

# PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

Volume 6, Number 6

<https://planetaryhealthweekly.com>

February 6, 2020

Hi,

fortunate enough to enjoy some quiet time and more of Mother Nature's great splendour this last week, cross-country skiing in beautiful Quebec (see End Shots), I was confronted again in my reading with global climate crises contradictions. Too many countries are continuing to add coal powered electrical generation to their grids. They all can and should be doing better, refusing such enormously destructive projects and instead leading the way towards life saving green technologies. Reading that Japan is planning to build as many as 22 new coal-burning generating stations, while paradoxically hosting the best athletes of the world this coming summer, really bothered me. This, too, added to recent stories about Germany (currently with at least 40 coal plants and the only one under construction in the EU) and China (with more coal generation under construction than rest of the world combined) all continuing to exploit cheap coal to the detriment of the whole world. Why are they deciding to do this, when even economic analyses show it's not necessarily cheaper? Where is their moral compass? Where is their leadership? Today's 'Opinion' story about the failure of our current economic system tells us. No surprise, it's all in the pursuit of quick profit, satisfying the demands of political lobbies all the while failing to lead us in new directions and so likely endangering the future of my grandchildren and beyond. Exasperation and disgust followed by renewed commitment to work for positive change is what I feel.

Perhaps, too, you'll get some of this feeling while also enjoying the nature that surrounds us, wherever you live, even in the depths of winter. It's still there to behold and always beautiful as a friend reminded me the other day.

For more news and information about our changing nature and deep social problems please take a look at today's **Planetary Health Weekly** (#6 of 2020). In it

you'll find stories on:

- The top UN court ordering Myanmar to immediately stop its ongoing genocide against the Rohingya,
- Climate change making wildfires worse,
- Whether you should get an HPV vaccination?
- Trump decimating more pollution controls,
- Locusts swarming East Africa,
- Vertical farming and drones revolutionizing crop walking,
- 40,000 Canadians calling for a rejection of Teck's proposed giant oil sands mine,
- The climate crisis violating the rights of the unborn,
- Preventing satellite collisions,
- The UN telling Canada to stop several energy proposals until First Nations approval,
- Art reclaiming gadgets,
- Coronavirus - a fear of a pandemic or a pandemic of fear,
- Hydrogen fuel prospects,
- How everything you think you know about MSG is wrong,
- A new climate change toolkit for health professionals,
- Writing a career change cover letter, and more.

I hope you'll take a look. Until next week.

Best, david

David Zakus, Editor and Publisher



Credit: David Zakus

Domaine St. Bernard, Quebec

February 5, 2020

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# UN Top Court Orders Myanmar To Immediately Stop Genocide Against The Rohingya With 'All Measures'



Credit: Getty Images

The United Nations (UN) top court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), finally took its first step in stopping ongoing injustices and violence Rohingya people are facing in Myanmar. The UN Human Rights Council released a 440-page report that describes the violence inflicted on the Rohingya people as genocide. The report detailed what the council labeled as “massive violations,” and called for further investigation to be done on the “crimes against humanity and war crimes” committed by Myanmar’s military. Despite the violence inflicted on Rohingya Muslims, all Suu Kyi has to say on the matter of her involvement in the genocide is that it’s “fake news.” [Read More at Daily Kos](#)

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## Should I Get The HPV Vaccine to Guard Against Cancer?



