

## 1. Stories of Citizens Who are Changing Their Life Path to Help Prevent Climate Change

Profound changes are occurring across the face of our Home planet, Mother Earth – changes that were not readily apparent 25 years ago. These changes are not primarily driven by the natural cycles of the Earth itself. Rather, they are driven by the collective impact of human society, and most particularly by our decision to extract and consume increasingly vast quantities of fossil fuels. The changes are so sweeping that in just the last two decades they have caused the oceans to grow more acidic, Arctic sea ice to melt in vast quantities, and the great mountain glaciers of the Earth to give up much of their ice. They have also caused the great ice sheets of Greenland to melt at an accelerating rate, both from the surface and from their underpinnings in the ocean below. Yet all of this is just the beginning – like rumbling thunder in the distance – unless a more sustainable approach to energy production and economic development is chosen.

The changes described above directly correspond to an ever increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases are heat trapping gases that exist naturally, but that are also released from manmade activities, particularly the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. In nature, greenhouse gas concentrations are miraculously at levels well suited to supporting life on Earth. However, current rates of fossil fuel extraction and consumption are driving up the atmospheric concentration of these gases every year – without exception.

The changes in the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases are closely monitored by the scientific community, but to date have been watched with only passing interest by most Saskatchewan residents. Yet there are some among us who have recognized the far reaching implications of what is occurring, and have changed their life path accordingly.

For example, the Citizen Hearings heard from Shane Wolffe who, recognizing what is occurring, gave up his job at the Saskatchewan Government Insurance head office in Regina, and decided instead to spend his time promoting cost effective ways of reducing fossil fuel use. He has focused his efforts on helping homeowners save money and energy through carefully planned home retrofits, and has written a practical book on the subject entitled Future Proof My Building. (Refer to [FutureProofMyBuilding.com](http://FutureProofMyBuilding.com))

James Glennie of Saskatoon has worked in the energy sector for 23 years. The first 10 of those were spent in the oil and gas industry, but James concluded that the future was not in fossil fuels, but rather in renewable energy, which has a far lower greenhouse gas footprint. He switched careers and focused his efforts on developing wind energy, first in the United Kingdom as Head of Offshore Wind at the British Wind Energy Association, and then in New Zealand as Chief Executive of the New Zealand Wind Energy Association. He has recently moved to Saskatchewan where he is actively building support for community owned wind power.

Jan Norris, of Saskatoon, has also realized that current rates of burning gasoline and other fossil fuels is putting the world on a dangerous track. Saddened by what she sees happening to the natural world, Jan resolved to dramatically reduce her own greenhouse gas footprint. She did this by cutting back her travel by automobile and airplane. In fact, **from September 1, 2011 to September 1, 2012, she set an example by not using her car at all for an entire year, and never once boarding a plane.** She walked a great deal, and also used public transit.

It was not an easy experiment. Grocery shopping was more challenging. She often walked for up to an hour to get to work. She particularly missed not getting out of the city during the summer, and not going on her usual northern camping trip. On the other hand, there were important benefits. For every litre of gasoline she avoided burning, she prevented the release of 5 pounds of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Walking was an excellent source of exercise, and she got to know many people on her walks, helping to build a greater sense of community.

**Clearly, the changes occurring around us are worrying some of Saskatchewan's citizens so deeply that they are willing to make sacrifices and career changes to try to prevent further damage from happening. With this in mind, the Hearings and the Commissioners explored more deeply what is occurring on our planet and in our own prairie environment.**