

earth they could be ignored, as they have been in much of mainstream economics. Economists are not alone in treating the economy as a self-contained, free standing system largely independent of its environmental setting. It is a widely held view that environmental protection is just one among multiple competing interests to be traded off against the economy. And anyway, this mainstream perspective teaches that if resource and environmental constraints are encountered, scarcities will be signalled by increases in prices that will induce a variety of beneficial changes in behaviour and technology. Should this system of scarcity, price, response fail then economists can estimate 'shadow' prices which can be imposed directly through taxes or used indirectly through policies based on cost-benefit analysis to fix the problem.

To ecological economists, this is an inadequate response to the myriad problems of resource depletion, environmental contamination and habitat destruction confronting humanity in the 21st century. They question the pursuit of endless economic growth and contemplate a very different kind of future.

In my own work, I have examined whether and under what conditions a country like Canada could have full employment, no poverty, much reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and maintain fiscal balance, without relying on economic growth. Using a comparatively simple model of the Canadian economy I have explored scenarios in which these objectives are met. The ingredients for success include a shorter work year to reduce unemployment yet retain the advantages of technological progress, a carbon price to discourage greenhouse gas emissions, and more generous anti-poverty programs.

In such an economy, success would not be judged by the rate of economic growth but by more meaningful measures of personal and community well-being. We would adjust to strict limits on our use of materials, energy, land and waste, guided by prices that pro-

vide more accurate information about real rather than contrived scarcities. We would enjoy more services and fewer but more durable and repairable products, and we would value use over status when deciding what to buy. Rampant consumerism would be history, advertising would be more informative and less persuasive, and new technologies would be better screened to avoid problems to be fixed later, if at all. Infrastructure, buildings and equipment would be more efficient in their use of energy and we would think and act more locally and less globally. With more free time at our disposal we would educate ourselves and our children for life not just work.

Is all this simply wishful thinking of a sort that flourishes in troubled times? I think not. The undercurrent of discontent with modern life is rich with ideas for a better future, one that is not dependent on economic growth. For example, in March of this year the UK's Sustainable Development Commission delivered its report 'Prosperity without Growth?' to the British Government endorsing and amplifying many of the ideas expressed here. The Centre for the Advancement of a Steady State Economy based in the USA has obtained over 3000 signatures on its position statement designed to help change the goal of the economy from growth to sustainability. At the local level, Transition Towns has spread in less than four years from the UK to many countries including Canada, to raise awareness of sustainable living and to build local resilience in response to the combined threats of peak oil and climate change. Even mainstream economists are moving with the tide. Nobel Laureate economist Robert Solow said last year: "It is possible that the US and Europe will find that...either continued growth will be too destructive to the environment and they are too dependent on scarce natural resources, or that they would rather use increasing productivity in the form of leisure." Let's add Canada to the list and go from there.🌍

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From Homelessness to Hope: Constructing Just, Sustainable Communities for All God's People

In June 2008, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) "affirm[ed] the complexity of issues surrounding homelessness and the need for a holistic approach that (1) addresses ministry to those experiencing or risk of homelessness and (2) the structural components necessary for a comprehensive solution."

Principles affirmed as foundation to faithful ministry with persons who are homeless include: universal access to safe, decent, accessible, affordable, permanent housing is a measure of a just society, The church is called to create communities of hospitality, The church is called to create sustainable communities where people can be securely housed, The church is called the challenge society to provide safe, decent, accessible, affordable, and permanent housing for all persons who cannot secure such housing through their own means.

The Assembly encouraged congregations, presbyteries, synods, and other church-related entities to pursue comprehensive responses to the crisis of homelessness and affordable housing, including providing the physical space and the spiritual openness to address the problem, including:

Shelters, transitional housing, mixed income communities, and other affordable housing and links to service providers

The impact of employment practices, including sustainable wages and benefits, employment of youth and adults reentering the workforce after being homeless or institutionalized

Links with local, regional, and national coalitions that advocate for worker justice, green design in homes, and affordable housing

Supporting residents in public housing in their efforts to organize and have a voice in their communities

Application of stewardship strategies in the area of homelessness, such as allocating physical space for services and tithing capital campaign proceeds

The Assembly affirmed ...public policy recommendations in four categories:

Housing and Services: preservation of Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program; restoration and expansion of Project-based Section 8, including revitalization of 2.5 million units; development of housing trust funds at the municipal, state and national levels; enactment of inclusionary zoning policies and other strategies to achieve mixed-income communities; and improved enforcement of existing nondiscrimination laws with regard to housing and home financing.

Services for Persons Experiencing Homelessness or at Risk of Homelessness: revision of municipal zoning codes to include temporary housing and to prohibit discrimination based on housing status; increased funding for the federal departments that serve the homeless, including the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, the Dept. of Health and Human Services, and the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs; expansion of adequate funding for supportive housing (housing plus services); increased investment in the McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Assistance programs; and continued investment in several programs that help low-income people obtain and stay in housing.

Lending Practices: development of foreclosure prevention strategies and programs to benefit households at risk; and restrictions on predatory and abusive lending practices.

Taxation: support fiscally responsible federal budget priorities and adequate revenues to ensure long-term funding for the programs outlined above; tax incentives that encourage "smart growth;" more equitable distribution of tax benefits for those at lower income levels, including expansion of the EITC and CTC to more low-income people, and the development of a refundable tax credit targeted to low-income renters.🌍