

**Climate Change means changing the climate  
Or can we realistically do that?  
(Observations assembled by R. Max Wideman, FPMI)**

The views expressed in this article are those of the contributors.  
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### ***Introduction***

Last year, 2019, was the Project Management Institute's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its original launching. It was a great occasion, especially amongst the Project Management Institute's Fellows who assembled *en masse* for the occasion. And a lot of interest, talk and excitement were garnered, especially amongst its older Fellows, who were there "at the beginning". Then the talk turned to: "What if we all got together for a face-to-face discussion, what would we talk about that could be current and beneficial?" Several suggestions were offered, and here are a couple of them from my friends and colleagues, Bryan McConachy, FPMI and Helen Cook, FPMI.<sup>1</sup>

### **Bryan's pitch**

I want to address this group of distinguished individuals who have influenced change in the past and have the ability to do so in the future. And I specifically want to raise an issue that concerns all of our future and that is CLIMATE CHANGE. Several comments were made this morning about how hard it is for us to change – but it does happen.

My sudden change came about when talking to youths about the school strikes called Fridays for Future.<sup>2</sup> It was pointed out that I won't likely live long enough to see the worst effects of climate change but they will and it scares the hell out of them. It is our generation that has the influence and resources to bring about change. The kids are going to provide the motivation. My contribution to supporting the kids was to write and distribute a chant for their protest marches. (Available on request.)

What can you who have influence in your many respective communities do? We used to say think globally and act locally. It led to lots of valuable programs. Now we must both think globally and act globally as climate change is our common threat.

My engineering background always has me looking for optimum solutions. Where do we get the best return for our resources. For GHG emissions, we have to start with the largest sources. The September 21st issue of the Economist stated that some American politicians have not only committed to reducing their emissions but proposed ways to support cleaner energy abroad by imposing taxes on goods from countries without robust climate policies.

The same article also mentioned aid to poor countries for them to have cleaner energy. Here I have a proposal for my country, which is Canada. We contribute about 1% of global emissions but now have a federal carbon tax of about \$30 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> which could raise say \$10 B per year. This will impose significant costs on industry and individuals but make negligible impact on the global GHG levels.

What if Canada took that money to a country like India, which generates most of its power from coal – a fuel with high GHG emissions. How many coal-fired plants could we convert to natural gas (which we

could subsidize) and could we get a significant reduction of global GHG emissions? What if we repeated the process a few thousand times?

The reaction I get is understandable – interesting, but politically impossible. I don't argue that, so my response is that in brainstorming sessions, you may not simply reject a proposal, you must propose something better. I would like to hear any better ideas.

Bryan McConachy, PMP, PMI Fellow

### Max's response

OK, that's a challenge that I cannot resist. My first reaction is that if we are going to contemplate such a large project, we must in any case start off right. That means doing due diligence "at the front end". This in turn means doing our research and analysis with a view to developing a Business Case. I love Business Cases because in my experience they garner significant amounts of useful information and analysis, but rarely get properly implemented or followed because the sponsors are far too keen to start implementation – regardless.

In broad strokes, here is what such a climate change project **Business Case** should include:<sup>3</sup>

**Proposed scope:** What does this project actually involve, what would it look like?

**Justification:** What, why, how, and how much should be involved? What are the measureable benefits and risks? What would be the cost and would it be worth it?

**Base Case:** What is today's documented status to be referenced for purposes of determining actual achievements to be measured at some time in the future? What assumptions does this require?

**Alternatives:** If any, including no effective action (the most likely), and corresponding assumptions?

**Implementation:** Strategy, Key Success Indicators, resources involved, tentative schedule, cost estimate, source of funding and implementation risks;

**Approvals:** Roster of Stakeholders (participants).

With all the political hype and blather, has anyone actually looked at any of these issues? Probably not, so here goes.

### Scope of proposed Climate Change

First off, what do we really mean by "Climate Change"? Well, the simple definition, according to Wikipedia,<sup>4</sup> is:

"Climate means the usual condition of the temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, rainfall, and other meteorological elements in an area of the Earth's surface for a long time."

In simple terms "climate", in these terms, is the average condition for several decades.

