



# Newsletter

## Adaptation to Climate Change by Benoit Laplante

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Strangely enough, a large number of people continue to believe that if only anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) could be stabilized or reduced, climate change and sea-level rise could be avoided. Equally strange, others believe that emissions of (GHGs) will indeed be stabilized or fall in coming decades as a result of a sustained investment in energy renewables (solar, nuclear, and wind), and efficiency gains (mostly) in the transport sector. Illusions.

First, climate projections (mostly of temperature and rainfall patterns) for the next 40 to 50 years do not depend on existing and future emissions of GHGs, but on past emissions and the resulting stock of these gases already in the atmosphere. Hence, climate change for the next few decades will take place regardless of existing and future GHGs emissions, and therefore regardless of efforts to reduce those emissions. Similarly, sea level will continue to rise over the coming century regardless of the quantity of GHGs which will be emitted over the same period of time. Incidentally, most of the expected increase in sea level will result from the expansion of the sea as it warms up, and only mildly related to melting ice.

Second, let's face it, emissions of GHGs are not about to stabilize, let alone to fall. As pointed out in the most recent World Energy Outlook (2010) of the International Energy Agency (IEA), even if countries were to act aggressively upon recent voluntary commitments to reduce GHGs emissions, the continuing rising demand for fossil fuels will drive up energy-related emissions of GHGs (mostly CO2). Even in this optimistic mitigation scenario (note the use of "aggressively" and "voluntary"), the IEA report predicts emissions of CO2 to increase from 29 to 35 gigatonnes between 2008 and 2035. Non-OECD countries, including China and India, will account for most of the projected growth in emissions.

For all countries of the world, arguably with the exception of a very few, the key issue is *adaptation* to climate change (where for some, adaptation will mean: "Where do we go now?"). Insofar as developing countries are concerned, a further issue pertains to the financing of estimated adaptation costs.

In recent years, I have contributed to a better understanding of the importance and needs for adaptation. In a recent comprehensive effort by the World Bank, we have estimated a global adaptation cost of 100 billion dollars (US dollars of 2005) per year, over the period 2010-2040. South Asia and South East Asia represent approximately 45% of this estimated cost (the report is posted as [www.worldbank.org/eacc](http://www.worldbank.org/eacc)). After pointing out that Viet Nam would likely be the developing country most impacted by sea-level rise (in terms of its land, population, and gross domestic product), I am currently providing advice to the Government of Viet Nam on assessing the costs and benefits of options to reduce the impacts of climate change in the country. Finally, with a team at the Asian Development Bank in Manila, I am developing guidelines for the conduct of cost-benefit analysis of investment projects (including adaptation options) which accounts for climate change projections.

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**Benoit Laplante is an Adjunct Professor with the School of Public Policy who has 20 years of experience around the world in environmental economics and in the conduct of economic valuation of environmental impacts of projects. He is currently working with the Asian Development Bank on the economics of adaptation to climate change.**

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## A Research Co-op by John Kendler (MPP 2011)

Unlike many of my MPP counterparts, I had the unique opportunity to think about public policy from the private sector perspective during my summer co-op. I worked for The News Group, a major North American magazine distributor. As I was very surprised to find out, for every 100 magazines printed, only about 35 ever end up being sold—the rest become waste



### From Co-op To Capstone

paper for recycling. My job during the summer was to research the waste paper industry, including the material supply chain, and public policy issues and implications. Waste paper sales had been becoming an increasingly significant factor in the

company's bottom line, but up to that point they had never been a real focus; my report gave them the information they needed to better understand and make decisions when it came to waste paper. The position was something I stumbled into through a connection within the MPP Program. Prior to taking the job, I had some

interest in solid waste and recycling, but very little technical knowledge in the field. Through the co-op I gained an intimate knowledge of the industry, which then inspired me to take on a related Capstone project. I ended up looking at policy approaches to increase residential recycling in the City of Vancouver. The industry knowledge acquired through the co-op provided a foundation from which I was able to jump quickly and deeply into the substantive policy work. The co-op also facilitated extensive networking; many of the connections made during the summer became participants in the Capstone study as well. This has all culminated in a new job opportunity working with a local recycling firm that was part of both the co-op and the Capstone.

