

Peak Oil and Climate Collapse: Can Society Make the Transition in Time?

Global Research News Hour Episode 145

By [Michael Welch](#), [Richard Heinberg](#), and [Gordon Laxer](#)

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Region: [Canada](#), [USA](#)

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As the independent investigative journalist [Dahr Jamail](#) has detailed in his regular climate dispatch for [Truthout](#), there are signs that excessive amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide are wreaking havoc on the globe's atmospheric and ocean systems.

From the Wildfires raging near Fort McMurray in Alberta, to the increasing acidification of the oceans which cover 70% of the planet, to the mass die-off of species, to rising sea levels, to record shattering heat persisting for three months straight in early 2016 coming on the heels of record high global temperatures persisting for the last sixteen years, it is clear that Earth's ecological systems are under assault.[1][2]

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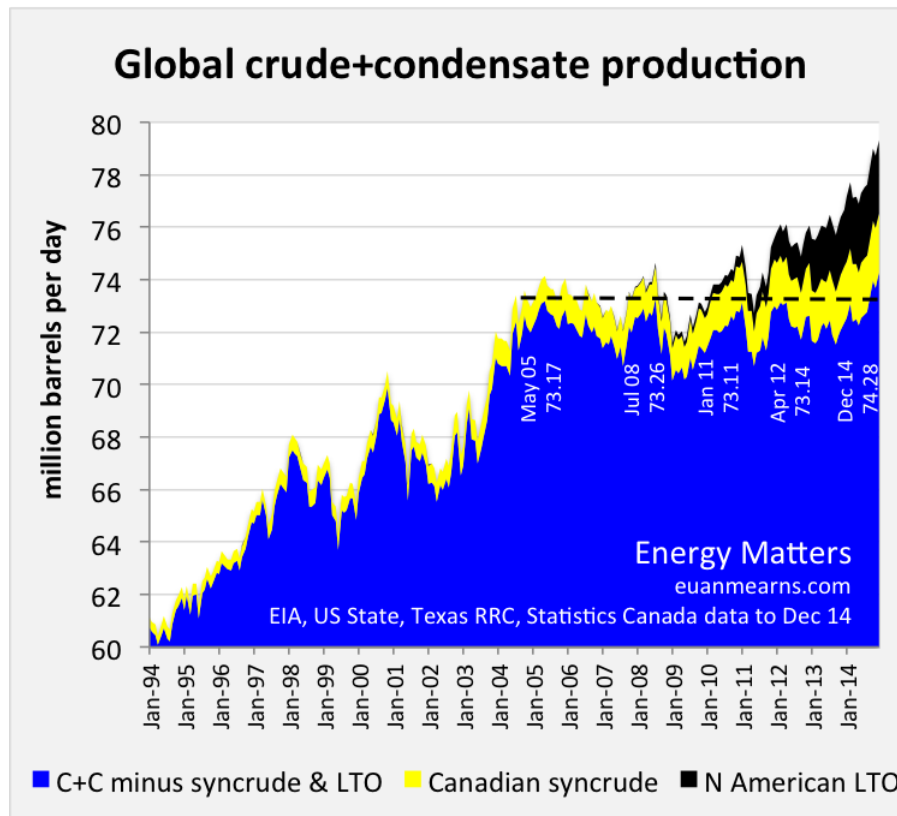


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Then there is the question of peak oil and gas.

As energy writer Richard Heinberg argued in [a previous installment](#) of the Global Research News Hour, the discovery of cheap accessible oil and natural gas was akin to 'winning the energy lottery.' He indicated then that all aspects of life were altered as a result of incorporating this extremely potent energy source into our economic system. Agriculture, petro-chemicals, plastics synthetics, consumerism, the techno-boom and the [resulting six-fold increase](#) in the human population all resulted from the oil century.



There are credible signs that conventional oil production peaked around 2005. Unconventional supplies such as Alberta tar sands oil (bitumen) and shale oil (kerogen) have unexpectedly resulted in the current glut on the market and given the oil age a new lease on life. However, extraction methods for these substances have proven to be extremely harmful to the environment. In any case, these supplies are finite and will eventually run out.

Given the realities of peak oil and climate change, our high tech civilization would seem to be an energy castle, built on a foundation of fossil fuel sand.

Transition to a non-fossil fuel based economy, sooner or later, is inevitable. The question is how could that be achieved in time to address the hazards on the horizon? Is it feasible? How could that be pursued in a meaningful way? What political and other obstacles need to be overcome to get to a truly renewable economy?

The Global Research News Hour focuses this week on how to respond to the modern day energy dilemma with three guests. [Richard Heinberg](#) of the [Post Carbon institute](#) and Gordon Laxer, founder and former director of the University of Alberta-based [Parkland institute](#) take up the bulk of the show discussing the role of trade agreements in undermining energy security, US imperialism as part of the problem, obstructionism from elites, and the compromises that will be necessary to achieve a sustainable future.

With a less optimistic take is returning guest Professor Emeritus Guy McPherson, who explains in the final segment of the program why near-term human extinction due to runaway global warming is not only likely but inevitable, why he feels the renewable economy is a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” proposition, and yet continues to promote action rather than resignation as a strategy moving ahead.

Richard Heinberg is a Senior Fellow with the Post-Carbon Institute. He is a journalist, and

author of thirteen books including [The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies](#) (2003, New Society Publishers), [Afterburn: Society Beyond Fossil Fuels](#) (2015, New Society Publishers) and his most recent [Our Renewable Future: Laying the Path for One Hundred Percent Clean Energy](#) co-authored by David Fridley (2016, Island Press). Heinberg is considered one of the world's leading educators on the subject of Peak Oil, the opposite side of the fossil fuel energy coin.

Gordon Laxer is a political economist and the former head and founding director of the Parkland Institute based at the University of Alberta where he is Professor Emeritus. He is widely published in newspapers and magazines and the author of several books including [Open for Business: The Roots of Foreign Ownership in Canada](#) (1989, Oxford University Press), and his most recent [After the Sands: Energy and Ecological Security for Canadians](#) (Douglas & McIntyre.)

Guy McPherson is a Professor Emeritus of [Natural Resources](#) and [Ecology & Evolutionary Biology](#) at the University of Arizona. He has spent years assembling and collating [available peer-reviewed research on climate](#). He hosts the [Nature Bats Last](#) website, and is host of the [Nature Bats Last radio program](#) on the [Progressive Radio Network](#).

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The [Global Research News Hour](#) airs every Friday at 1pm CT on [CKUW 95.9FM](#) in Winnipeg. The programme is also podcast at [globalresearch.ca](#). The show can be heard on the Progressive Radio Network at [prn.fm](#). Listen in every Monday at 3pm ET.

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Boston College Radio [WZBC 90.3FM NEWTONS](#) during the Truth and Justice Radio Programming slot -Sundays at 7am ET.

[Port Perry Radio](#) in Port Perry, Ontario –1 Thursdays at 1pm ET

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It is also available on 93.9 FM cable in the communities of SFU, Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Surrey and Delta, in British Columbia Canada. – Tune in every Saturday at 6am.

Radio station [CFUV 101.9FM](#) based at the University of Victoria airs the Global Research News Hour every Sunday from 7 to 8am PT.

Notes:

1)

<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/36133-atmospheric-carbon-dioxide-concentration-has-passed-the-point-of-no-return>

2) <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/35796-temperatures-in-2016-are-already-near-cop21-limit>

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