

Economic growth
environmental
sustainability
assignment



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Environmental Sustainability And Economic Development Environmental sustainability and economic development can be considered contending imperatives. We as humans have a burning desire for economic growth and prosperity, while at the same time we have a need for the resources the planet provides us. Typically in order to grow our economy it requires that we deplete natural resources such as lumber, oil and minerals by means of deforestation, drilling and mining.

It is important for us to realize that if we do not deal with environmental issues right now; the consequences could be devastating not only to ourselves, but to future generations. We are now seeing more and more concern for 'sustainable development' that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." [1] I have chosen an article from the Alberta oil sands website. Once you have typed the address into your URL box atop your web browser, scroll down to the heading 'News highlights'.

Click on the article entitled "Alberta surges ahead with climate change action plan". This article states that the Alberta government is investing \$2 billion in carbon capture and storage, and \$2 billion in public transit systems with the hopes of reducing greenhouse gases 50% by 2050. The idea behind carbon capture and storage is that it is possible to capture greenhouse gas emissions, and then seal them deep underground in rock formations similar to those from which we have taken oil and bitchumen.

Since 2000, seven million tones of CO₂ have been stored near Weyburn, Saskatchewan with no adverse effects. The hope is that with this funding

Alberta will be able to store up to five million tones of CO₂ per year by 2015, which is equal to one million cars being taken off the road every year. This is a significant number no doubt, but is this the right thing to do ethically? As with any new technology or idea, one can say that theoretically there will be no long-term adverse effects, and the numbers may very well add up.

But as reality begins to sink in, one can't help but imagine what kind of disasters this could lead to, or what a massive leak could potentially do to later civilizations. The fact that no one knows what will happen makes this a tough ethical decision. Much as with the design and production of the atomic bomb, we are today making decisions that can have a very significant impact on the future of humankind and even earth. Pumping our toxic emissions deep into the earth where we think we won't have to worry about them anymore, is like using a band-aid to reattach a limb.

It is a quick, cheap, and easy fix, that won't hold together for long. People need to realize that we very well may be in an irreversible dilemma. Sure reducing GHG 50% by 2050 might seem like a leap in the right direction, but even a simple analysis of our emissions exponential increases, mostly in the past few decades, quickly leads to the conclusion that by 2050, we will have to reduce emissions by much more than half.

Researching and investing in new ideas is a 'good start', as long as people aren't being lead to believe that this is the end all be all cure for our problems. This article throws some big numbers out there, which might easily mislead people. More time and energy has to put into finding various ideas that we can test, as opposed to throwing all of (or at least 2 billion of)

our eggs into one basket. The Alberta oilsands website is a very credible source. It is updated frequently and anything posted on it must adhere to the government's strict code of conduct and ethics.

The article itself was posted July 8th, 2008. Although no author of the article is cited it does give a person to whom media inquiries may be directed, Jason Chance of Alberta Energy. [1] United Nations. 1987. " Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. " General Assembly Resolution 42/187, 11 December 1987. Retrieved: 2007-04-12 July 8th, 2008. Alberta surges ahead with climate change action plan. Alberta oilsands website. Accessed November 25, 2008