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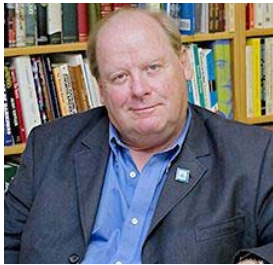
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“The climate change genie is out of the bottle and a failure to act could clearly cost us our prosperity”

Renowned Canadian policy adviser says “climate change disruptions are pounding the hell out of our infrastructure”

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“Everybody knows about it, people are experiencing it, but nobody wants to talk about it.” That’s how Robert Sandford described “the



(<https://citizenactionmonitor.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/robert-sandford.jpg>)

Robert Sandford

silence around the silence” on climate change when he spoke last week in Hamilton. The new Water Security Research Chair for the United Nations University based in Hamilton didn’t speak specifically about Hamilton’s frozen water pipes, but he bluntly noted that the “disruptions to the climate system are pounding the hell out of the infrastructure we can’t afford to maintain and replace.” And he explained a warming arctic is linked to extremely cold winters.” —Robert Sandford

In a June 2014 article, the distinguished Canadian ecologist, William Rees, suggested that it may take some major catastrophe to precipitate a “great awakening”, impelling world leaders to agree that the science of climate change is basically correct and demands a decisive collective response. (Source: *[Avoiding Collapse: An agenda for sustainable degrowth and relocating the economy](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/avoiding-collapse)* (<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/avoiding-collapse>)).

Robert Sandford evidently agrees with Rees, suggesting “the unthinkable” may be closer than we think –

“...more and more people are paying attention to the disruptions that they’re seeing, and that means more and more people are seeing what’s really happening right in front of their very eyes, and they’re seeing that this is consistent with science instead of what special interests would have us consider....the genie is out of the bottle and a failure to act could clearly cost us our prosperity.”

To read a summary of Sandford’s recent talk in Hamilton about “the inthinkable”, click on the following linked title. Optionally, below is a cross-posting of the article.

The new sex (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1338) by CATCH News (Hamilton), March 15, 2015

"Everybody knows about it, people are experiencing it, but nobody wants to talk about it." That's how Robert Sandford described (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1337) "the silence around the silence" on climate change (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1336) when he spoke last week in Hamilton.

The new Water Security Research Chair (<http://inweh.unu.edu/epcor-endows-unu-water-security-chair/>) for the United Nations University based in Hamilton didn't speak specifically about Hamilton's frozen water pipes, but he bluntly noted that the "disruptions to the climate system are pounding the hell out of the infrastructure we can't afford to maintain and replace." **And he explained a warming arctic is linked to extremely cold winters.**

"The less ice there is in the arctic, the slower and wavier the jet stream appears to become and the more erratically it behaves," he noted (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1337). "And therefore more turbulent atmospheric warm and cold fronts end up and persist in places in the mid-latitudes in which they were not common in the past. I think you've experienced that."

Homeowners have reported over 1100 frozen water pipes this winter – double last year and twenty-five times the rate in a 'normal' winter. Last year's 560 breaks cost (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/news/city-looking-at-grants-for-residents-with-frozen-pipes-1.2978452>) **taxpayers \$700,000, and the intensity of the problem this year has city councillors considering a compassionate grant program similar to the one that has handed out over \$5 million to victims of flooding in the last decade. City staff also are scrambling** (<http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5476520-share-water-with-frozen-neighbours-city/>) **to deal with nearly 100 water main breaks in the past month.**

The story is similar in cities across Ontario including Guelph (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/author-thomas-king-helps-guelph-neighbours-with-frozen-pipes-1.2982519>), Toronto (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/east-end-hit-hardest-by-frozen-water-lines-1.2980642>), Ottawa (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-s-frozen-pipe-problem-growing-wait-time-now-5-days-1.2983581>), Sudbury (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/thawing-frozen-water-pipes-can-result-in-hefty-bills-for-homeowners-1.2975470>) and Windsor (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/frozen-pipes-lead-to-51-service-calls-to-enwin-this-winter-1.2984245>) and many other communities (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/frozen-water-pipes-1.2572762>) extending into the Maritimes. Bills are piling up in Charlottetown (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/charlottetown-over-budget-with-water-system-repairs-1.2988482>), and Toronto staff are facing (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/frozen-pipes-a-big-problem-in-toronto-this-february-1.2972684>) ten times the usual number of broken pipe reports.

Sandford sees (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1337) **a silver lining in these situations – "more and more people are paying attention to the disruptions that they're seeing, and that means more and more people are seeing what's really happening right in front of their very eyes, and they're seeing that this is consistent with science instead of what special interests would have us consider." He thinks that's crucial because "the genie is out of the bottle" and a failure to act "could clearly cost us our prosperity."**

The advisor to a policy group of former heads of state like Bill Clinton and Jean Chretien, Sandford (<http://www.rwsandford.ca/>) has also been part of World Bank meetings and reports that **the "unthinkable" prospect of climate change causing reversed development is now being discussed in these forums.**

It's already happened in Pakistan. "In 2010 and 2011 Pakistan was affected by major floods caused by heavy rainfall during the monsoon period. Land use changes had altered natural drainage patterns and river flows aggravating flood risk and 2500 people died," Sandford recounted. (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1337) "And 27 million people, almost the entire population of Canada, were displaced. The economic losses were estimated at \$7.4 billion and the country's development has been reversed – set back for years."

Sandford's key message is that changes to the hydrological cycle have become the most obvious manifestation of climate change – melting ice, sea level rise, extreme rainstorms, and severe droughts. "Rising mean temperatures have begun to change a vast array of visible and invisible patterns and parameters that define the foundation of our world as we've come to know it, at least how it's defined by water."

February – despite its record low temperatures in Hamilton – was the 357th consecutive month of above average global temperatures – a record extending back to 1985. Last year had the highest global temperatures yet and January was (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/service/global/map-blended-mntp/201501.gif;%20http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/2015/1>) the second hottest on record.

Sandford doesn't offer any reprieve – especially where water is concerned – noting (http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1337) that the atmosphere can carry seven percent more water vapour with each increase of one Celsius degree.

"What we haven't understood until now is the extent to which the fundamental stability of our political structures and global economy are in part predicated on relative hydrologic stability and predictability. And as a result the loss of hydrologic stability, political stability and the stability of our global economy in all regions of the world are now at risk."

Robert William Sandford (http://www.rmbooks.com/author_details.php?contributor_id_1=1717) is the EPCOR Chair of the Canadian Partnership Initiative in support of United Nations "Water for Life" Decade and an associate of the Centre for Hydrology, which is part of the Global Water Institute at the University of Saskatchewan. He is also a member of Canada's Forum for Leadership on Water; serves as water governance adviser and senior policy author for Simon Fraser University's Adaptation to Climate Change Team; and has been senior water policy adviser for the Interaction Council, a global public policy forum composed of more than thirty former heads of state. He is the author of numerous books on water issues, including Saving Lake Winnipeg (RMB, 2013), Cold Matters: The State and Fate of Canada's Fresh Water (RMB, 2012) and Restoring the Flow: Confronting the World's Water Woes (RMB, 2011).

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