

## The Climate Decade and WW3 — Ten Years To Secure The Future

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As a longtime advocate for children and the Earth, in this year when my song “Baby Beluga” turns 40, I feel I must speak out for the sake of my beloved fans, the “beluga grads” and their kids, on the climate emergency we all face.

People live with faith that one day will lead to another, that their future lives are not in question, that their kids can imagine adulthood. For many, that’s getting increasingly difficult. As New York Yankee catcher Yogi Berra said, “The future ain’t what it used to be.” Humanity’s future is in jeopardy.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. Science tells us that on our current path, we face at least 3 degrees Celsius of global heating by the end of the century. I will not be there, but my granddaughters will. I refuse to be an accomplice in the destruction of their one and only home.

— António Guterres, UN Secretary General

Our house is on fire. Act like it.

— Greta Thunberg

The ominous subtitles of two influential climate change books published in 2009 contain the following: “The Coming Climate Catastrophe And Our Last Chance To Save Humanity” ([James Hansen](#), *Storms Of My Grandchildren*), and “Confronting Climate Collapse” ([David Orr](#), *Down To The Wire*).

Australia is burning. Its climate-denying government just mobilized a military response. (A state of emergency, I’d say.) And their summer’s extreme heat will likely bring more devastation, and an even greater deployment of military support.

As we run out of time to respond to the existential climate emergency the world faces, I’ve run out of patience.

Since 1989, when I first learned about the global warming danger, in my climate songs and in essays I’ve done my best to rouse people to action. To safeguard our imperiled future.

In the introduction of a 2006 anthology I co-edited ([Child Honouring: How To Turn This World Around](#)), I wrote a passage called A Theft Of Futures. In a 2011 essay [The Right To A Future](#), I wrote, “Nobody can guarantee a future, but who has the right to steal it?” During the 2019 climate strikes worldwide, young people all over the world were repeatedly protesting their stolen futures.

Given the failure of the last three decades to mount effective action against global warming, given the recent failure of the UN COP25 climate conference in Madrid,

and given the [2018 IPCC Report](#) directive to reduce GHG emissions in half by 2030, I am now among those who recognize the urgent need for nothing less than a wartime response to the climate emergency—a massive mobilization of clean energy resources in order to make unprecedented annual GHG cuts, year after year.

We have ten years to secure the future. To do what's never been done before.

The US, China and India may be emitting the most GHGs, and so have the greatest responsibility to reverse course. The US itself must be a leader in this fight to stabilize global climate, and its internal politics will soon once again be put to that test. But more than US involvement, it will take an unprecedented global effort to change humanity's course.

Climate scientists point out that the latest IPCC science means that incrementalism and individualism cannot meet the daunting scale of the challenge we face. They're right. Nothing less than an all out mobilization such as happened during WW2 in the US and Canada will suffice. And I am calling this new massive effort by a solemn name: "Climate World War 3." Let me explain.

In a 2016 essay, [A World At War](#), author and climate activist Bill McKibben wrote: "Its not that global warming is *like* a world war, it *is* a world war. And we are losing." Based on the failure to bring down CO2 emissions over the last three decades and the escalating devastation we've seen, it's hard to argue with that. But this world war is different in important ways.

Both World War 1 and World War 2 pitted nation against nation, resulting in tens of millions killed and wounded and populations traumatized. The world war that I speak of here is entirely different. It certainly isn't the total nuclear annihilation we once feared. This is a unique and truly global war—a climate war—one not to be waged against any person, group or nation, and not a war of conflict, but rather a cooperative war for the protection of human and natural communities. This is a multinational war to safeguard the right of the world's children to a healthy and stable climate, and for a rapid transition from a global commerce of ecological destruction to one of life-affirming restoration. What I'm calling Climate World War 3 involves a wartime mobilization fueled by love. For all that we hold precious.

The enemy, simply put, is climate change and its deadly assaults in once-in-a-century fires, floods, hurricanes and other extreme weather intensifications. The enemy is destabilizing planetary life-support systems and it must be stopped.

In Canada, MP Elizabeth May has been a longtime climate crusader and in a recent [stirring speech in Parliament](#) had this to say: "I've had a ringside seat, Mr. Speaker, to decades in which we could have arrested climate change before our glaciers were melting, before we were losing the Arctic, before our forests were on fire...we had a chance in the 1990s and we blew it."

Who's to blame? There's plenty of blame to go around. Politicians, governments have played deaf, dumb and blind to the climate science warnings from a number of sources, including the [Union Of Concerned Scientists](#), who issued clear calls to

contain climate change before it grew impossible to do so. And yet the fossil fuel industry spent enormous sums of money spreading disinformation, creating a denial industry, spreading doubt about the climate threat.

Before my Baby Beluga album was recorded, the oil and gas giant [Exxon knew](#) of the possible catastrophic effects of global heating and the greenhouse effect. They withheld the information, spent millions to cover it up and deceived the public.

Politicians have often admitted in private that what needs to be done isn't politically feasible. A cruel irony, the thought that politics and governance cannot confront an existential threat to our lives. All that is now changing. It has to change, and quickly.

Spring forward 10 years to the year 2030.

### **Imagine that it's 2030.**

How do we want to feel in 2030? What might we regret? What will we applaud?