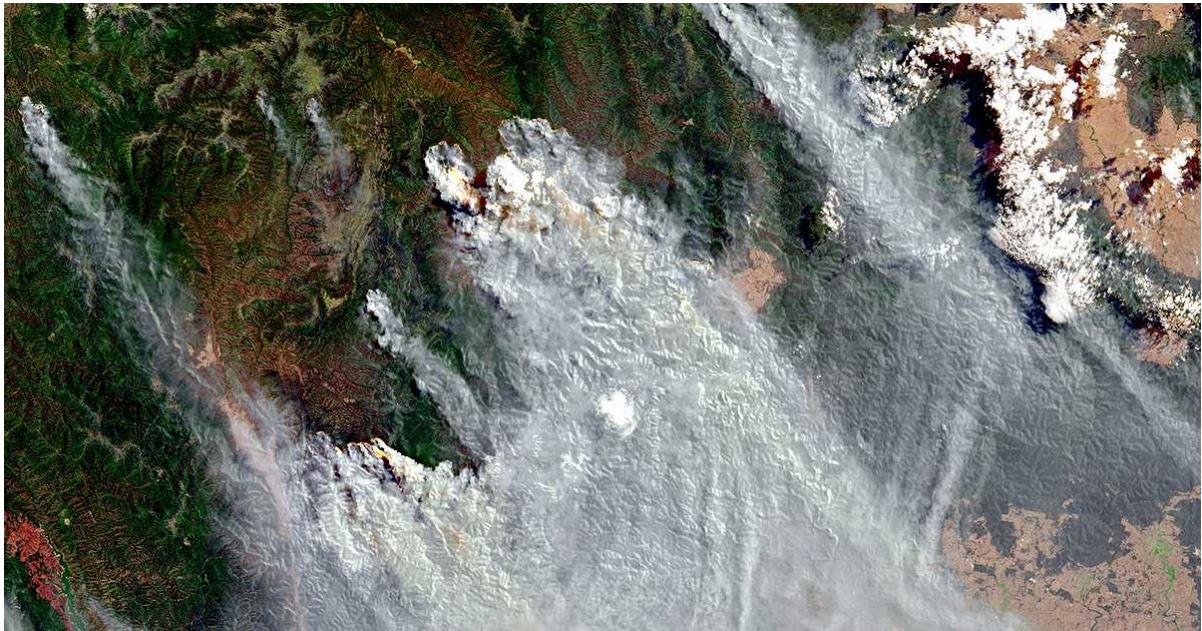
Credits: iStock/fstop123

It's certainly true that there's been a big push by public health officials to inoculate adolescents against *Human Papillomavirus* (HPV) before they become sexually active. But the vaccine isn't only for teens. Here's what you need to know: Gardasil 9, the most widely-used brand of the vaccine, guards against nine different types of HPV which is spread through vaginal, anal and oral sex.

Although eligibility for a publicly-funded shot is limited to young people, "it's never too late to vaccinate for HPV," says Nancy Durand, a gynaecologist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto and associate professor at the University of Toronto. About 75% of Canadians will be infected with at least one type of HPV at some point in their lives. Despite the potential benefits of the HPV vaccine, many doctors don't recommend it to their patients. They often assume their patients are either monogamous or will balk at the price. Durand believes patients should at least be informed of the option so they can decide for themselves. [Read More at Healthy Debate](#)

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## Climate Change Is Indeed Making Wildfires Worse



Credit: ESA/PIERRE MARKUSE

A team of researchers from the University of East Anglia in the UK say that an analysis of 57 peer-reviewed papers corroborates that climate change is indeed making wildfires worse globally. "Overall, the 57 papers reviewed clearly show human-induced warming has already led to a global increase in the frequency and severity of fire weather, increasing the risks of wildfire," senior research associate and lead author of the review Matthew Jones said in a statement. Just a two degree Celsius increase in global warming could lengthen Australia's fire season up to 30 days, *New Scientist* reports. [Read More at Futurism](#)

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## Trump Removes Pollution Controls On Streams And Wetlands



Credit: Jim Brandenburg/Minden Pictures

The Trump administration has finalized a rule to strip away environmental protections for streams, wetlands and groundwater, handing a 'victory' to farmers, fossil fuel producers and real estate developers who said Obama-era rules had shackled them with onerous and unnecessary burdens. Although Mr. Trump frequently speaks of his desire for the United States to have "crystal-clean water," he has called his predecessor's signature clean-water regulation "horrible," "destructive" and "one of the worst examples of federal" overreach. Mr. Trump's replacement legislation, called the "Navigable Waters Protection Rule," finishes the process. Ean Thomas Tafoya, a Colorado-based clean water activist with the group GreenLatinos, said the new rule could harm the quality of the water in the Colorado River, which supplies water to 17 western states. "The legal standing all has to do with whether you have a rational basis for what you're doing," said Patrick Parenteau, a professor of environmental law at Vermont Law School. "And when you have experts saying you're not adhering to the science, that's not rational, it's arbitrary." [Read More at New York Times](#)

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## Locusts Swarm Into Kenya As UN Warns Of 'Extreme Danger' To Food Supply



Credit: Baz Ratner/Reuters

Government races against time to contain threat to key food-producing regions in countries still reeling from droughts and floods. The UN has warned of a "significant and extremely dangerous" escalation in the number of desert locusts descending on Kenya, as the government strives to contain the threat before it reaches the country's food-producing regions. Each square kilometre of locusts in a swarm can eat as much in a day as 35,000 people, according to the FAO. One locust swarm seen in Kenya measured 2,400 sq km. "There is an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods" across the whole Horn of Africa, the FAO said. Kenya's newly appointed agriculture minister, Peter Munya, announced on Wednesday that the government has allocated nearly \$300,000 to fight the threat. Locust plagues occur intermittently in the Horn of Africa, but this invasion is the worst in 25 years, according to the FAO. Originating at the India-Pakistan border, the insects migrated into Somalia and Ethiopia and destroyed nearly 71,000 hectares of farmland in the two countries. [Read More at The Guardian](#)

See Also in The Guardian: ['Food Prices Shot Up': Floods Spark a Scramble for Survival in East Africa](#)

AND in Associated Press News: [Spray Planes Combat the Huge Locust Outbreak in East Africa](#)

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## Vertical Farming: Nowhere To Go But Up



Credit: [Green roofs](#)

Vertical farming has become a hot topic of discussion for many countries across the globe. It has become a key factor in how to solve food scarcity, diminish food deserts, tackle city pollution and fight climate change in recent years. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations estimates that more than 820 million people globally do not have enough to eat and are suffering from malnourishment. Vertical farms could offer an affordable, steady flow of food for families. These vertical farms provide natural air filtration by taking in CO<sub>2</sub> from the air and turning out oxygen. Additionally, by utilizing vertical farming, individuals could use up to 95% less water depending on the individuals' growing system. The cost can also be significantly more expensive for bigger vertical farms. [Read More at FPC Freshtalk Daily](#)

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## GOOD NEWS

# More than 40,000 People Call On Canadian Climate Change Minister To Reject Teck's Frontier Mine



Credit: *Stand.Earth*

Climate activists delivered a petition signed by more than 40,000 people to Canada's Minister of Environment & Climate Change Jonathan Wilkinson's office today in North Vancouver, calling on the federal government to reject Teck's Frontier Mine in Alberta — a project by Vancouver-based company Teck Resources to build the largest tar sands mine ever proposed.

