

CHAMPIONS

FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Ordinary people taking extraordinary action

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: RETHINKING BUSINESS AS USUAL

Glenn Wright grew up in Saskatoon but loved visiting his relatives who farmed. He always envied farm life. He was drawn to the wide-open skies, but above all he loved driving the machines. His love of farms and vehicles continues to this day, but his approach to both unexpectedly changed after 2006.

That year Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" was released. The movie stunned Glenn. He had never heard about climate change, even when he studied Engineering. Skeptical by nature, he launched into years of checking the science and the data. Eventually, and reluctantly, Glenn had to accept that burning fossil fuels is the biggest driver of climate change, which threatens all of Earth's systems. He grieved that his beloved motorsports hobbies, including drag racing, burned fossil fuels.

Something had to change, but rather than abandon his hobby, Glenn decided to rethink it. In 2018, Glenn and his wife bought a used 2013 Nissan Leaf and have since been slowly switching out other vehicles with electric. Now Glenn and his wife both drive electric vehicles. He and his son retrofitted a pick-up truck to electric in 2021. Glenn continues to drag race, but now it's with an electric vehicle, which has no trouble keeping up with the other vehicles. Glenn estimates the transition to electric transportation has saved his family \$30,000 in gasoline costs since 2018.

He is working to electrify a 1965 International Harvester 60hp tractor for use on his farm. He and his wife had bought a small parcel of land in 2004 which has since expanded to a small farm of about



700 acres. Though electric tractors are not yet available in Canada, Glenn is optimistic that he can convert this one based on the experience converting the pickup truck. The tractor conversion is in the early stages, and Glenn hopes to have it operating this year. He already charges his electric vehicles from his solar array, and he envisions a future where he could generate his own renewable solar "fuel" for the farm.

Glenn's interest in reducing greenhouse gas emissions has spilled over into other areas of his life. He has super insulated his home, replaced doors and windows, converted to heat pumps, and installed a small solar array. Combined, these measures have reduced the energy demand of his home by 75% and is currently saving about \$7,000/year.

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On his farm, Glenn reduces the use of inputs, which originate from fossil fuels. One way he does this is by intercropping, which involves two or three crops planted together. One of them is typically a nitrogen fixer, like peas, alfalfa, or lentils. This reduces the need for inorganic nitrogen fertilizers and their greenhouse gases. Intercropping requires some specialized equipment, but that equipment has provided other benefits. When separating the intercrop harvest, Glenn also separates weed seeds, which are used as animal feed. Glenn also strives to keep cover crops year-round. This supports soil health and reduces the need for fertilizers.

Since 2006 Glenn has made dramatic changes in all areas of his life, all stemming from a movie that, at first, he did not believe. But Glenn knows we must "be the change you want to see in the world." Through all these changes Glenn has learned that while he is reducing his greenhouse gas emissions, he is also saving money – on gasoline, on natural gas, and on farm inputs. Good for our shared planet, and good for the pocketbook.

This column is a collaborative project of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – RCE Saskatchewan.



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