In 2030 I will be 82 years old. I want to feel, looking back, that during the decade of the 2020s I did all I could in the effort to stabilize global climate to secure our children's future, to give our young people hope for the years ahead, and to avert the worst warming predictions hurtling towards us as outlined by the reports of climate science. I want to feel that I helped fight the impending climate catastrophe with all my might.

I have never been in a war. I've never wanted to fight. But now I feel moved to join the growing calls for a World War II scale mobilization to address the climate emergency. And that means war.

As a climate emergency responder, I hereby enlist myself in Climate World War 3, a war of survival against runaway climate change. We've entered a 10-year campaign, a decade long war.

This is a unique war, a war of cooperation, a war of redemption. For the entire global village. A ten year war for saving lives, coral reefs, ecosystems—for saving the delicate balance of oceanic PH levels. For securing our future. Are you in?

In the fall of 2019, an estimated [7.5 million people in over 150 countries](#) took part in climate strike rallies. I recorded the rousing song "[Young People Marching](#)" to commemorate the Fridays For Future movement that the brave young Greta Thunberg made popular. [This Is Zero Hour](#) co-founder Jamie Margolin of the US and climate striker Leah Namugerwa of Uganda are two other teen climate leaders in a rising tide of youth voices shouting in unison—save our future!

At the UN Climate Summit in September of 2019, Greta Thunberg's emotional "[How dare you!](#)" [speech](#) had me in tears. Its moral truth is undeniable. "The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say, we will never forgive you."

## **Wartime Mobilization**

“Defeating the Nazis required more than brave soldiers. It required building big factories, and building them really, really fast.” Bill McKibben

We’re talking about both sacrifice and opportunity. Government rationing to restrict the use of fossil fuels. Conversion of commercial manufacturing factories to wartime production of green technologies—solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles including trucks and buses, and much more. It’s all out war, all hands on deck.

In both Canada and the United States, World War Two brought sweeping government mandated changes to the economy. Civilian factories were ordered to change their output to military hardware: airplanes, tanks, munitions. Rationing of goods was mandated, and a steady stream of public service announcements extolled the virtues of sacrifice for the war effort. It was a massive undertaking and a huge success. ([McKibben’s essay](#) is full of detailed numbers on the dollars spent and production output.)

The clear warnings that politicians have ignored for decades can no longer go unheard. We’re rapidly running out of time.

The good news is, there are climate solutions, green tech tools already in use, waiting to be scaled up to massive proportions. This year, pressure on elected leaders will grow to a fever pitch. The US presidential election may herald a total reversal of the climate denial of past years. [Green New Deal](#) legislation has already been proposed for the Congress to transform the economy.

[Facing The Climate Emergency](#), a book by Margaret Klein Soloman (founder of [ClimateMobiization.org](#)), is one of several notable climate books due this year. Ms Klein Soloman encourages us to feel the fright of the dire climate present, so that we might more fully and forcefully rise to meet the threat. She urges us to live in “emergency mode.” As I like to say, “In case of emergency, be an emergency responder!”

You don’t go to war hoping you’ll win. You amass the strongest force you’ve got, but you can’t know the outcome. Currently, whenever I’m asked if I’m hopeful, my answer is short: I’m active. Confronting the enemy. As Greta Thunberg keeps saying, “Unite behind the science.” We’re in a climate war, with ten years to secure the future. Enlist now.

## **Living In A Long Emergency**

Enlisting in Climate WW3, we’re in for the long haul. How do we live in these times? We’ll figure that out together. As we work to put pressure on elected officials to enact World War 2 style climate mobilization, we’ll experience quite a shift. We’ll be living in two streams, daily life and emergency mode. At home, school and work environments, we’ll talk and share. We need age appropriate dialogue with kids, and climate education in the school curriculum.

Whatever our conscience bids us to change in our personal lives to lower our own carbon footprint, this must be amplified by our actively calling for systemic change. Just as groups of friends and entire families are going on climate strikes, they can also make their views heard in other ways. Emails and calls to the regional and federal offices of our elected officials is essential. A count is kept of how many contact them and why. You do have some influence, provided you act.

It's very important to read the latest climate articles and books from trusted authors, scientists and journalists. Get updates on the latest science, talk about the climate emergency. Draw your climate tribe close and take refuge and inspiration as needed.

[The Raffi Foundation For Child Honouring](#) offers an [online course](#) based on 9 principles for conscious living. Among them are Diversity, Sustainability and Ethical Commerce. One way to feel empowered is to take the course, feel energized and become a changemaker.

This year as we celebrate Baby Beluga's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, make a vow to do your utmost to help win Climate WW3 and secure the future. Enlist today.

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*Raffi Cavoukian, C.M., O.B.C., best known as Raffi, the renowned children's troubadour, is founder and chair of the [Raffi Foundation For Child Honouring](#). The recipient of four honorary degrees, the UNEP Earth Achievement Award and the Global 500 Award, A longtime advocate for children and the Earth, Raffi has been active on the climate threat since 1989. His [climate songs](#) "Cool It" (2007), and "Young People Marchin'g" and "Do We Love Enough" (2019), are for rousing people and governments to action.*