"This is about choices: whether to double down on the energy of the past or start embracing solutions," said Julia Levin, Climate and Energy Program Manager at Environmental Defence. "Approving this project in the era of climate emergency is irresponsible — it's adding fuel to the fire. Minister Wilkinson and the Federal Cabinet should remember that just months ago, two-thirds of Canadians voted for action on climate. Instead of expanding the oil and gas sector, what we need is investment in creating new opportunities for workers and communities." [Read More at Stand Earth](#)

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## MORE GOOD NEWS

# New Drone Technology Revolutionizes Crop Walking



Credit: *SouthEast Farmer*

New drone technology that will help growers to walk crops more efficiently will be available from March 2020. Skippy Scout is a crop monitoring application (app) that uses drones to automatically capture images which are analysed by artificial intelligence (AI) to offer arable farmers vital broad acre crop insight. Jack Wrangham, founder of Drone Ag, and his team have spent the last 18 months developing the software and during 2019 worked with 200 triallists. A partnership with drone specialists Heliguy will offer farmers the opportunity to lease a package of drone and software, allowing those interested to experiment and learn how drones can benefit their farm. [Read More at FPC Freshtalk Daily](#)

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## OPINION

# Bad Ancestors: Does The Climate Crisis Violate The Rights Of Those Yet To Be Born?



Credit: William McClymont/Getty Images/EyeEm

As environmentalists Bill McKibben and Naomi Klein have demonstrated in detail, the world's largest, most powerful corporations are already in possession of untapped reserves of oil and natural gas that far exceed the limits we must observe if we are to mitigate the oncoming catastrophe. Companies would need to keep those reserves buried underground, in the process forfeiting approximately \$20tn in assets. Capitalism, it seems, lacks the attention span required for survival.

With climate calamity upon us, liberal democracies are in a bind. Capitalism constrains our relationship to the future, sacrificing humanity's wellbeing and the planet's resources on the altar of endless growth while enriching and empowering the global 1%. The fact is, we're up against ecological limits, not monetary shortages; we are constrained by a carbon budget not a federal one, and we need to remake our economy to reflect this reality. Ample wealth exists to be reclaimed for collective benefit, and bringing finance under democratic control will mean that money will finally serve people, instead of the other way around. [Read More at The Guardian](#)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

# Experts Call for System Preventing Satellite Collisions



Credit: IMAGE VIA NEEDPIX

SpaceX is planning to launch more than 40,000 tiny Starlink satellites to bring broadband internet service to the entire globe. On January 29, the Elon Musk-led company planned to send up another 60 satellites, bringing the total to nearly 240. "I think a major cataclysm of some form will happen in space that will have very long term consequences," former NASA scientist and professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Moriba Jah, told National Public Radio. Not only would private companies like SpaceX lose satellites in a crash, but the collision would generate a field of deadly debris that could put astronauts at risk. To help satellite owners avoid collisions, the system sends out automated warnings messages, often via e-mail — but rarely with any follow-up. There is a great need for some type of regulation. [Read More at Futurism](#)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

# Work Must Stop On Trans Mountain, Site C, LNG Pipeline Until First Nations Approval, UN Committee Says



Credit: Ben Nelms/CBC

A United Nations committee working to end racism is urging Canada to immediately stop the construction of three major resource projects in British Columbia until it obtains approval from affected First Nations. The committee on the elimination of racial discrimination monitors a convention to end racial discrimination signed by countries including Canada, and is calling for a suspension of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, Site C dam and Coastal GasLink pipeline. Members of the Wet'suwet'en Indigenous nation have attempted to block construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline near Smithers, B.C. The natural gas pipeline is part of the massive \$40-billion LNG Canada project. [Read More at CBC](#)

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Credit: Shawn Goldberg/Rex/Shutterstock

## Quote Of The Week

We cannot say we were not warned. In an 1847 speech, pioneering conservationist and U.S. congressman **George Perkins Marsh** identified processes that would later be understood as part of the greenhouse effect. His popular 1864 book, *Man and Nature: Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, reprimanded those who despoil the environment and recommended a course of resource management that would take the needs of future generations into account.