There are several types of climates: Tropical, Desert/dry, Temperate, Polar, Mediterranean. By the way, "Climate" and "Weather" is not the same thing. Weather is the day-to-day conditions in the atmosphere. However, you could say that "weather" is the base unit, the variability and continuity of which forms the basis of climate.

And what do we mean by "Change" in this connection? Here again, Wikipedia comes to our aid:

"[Climate] Change means the difference in the Earth's global climate or in regional climates over time."

Wikipedia adds the helpful note that: "Climate change is now a major global concern." It is not evident, however, that the only way to change the climate is in consistently changing the short-term weather conditions.

So now we have two problems: Which of the "*usual conditions*" of climate do we want to change? And which of the "*types of climate*" is it that we want to change? (Both sets cited earlier.) Let's assume the first are: "temperature, wind and rainfall" and the second are "Desert/dry and Polar" and both sets presumably for a long time.

The reasoning for the first set, usual conditions, is because if the temperature and wind are too high and the rainfall too low gives conditions that are subject to extensive wild bush fires causing great public distress. Or, if the rainfall is too high, then severe flooding occurs with similar consequences. The reasoning for the second set, types of climate, is because if the climate (at least locally) is just too dry, nothing will grow or prosper, or if the polar areas get too warm, ice will melt and, to some indeterminate amount oceans will rise.

While the selections we have made here are arguable, we do begin to see that amongst these objectives there are several contradictions. That is to say that solutions in different parts of the world have to be different, even opposing. In other words, the solutions have to be regional. One size does not fit all.

Given these findings, it would appear that each area of the world has to find its own solutions. However, it will be quickly argued that the sources of the alleged problems are not the same as the areas affected (which may or may not be true). Hence a concerted effort by the whole world is necessary. Politically, that is interpreted to mean the "Western World" because that's where the money is (or at least was.)

## **Justification**

This is an easy one. A lot of personal grief, even deaths, and costly damages are done as a result of the climate forces. But whether the world would be better off in the long run, i.e., over centuries, could be questionable. For example, we know that forest fires are a part of natural rejuvenation, and storms at sea contribute to refreshing the oceans, while hurricanes serve to refresh the atmosphere.<sup>5</sup>

But why do we focus on carbon, the basic building block of life? I suggest that the real target is the selection of noxious gases that are associated with the burning of fossil fuels to derive energy, especially for travel and similar purposes. If this is true, then our first step should be to permanently ground all aircraft, ban all cars, buses and similar modes of transport, and buy shares in bicycles and canoes.

***And since the major source of periodic pollution, far in excess of the sources just mentioned, comes from nature's own volcano discharges, we should take immediate steps to quash all pending volcanic eruptions.***

## ***Alternatives***

The main alternative seems to be to do nothing. And since our analysis establishes that solving the problem as described is virtually impossible due to conflicts between different areas, then it is probably

the only option.

### **The No-project option**

But the people demand action! Well, that is to say, the media who make a living out of raising alarms to increase revenues and justify their existence. Or perhaps it's the armchair scientists who are anxious to make a name for them selves. Or, again, the politicians who see great potential in frightening the people into paying more taxes, the destination and specific purposes of which are unstated, but most likely the general slush fund for their pet gimmicks. Or, worst case — all of them.

As a suggestion, how about redirecting all of the world's war efforts and expenditures away from current conflicts and, instead, focus these energies on this great "Climate Change" project??

### **Helen Cooke's perspective**

Fellows, thank you for putting your heads together regarding how the unique and distinguished talent and wisdom of the individual fellows can be leveraged to make the world a better place.

I joined PMI Chicagoland in 1984 after having already spent ten years managing major government projects. It was like 'coming home' to discover others who (a) thought like me and (b) valued collective efforts to tackle the largest problems of our age. I was committed to improving management effectiveness, specifically project managers (who are team and results oriented, and rely on leadership and wisdom rather than directive action, as many operations managers do).

The Body of Knowledge<sup>6</sup> is critical for any manager to have in order to make wise decisions. Project Managers require it! So, I was shocked to hear that PMI members doing revisions are considering getting rid of the nine knowledge areas in favor of an encyclopedia of tactics and principles of operation. No manager consults an encyclopedia before taking action: they tap that body of knowledge and what they know to achieve success in the world.

