

Energy is life – and nuclear power can provide the reliable clean energy essential to our future

It has been about two months that most of us have been staying home to help flatten the curve of the COVID 19 pandemic. While it may seem difficult, we keep telling our kids how lucky we are to have incomes as we work from home to limit our health risk. There are many who are struggling to meet their expenses having lost their jobs and are extremely stressed about what their future may hold. We also have to appreciate those who continue to go to their workplace, to help us stay fed and have what we need to survive, often for very little pay while they are at increased risk of becoming sick. And most of all, we need to acknowledge the challenges faced by our health care workers who are working so hard to try and help those who are suffering most from this illness.



Just try to imagine what would it be like to be at home if we couldn't count on the very basics such as staying warm or keeping our food fresh and having the means to cook it. What would we do without the internet and our mobile phones that keep us connected to the outside world and enable us to do our work? These things we need to maintain our health, be fed, work at home and stay safe, all depend upon access to reliable cost-effective energy.

Yes, some will point out the oil market has crashed, and energy demand has dropped the largest amount since the second world war. But what we need to understand is that while demand is down as our economies have ground to a halt, our **reliance** on energy has never been greater. Without access to reliable economic energy, suffering would increase. Energy not only allows us to live, it enables us to thrive.

Many of you will have watched Michael Moore's latest film "Planet of the Humans". We will not review it here as there are numerous articles and videos out there to explain why it is both right and completely wrong in its assessment of the

environmental movement. And while some may find it fun to watch progressives take on their own set of beliefs; what is really important is the recognition that intermittent renewables, wind and solar energy, cannot solve our climate crisis on their own. We talked about this last year when the International Energy Agency (IEA), issued its report **“Nuclear Power in a Clean Energy System”** that clearly stated *“despite the impressive growth of solar and wind power, the world’s overall share of clean energy sources in total electricity supply in 2018, at 36%, was the same as it was 20 years earlier”* after spending billions of dollars to increase their use.

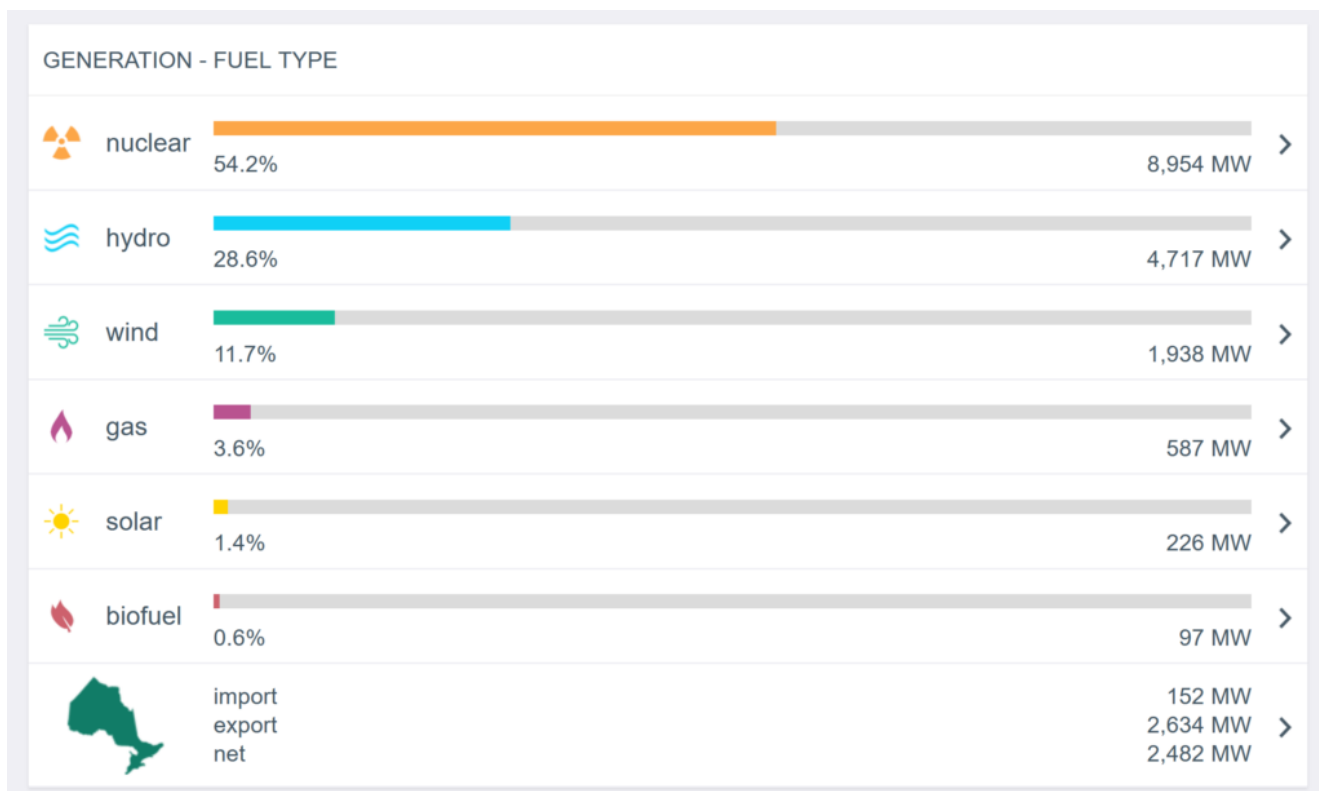
Unfortunately, the movie seems to say there is no solution. It takes the anti-capitalistic view that continued growth is simply unsustainable suggesting the only way to reduce the burden on the planet is to reduce both population and our consumeristic approach to life, so that we all must learn to live happily with less. These folks look to how much the environment has improved during this pandemic as we stay at home as an example of what is possible.