**“The Earth is fast becoming an unfit home for its noblest inhabitant, and another era of equal human crime and human improvidence ... would reduce it to such a condition of impoverished productiveness, of shattered surface, of climactic excess, as to threaten the depravation, barbarism, and perhaps even extinction of the species. The world cannot afford to wait till the slow and sure progress of exact science has taught it a better economy.”**

For the source of this quote, see on The Guardian: [Bad Ancestors: Does the Climate Crisis Violate the Rights of Those Yet to be Born?](#)

# Upcoming Events

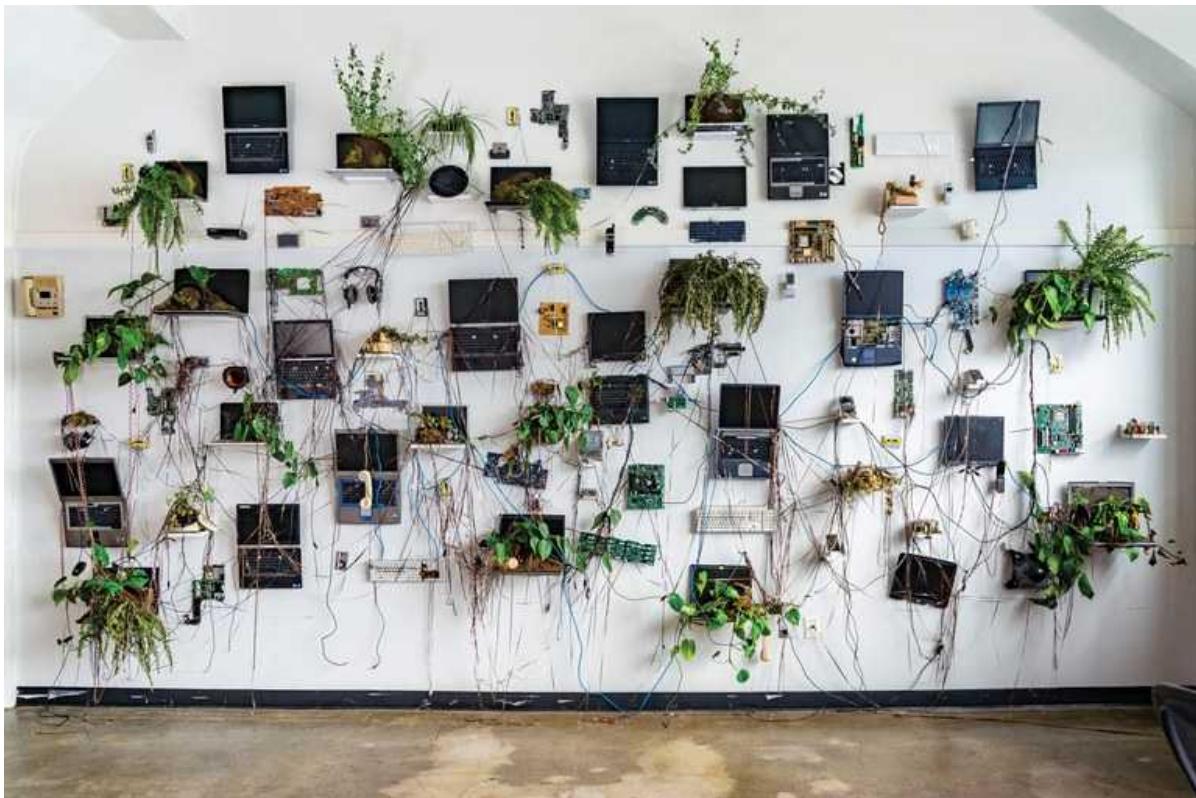
- February 7th - 8th: [International Development Week Conference: Sustainable Development In A Climate Crisis](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- February 19th - 20th: [2nd World Congress on Primary Healthcare and Medicare Summit](#) (Paris, France)
- March 6th - 7th: [International Women's Day: Research and Revolt Conference](#) (Guelph, Ontario)
- March 21st - 24th: [Oxfam Summit And Day Of Action](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- March 31 - April 2: [World Public Health Nutrition Congress 2020](#) (Brisbane, Australia)
- April 6th -7th, 2020: [17th World Congress on Paediatrics and Neonatology](#) (Tokyo, Japan)
- April 18th -20th, 2020: [CUGH Conference 2020: Global Health in a Time of Worldwide Political Change](#) (Washington, D.C., USA)
- April 24th - 26th, 2020: [PEGASUS IV Migration - Climate Change - Sustainable Development](#) (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada)
- April 28th - 29th: [Global Health Impact Expo + Exchange](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- April 28th - 30th: [CPHA's Public Health 2020](#) (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada)
- May 2nd - 4th: [RESULTS CANADA National Conference: From action to impact: working together to end extreme poverty](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- May 21st - 23rd: [Indigenous Health Conference: Building Our Future](#) (Niagara Falls, Canada)

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**FYI#1 SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA: NEW ART EXHIBIT**

# Nature Will Triumph—And Reclaim All Our Gadgets



**Credit:** NATHANIEL STERN

A new art exhibit, “The World After Us,” shows the power and ingenuity of nature to make use of machines in a world without humans. As an artist, Nathaniel Stern has an obsession with the ways technology and the earth relate. He spent years scuba diving with a desktop scanner to create prints of jellyfish, coral and the undersides of lily ponds. In 2012, he launched a series of messages into space (no longer than 140 characters each), using a high-amplitude, high-frequency radio telescope. In another installation, he rigged tornado machines to respond to microscopic movements, like a gust from a closing gallery door. The project of “rethinking” may seem underwhelming (like an art novice tilting her head to consider a piece of modern art: “It really makes you *think*”). But in Stern’s case, this reimaging is meant to provoke political change. Of course, Stern is not the first to call up the question of what happens to our stuff when we are gone. In the 2007 book, *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman imagines Earth minus all the humans.