Many of the suggestions (in comments below) recommend 'getting involved'. I have already done that, initiating many of the parts of PMI we use today. Like Frank and David and Paul, we are usually years ahead of the mainstream in what we get involved in. I helped found the PMIEF<sup>7</sup> by being its first volunteer with Max Wideman's initiative in the late '80s, spending ten years building its vision and mission and support with Max, Paul Dinsmore, Jim Snyder, Walt Bowman and others. I was the first elected officer with Jim Snyder in 2001. Jim, thank you for flipping a coin to see which of us was to be President: it was a most generous act, and you became the first elected President of PMIEF in 2000 (I framed the quarter!)

The PMIEF global initiatives we initiated were ready to 'hand over to operations'. Some of the PMIEF global initiatives came from our PMI Ambassador trip to South Africa in 1996-7. This also generated the concept for the first Executive Council in 2005 to provide a space for executives to explore their budding knowledge of project management, without touting their ignorance in public in front of their staff. Our Chicagoland Executive Council, founded in 2005 with Gregory Balestrero as our first speaker, now has 40 regularly attending executives from almost as many companies, high tech, insurance, pharmaceuticals, universities, financial institutions and health care. After twelve years it too was ready to 'hand over to operations.'

The Executive Council (followed by PMI HQ's Corporate Council) stepped up to the need to serve huge corporations struggling with improving their management and direction of Projects and Project Management across country lines. In 1996, I also proposed to the Board funding for OPM3 before stepping off the board to go to South Africa (heading the McDonalds PM Center of Excellence)

### **PMI and Climate Change**

The Climate Change issue was addressed by us in 1994 in Vancouver, with David Pells, myself, Bruce Rodrigues of South Africa and Brian Fletcher of Toronto as the impetus for creating a body to address global issues. Our basement meeting resulted in David's editorship of the "Project Earth" newsletter and several PMI conferences to address climate change issue in the mid-1990's. We affected 12,000 people before our Environmental Management SIG was shut down. FYI--The date we were shooting for to head off climate change damage was 2004.

I also created the Leadership Institute meeting in 1989, as president of Chicagoland Chapter, because I was asked by Frank Jenes of LA Chapter to chair the group of Chapter Presidents while the board was meeting. We created a Council for those presidents, and a pre-board meeting for chapter leaders so they would know more about the Board when they stepped into it, instead of learning on the job while serving. The "Learning and Sharing" duality was contributed by my partner Kathy Sharman of LA Chapter and still exists today. It has evolved into a huge development initiative for PMI's future leaders before our global conference.

The point I am making is that some of us Fellows are visionaries, and our contributions---way ahead of the curve—ARE our contribution to many of these initiatives. It is not enough to simply implement yesterday's programs. We are ready to look ahead to other cutting edge initiatives in project management, and it would be nice if we could do it as PMI global leaders instead of through other organizations. Many of us have been treated very poorly as individuals by PMI staff, and feel like our contribution days in PMI are fading fast.

### ***My Conclusion***

We are visionaries, leading edge contributors, and promoters of the leadership and success of project managers and project management to change the project economy for the better. We are opinion leaders, editors, website and webinar sponsors, and liaisons with other organizations. I am already beginning to seek other organizations that value my ideas, just to keep busy. I write for project managers and executives (not just team leads) on a global website which we started in 2001 after 9-11. It has 20,000 followers. Many of them may not be involved in PMI at all.

I would welcome another opportunity to change the world for the better. Count me in.

Helen Cooke

### **Conclusion**

***Max Wideman*** – Leadership anyone?

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan and Helen are both long-standing members of the Project Management Institute, USA.

<sup>2</sup> In August 2018, Greta Thunberg began the "Fridays For Future" movement. Canada became the 4th country in the world to join the Fridays For Future movement on November 2, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Data extracted from Issacon #1208b at <http://www.maxwideman.com/issacons2/iac1208b/sld005.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia is generally a very reliable source

<sup>5</sup> Or at least redistribute the natural resources that we have.

<sup>6</sup> Specifically, PMI's PMBOK.

<sup>7</sup> The Project Management Institute's Education Foundation