

Greenpeace's carbon footprint takes wing

Written by John Carpay

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By John Carpay, For The Calgary Herald

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The hypocrisy of Greenpeace was on full display last week, when one of its law-breaking protesters was granted bail so he could go home to Belgium, after hanging a "Separate Oil and State" banner from the Calgary Tower. Greenpeace preaches that producing and consuming energy is sinful and destructive, but the organization has no qualms about its activists using extra energy to come thousands of miles around the world for unnecessary trips. Why not rely exclusively on Calgary activists to carry out silly stunts? Are there so few Greenpeace protesters in this city that foreigners must be brought in?

I don't know if this Belgian flew across the Atlantic to get himself arrested in Calgary. Perhaps he used an environmentally friendly sailboat to get from Antwerp to Montreal, and then hitchhiked from Montreal to Calgary, thereby demonstrating his deep religious commitment to reducing his "carbon footprint." But I would bet good money he used a plane to get here, and a plane to get back home to Belgium.

The Greenpeace website blames Alberta's oil production for increased "substance abuse, gambling and family violence." But these problems exist around the world, regardless of how high or low the unemployment rate is, and regardless of the extent to which an economy is based on oil. For someone to say "the tar-sands made me get drunk, beat my wife, and gamble away my paycheque" is ridiculous and offensive.

Greenpeace whines about how oilsands workers who earn big paycheques must endure "long hours, bad accommodation, remote locations, and a lack of job security." But these are the very reasons why their wages are high. Without high wages to attract workers to the oilsands, why would people leave more comfortable and secure jobs?

Greenpeace says a move to "green energy" like solar and wind power will ensure energy security and "create millions of new green jobs." If that were true, it would have happened a long time ago. But wind and solar power can only function with massive, permanent subsidies

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from taxpayers. If there are no limits on how high our taxes go, then there are no limits on switching to solar and wind power.

Website claims of "dirty oil" destroying "over a quarter of Alberta" and threatening "the political stability of human civilization" might play well in Belgium. But we Albertans have every reason to be proud of our environmental and human rights records when compared to other oil-producing jurisdictions.

Greenpeace activists want a warm house in the winter, like the rest of us. They want modern conveniences like electricity, and the multitude of machines and gadgets powered by it. You won't find them freezing in the dark for the sake of their principles.

They will probably take a plane to cross the Atlantic, not a sailboat. Yet their website suggests they want Alberta to shut down oilsands production entirely. If this is the case, it would throw hundreds of thousands of Albertans out of work, considering the economic spinoffs.

Greenpeace is acting like a spoiled teenager who denounces his parents for being shallow materialists, but is more than happy to receive free room and board from them.

Thankfully, the spoiled teenager usually grows up and learns that the things he enjoys in life -- food, shelter, clothing, and high-speed Internet -- all cost money. Money must be earned through work, and work is provided by an economy which makes use of the Earth's resources. The teenager may even realize one day that participating in the economy does not necessarily make you shallow or materialistic.

Meanwhile, the Belgian Greenpeace activist may come to realize that an airplane's fuel, if it didn't come from Alberta's oilsands, likely came from another place on the planet where human rights and the environment receive far less respect than they do in Alberta.

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