See more at [Wired](#)

## FYI #2

# Coronavirus: Fear Of A Pandemic, Or A Pandemic Of Fear?



Credit: AP Photo/Heng Sinith

The coronavirus outbreak in China raises important questions about how well governments manage the latest pathogens to jump the species barrier and infect humans. Coronavirus is transmissible between humans, stoking fears that it could become the next great global pandemic. As the World Health Organization declares a global emergency, it's also fanning a pandemic of fear. The unfolding events are as much sociological as biological, with politics and economics equally at play. As public health experts, we are presently helping to create a new trans-disciplinary One Health

network, known as Global 1HN, focusing on improved governance of infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance locally, nationally and globally.

Effective One Health governance is based on three related actions: improved surveillance (detection), response (co-ordination and collaboration across sectors and levels), and equity (a focus on the most vulnerable). Improvement is needed in all three areas. Progress has also been made to integrate surveillance and governance at the global level across the three international agencies responsible for public health, animal health and agriculture.

See Also on The Conversation: [What the coronavirus emergency declaration means for Canada](#)

Read more at The Conversation

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### FYI #3

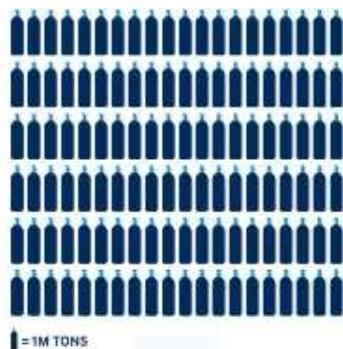
## H2 Economy Today

**120M  
Tons**

H<sub>2</sub>  
produced  
each year

**3X**

Growth  
since 1980



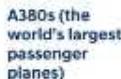
Enough  
to power:

**200M**  
fuel cell vehicles  
per year



or

**200K**  
A380s (the  
world's largest  
passenger  
planes)



**2/3 of the H<sub>2</sub>  
produced today  
is pure hydrogen,**  
used to create:



Fertilizers  
and other  
chemicals



Fuel that  
can be used in  
transport

Global H<sub>2</sub>  
production  
volume:



4%  
2019

**18%  
2050**

This would result in:

# H<sub>2</sub>



**30M**  
New jobs



**6GT**  
of CO<sub>2</sub>  
emissions  
avoided



**2.5T**  
in yearly  
revenue



Equivalent to  
almost all of  
North America's  
CO<sub>2</sub> emissions  
each year

Hydrogen, the most abundant element on Earth, is a powerful clean energy carrier when used in a fuel cell — highly efficient and flexible, emitting only electricity, heat and water. In this study, we explore the potential for a hydrogen-powered future by looking at the state of the hydrogen economy today. Countries around the world are already betting on hydrogen as a viable renewable energy source. We examined the 14 countries at the forefront of hydrogen innovation to understand the ways they are already adopting and investing in hydrogen across sectors, and to what extent they are doing so. We evaluated the 14 countries across five sectors and a range of assessment categories to arrive at their H Economy score. A score of 3 indicates maximum support, activity and investment for hydrogen in today's market, primed for future potential. While no country achieved a full 3, best-in-class examples exist across sectors.

Read more on Hyundai + Bloomberg Media Group

## FYI #4

# Everything You Think You Know About MSG Is Wrong



Credit: iStock

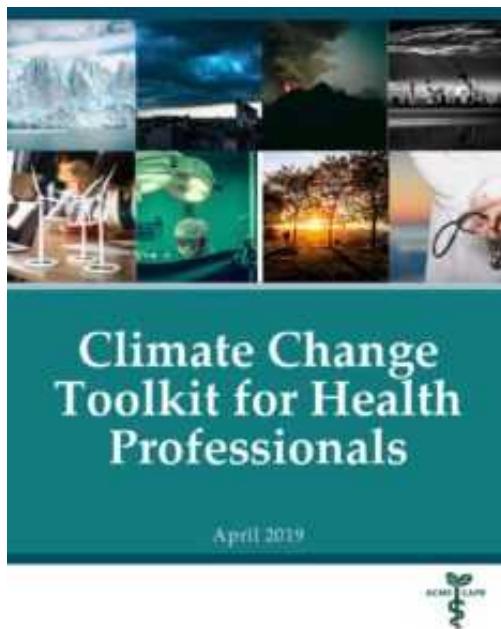
For decades, MSG has been vilified for causing a whole host of issues in some people who consumed it, from nausea and headaches to non-specific “toxicity.” But we were all wrong. MSG is harmless, and the decades of fear and loathing about it are based in racism and xenophobia. The seasoning we call MSG, or monosodium glutamate, is a sodium salt of glutamic acid, which means a sodium ion has attached to an (amino) glutamic acid ion. According to the FDA, MSG is produced by the fermentation of starch, sugar beets, sugar cane or molasses. MSG didn’t even *have* a bad reputation until 1968, when a doctor named Robert Ho Man Kwok wrote a letter to the *New England Journal of Medicine* describing symptoms that he allegedly developed after several meals at Chinese restaurants. The journal published Kwok’s letter with the title “Chinese Restaurant Syndrome,” sparking a widespread fear of this seasoning. A 2000 review of studies published in *The Journal of Nutrition* concluded that even in large doses, MSG doesn’t elicit adverse symptoms in most people. Time and time again, MSG has proven to be safe. MSG’s story is a great lesson to always check the source of your information. Even if they’re longstanding, some bad reputations aren’t deserved.