However, it should come as no surprise that if we sit home doing nothing, then the air will be cleaner, but at what cost? While this may be able to be sustained for some time to help solve an urgent crisis if we all work together, it cannot be the way of the future as millions are out of work with no way to support their families’ basic needs. And to suggest this is a viable path is an insult to the more than one billion people on the planet that have no ready access to energy and who are suffering from the most difficult of human conditions, extreme poverty.

In fact, we know the best way to limit global population is to create wealth. World Bank data clearly shows that population growth is lowest in wealthier countries. The least developed countries have a growth rate of 2.4% (2018 data), while the richest are much lower with the US at 0.6%, the EU at 0.2%,

and Japan not even replacing its population at -0.2% growth. The answer is not reducing our reliance on energy but rather ensuring that everyone has access to clean affordable energy.

We have this energy source available to us today, nuclear power. It was completely overlooked in Planet of the Humans (by design), yet it can provide the world with an almost unlimited amount of low carbon, economic and most of all, extremely reliable energy. The movie was right. Renewables cannot be counted on to solve this problem alone, but together with nuclear power, there is a future that meets all our needs. We see this in Ontario, Canada. Today is a typical work day during the pandemic and our electricity is being generated almost completely from nuclear and renewables (hydro, wind and solar), supplemented with a small amount of gas generation so that we are emitting an extremely low 16 g/kWh of carbon, essentially nothing.



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So, if the environmental movement can critically review its commitment to renewables and realize that maybe they can't do

it all; then could they also be wrong about nuclear power? A critical look with an open mind may actually surprise them. Of course, for those that want to believe that going back to simpler times is the only path, having abundant clean energy is not desirable. But these are also the people who are sitting in their comfortable homes, with ample energy, so they can use the internet to do interviews, talk on the phone, and make movies.

[This post is dedicated to my mother, Rennie Caplan, who passed away on April 25. This will be the first post in my 10 years of blogging she will not read. Although she had little interest in the subject matter, I was sure to hear after every post that she read it and thought it was wonderful. There can be no replacement for the absolute support received from a parent, even when we are well passed the age of needing it. Our family will never be the same without her. She will be missed, and we will always remember her for the wonderful mother and grandmother she was.] Milt