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Gabriola's Islands Trust has adopted bylaw No.253, which sets as its objective a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 33% by 2020. Without knowing how a "greenhouse gas" is to be defined (does burning wood create GHG that wouldn't otherwise exist?); without knowing which emissions are to be included and which not (does my trip to Australia count?); and without knowing what the baseline is (Federal politicians are good on this), it is difficult to know if this precisely expressed objective is achievable.

If we define the baseline as being for the year 2008, the latest for which carefully researched numbers are available, then we have to consider that by 2020, the population of Gabriola will likely have risen from roughly 4300 to 6000. To achieve an absolute reduction of 33%, the *per capita* reduction will therefore have to be about 48%. The 2008 total emissions of roughly 15,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent will need to be reduced to roughly 10,000 tonnes in spite of a population increase of close to 40%. Needless to say, this is ambitious.

To see how ambitious, we can go through the list of contributions to the 15,000 tonnes and see the effect of, not just improving the numbers, but eliminating emissions all together. For example, according to the audit, if we all completely stopped using our cars and trucks, the total emissions would drop to 9,500 tonnes, pretty good if you like staying home. Thinking Site C to supply the extra electricity if we switch to electric cars is not on because Site C will take ten years to build. Abandoning completely the use of anything else but cars would fail to do the trick. No ferry? 12,500 tonnes. No foreign food? 13,000 tonnes. No electricity? 14,000 tonnes. And when it gets down to the small stuff, like abolishing garbage, doing without furnace oil, and so on. Forget it. It won't make more than a small dent in the total.

I hate to be negative about these things because so many good people have good intentions, but until we face up to the fact that, if we want to avoid climate change, and that is debatable, then if we do, there has to be more than tinkering, and there has to be more than "aspirational targets" that nobody has much idea how to achieve. The real problems are that we like our lifestyle too much—nobody's going to give up their car, or lobby for reduced ferry service—and we refuse to even think about the problem of how to control population growth—deer and broom maybe, but humans? never—and until we do that, the environment is going to continue to go under as the single objective becomes how to make more room for, and feed, ten billion of us.