Read more at Chatelaine

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## FYI #5: WINTER READING

# Climate Change Toolkit For Health Professionals – From The Canadian Association Of Physicians For The Environment (CAPE)



Credit: Fernwood Publishing

This climate change toolkit consists of eight modules which have been prepared as stand-alone documents that can be read by themselves, but they have also been prepared to complement one another. It has been designed as a tool for health professionals and students in the health care and public health sectors who want to engage more directly on the issue of climate change as educators with their patients, peers and communities, and/or as advocates for the policies, programs and practices needed to mitigate climate change and/or prepare for climate change in their workplaces and communities. Do check it out.

Read more on Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

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## FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

# How to Write a Career Change Cover Letter (With Samples!)



Credit: Pinterest

Making a career change can be exciting, but it's not without its challenges—like, for example, that some less open-minded hiring managers might have a hard time understanding how your work history fits with their current needs. So you'll want to do everything you can to help sell a prospective employer on why you're the right person for the job.

Here's your step-by-step guide to writing a career change cover letter that will tell your unique story and help a hiring manager envision how you would benefit their organization. Plus, we've got a couple examples to show you how to put these tips into practice!.

1. Get the Reader's Attention Right Away
2. Introduce Yourself
3. Share Your Origin Story

4. Highlight Your Transferable Skills

5. Bring It All Together

Read more at The Muse

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## END SHOTS

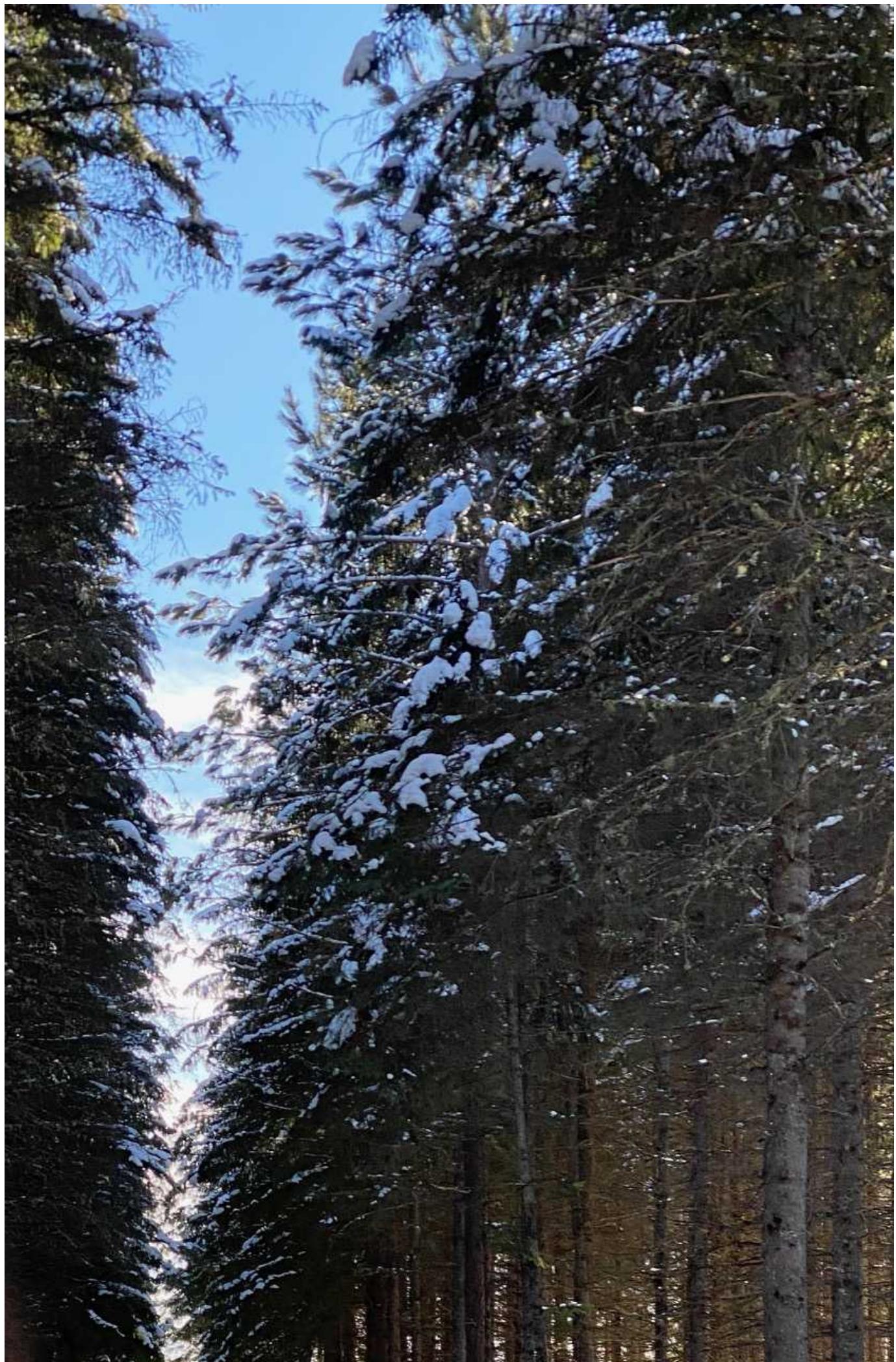
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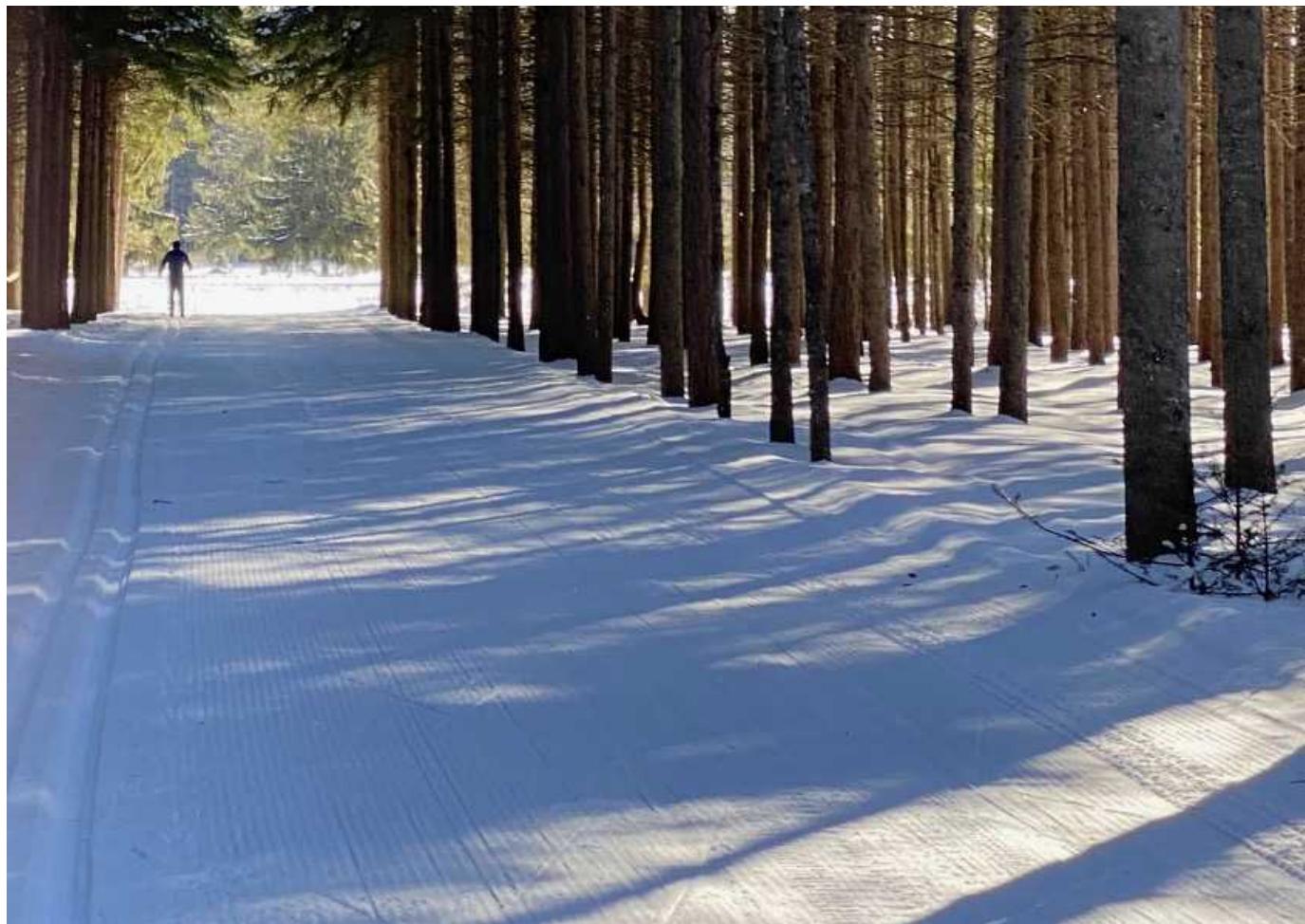
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING NEAR  
MT. TREMBLANT, QUEBEC

