

Putting mirrors in space to reflect sunlight

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Although it sounds like something straight out of an Austin Powers movie, scientists at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancun are seriously considering putting mirrors in space to reflect sunlight away from the earth and covering Greenland in a massive "blanket" so that it doesn't melt.

While extreme "geo-engineering" measures such as these may ultimately be necessary to combat climate change, it seems that before we resort to these measures we should first do everything we can to bring more of the planet's untapped clean energy sources online.

Here in B.C. alone we have a wealth of clean energy resources we could be contributing to global greenhouse gas reduction efforts: conventional hydro, run-of-river hydro, wind, biomass, geothermal, wave, tidal, solar. You name it, we've got it.

The carbon footprint of a typical run-of-river facility, for example, is less than five grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt-hour, or 100 times less than gas-fired generation and 200 times less than coal-fired generation (see "Carbon Footprint of Electricity Generation," United Kingdom Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology).

Besides which, clean energy technologies are well-proven and well-understood and any potential impacts they may have can be easily mitigated. Can we really say the same for some of the "geo-engineering" options being considered by the UN's climate scientists such as erecting artificial "trees" that suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere or building man-made volcanoes that spray sulphate particles high into the atmosphere to scatter the sun's rays back into space in addition to putting mirrors in space?

Considering that we've barely scratched the surface of the renewable clean energy resources we have available to us here in B.C., developing our untapped clean energy potential and helping neighbouring provinces and states reduce their greenhouse gas emissions seems like a no-brainer.

It's also a lot less complicated than building man-made volcanoes that spray sulphate particles into the atmosphere like some comic plot device from an Austin Powers movie.

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