## Career in Public Policy by Julie Clements (MPP 2010)

I work for NWT Health and Social Services in the division of Policy, Corporate Planning, and Evaluation. The Northwest Territories is unique due to its consensus style government, sub-arctic climate, regionally isolated communities, and strong aboriginal influence. These factors contribute to many policy challenges in the field of health particularly around culturally sensitive care, the high cost of service delivery, and equitable access to health and social services for all residents. My first collaborative project with the department was an audit of the medical travel program. This involved the analysis of survey data collected from doctors who made patient referrals to travel outside of their home communities

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for specific procedures, or specialized care. I also compile health statistics for other departments to inform public health campaigns and social programs. I write briefing notes on emerging health issues for the minister and assist with focus groups, survey design, and interviews for system research, program evaluations, and strategic planning. Most recently I have been writing a large report on the Health Status of the Territory which profiles chronic and communicable diseases, mental health,

well being, and health determinants of NWT residents. The experience I gained throughout the MPP program has been invaluable as my position requires political insight, critical thinking, and concise writing skills. I have used both qualitative and quantitative research methods although (to my relief) have yet to see an OLS regression in a GNWT report. The experience of collecting survey data for my capstone was a big learning experience that I have drawn from on several research assignments. Developing criteria and evaluating options in a matrix has also been a huge hit! Having a Masters degree was a pre-requisite for this position but being a public policy major gave me confidence and skills that facilitated a smooth integration into the public service.

# 3rd Annual Simon Fraser University Public Policy Colloquium

by John Richards

For the last three years, the provincial government has arranged with the SFU School of Public Policy to tackle six medium-term policy problems. At the beginning of the school year, the government chooses the problems; by the end of the school year, in April, the first-year cohort has completed written reports and presents “solutions” to officials in Victoria.

As in years past, the first-year cohort stumbled one early April morning onto a bus at Harbour Centre and headed to Victoria. Later in the day, students presented their collective wisdom on this year’s set of policy problems:

- \*designing high-level indicators of performance of the justice system;
- \*encouraging new immigrants to choose a community other than Vancouver;
- \*persuading MLAs to address the fact that BC has the most severe over-representation of rural and underrepresentation of urban voters of any provincial legislature;
- \*linking children to nature in the context of urban living and competition from video games;
- \*assessing the value of the health ministry’s publication, *Baby’s Best Chance* – getting health information to new parents;
- \*disposing of that old cell phone – provincial policies for environmental disposal of electronic waste.

There remains fine-tuning for both the School and government to get maximum benefit from this arrangement, but it has become an effective “capstone practice” for the first-year students. Their written reports and oral presentations to relevant provincial officials are providing students with useful real-world practice in analysis, and are providing the government with some new ideas on some medium-term policy problems.

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## Congratulations:

- ◆ T. Kalaw, MPP 2010 and Dominique M. Gross have published “**Employment Standard Violations and Live-in Caregivers’ Characteristics in British Columbia**” in the **Metropolis BC Working Paper** Series, nr 08-10.
- ◆ Prof. Jon Kesselman has a forthcoming article in **Canadian Public Policy**: “**Consumer Impacts of BC’s Harmonized Sales Tax: Tax Grab or Pass-Through?**”
- ◆ Prof. Jon Kesselman and Rod Quiney have led a successful application to SSHRC for a **Workshop on Tax Compliance 2011**. It will be organized by Simon Fraser University School of Public Policy jointly with the University of BC Law School and the University of Victoria School of Public Administration in the Fall 2011. The goal is to exchange information on the issue and invited participants will come from the Canada Revenue Agency, universities from the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.

## MPP Students in the News: Op-Ed

- ◆ Christine Robbins “**Far Sighted policy for visually impaired. Employment rate is unacceptably low and could easily be improved with more leadership from public sector.**” Vancouver Sun, December 29th, 2010.
- ◆ Jeffrey Carr “**More Choices Can Change Lives: Redressing the Rural-Urban Divide in Advanced Education Will Take More Than Just Offering Financial Support.**” Vancouver Sun, January 26, 2011.

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The Master's in Public Policy is a two-year innovative graduate program that emphasizes the development of techniques to **undertake** and **manage** public **policy analysis** and planning.

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### 3rd Annual SFU Public Policy Colloquium Group Photo