FEBRUARY 3-5, 2020

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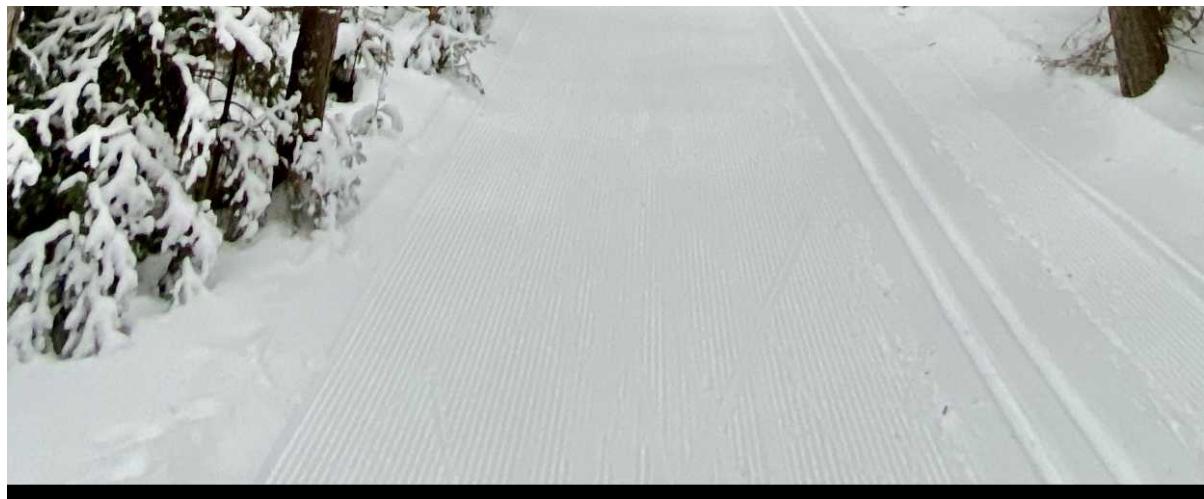




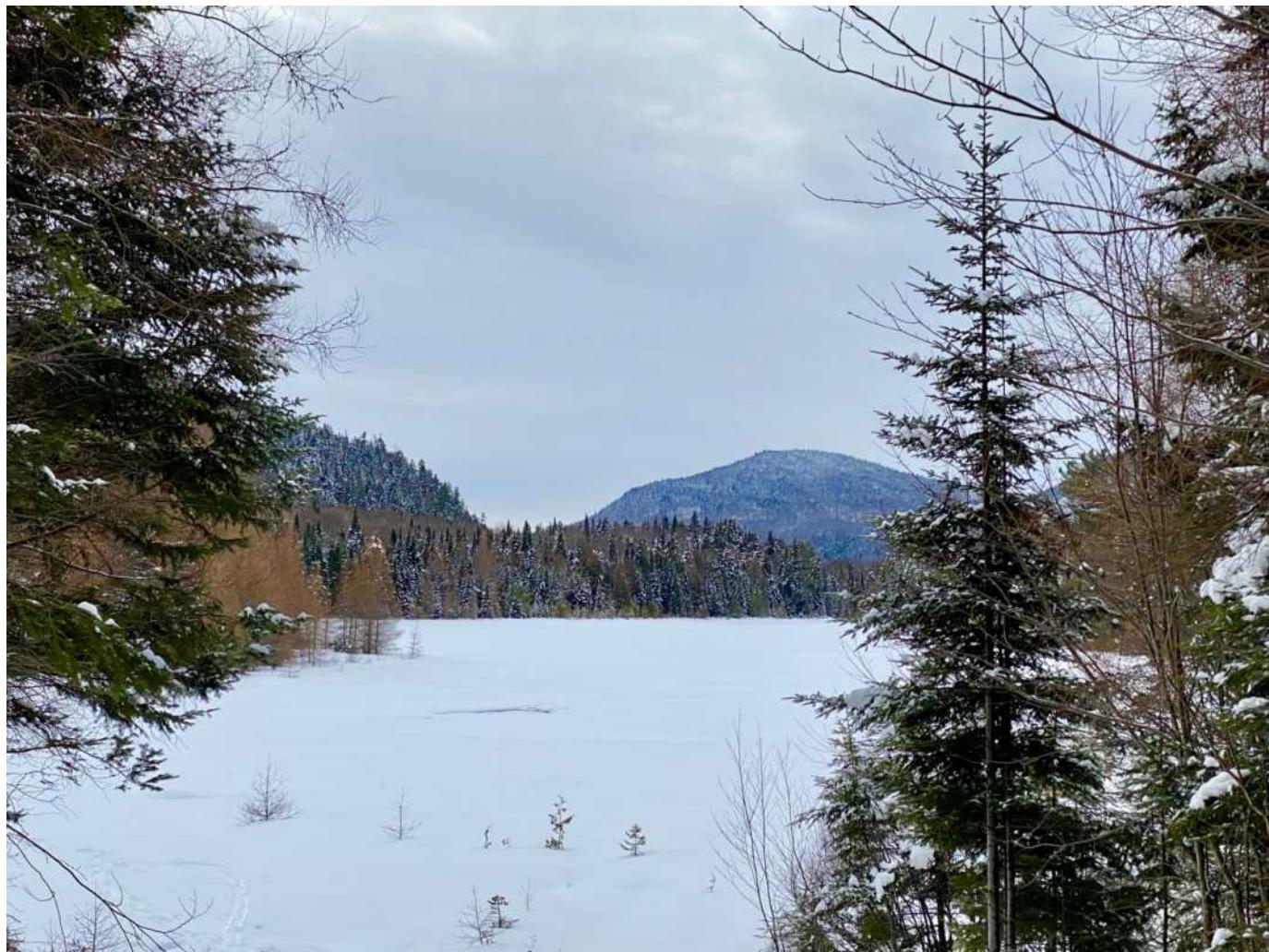














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