is a significant statement from a courageous council and reaches towards sustainability specifically because limits are recognized and stated.

Sustainable social and economic well-being requires that we choose to live within the limits of our biosphere. If the ecological processes and biological productivity of the Earth don't endure, neither do its life-support services.

We can continue along our current business-as-usual path but we won't be leaving our children and grandchildren many options.

Our impacts on biodiversity and vital ecosystems are already taking their toll. This is reflected in the recent conclusions of the largest study of ecosystem health ever undertaken, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: "the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted."

We have limited time to make better choices. The question is, will we choose to be sustainable or not?

Neil Dawe is a wildlife biologist living in Parksville. You can reach him at nkdawe@qualicuminstitute.ca

© Oceanside Star 2008

1 | 2 |

Ads by Google

