

A sunny day

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At eight in the morning, the smart calendar wakes me up by playing Beethoven's fifth symphony. I clap my hands twice to stop the music and head to the washroom, where I get undressed and take a steam shower. After five minutes, the water jets stop and the fans dry me with warm air. I get ready and go downstairs. My smart calendar automatically informs me of the day's schedule: "Happy 200th anniversary of Confederation! Outing with Sami downtown at 10 a.m." Finally! I've been looking forward to this stroll with the kid for a whole week.

I enter the kitchen and make myself a salad of locally grown blueberries, strawberries, and cherries. I savour my breakfast, brush my teeth, and leave to pick up my grandson. After walking a half-hour, I find young Sami in the doorway waiting for me.

"Grandpa!" he cries, leaping into my arms.

I signal to his mother, and we head toward the train station. As we walk, Sami asks, "Grandpa, when will I be able to drive?"

"Why are you in such a hurry to drive, kiddo?"

"Because it's so *cool!*"

"You know, Sami, when I was your age, it was very rare to see an electric car. Most ran on gas. They were noisy and polluting."

"Really?"

"Yes! But fortunately, the government invested heavily in finding renewable energies."

We get to the station after 15 minutes, I buy our tickets and we board the maglev (magnetic levitation) train. Sami takes the window seat and I sit beside him. As we pull out, Sami is impressed with the train's speed. "Wow, Grandpa! How fast are we going now?"

"I'd say about 600 kilometres per hour."

"What? That's faster than a leopard!"

"It sure is. Before, trains were much slower, polluted more, and were less efficient. That's why the government funded a national project to replace all the old trains with maglev trains."

Sami looks out the window and notices that the urban landscape has become a magnificent forest. "Grandpa, look at the giant trees!"

"I see them. They're about 40 years old."

"Only 40?"

"Yes. Forty years ago, hundreds of forests were planted where there were once cattle ranches."

"Why?"

"Those ranches caused deforestation and emitted a lot of greenhouse gasses."

"I'm happy that the animals finally found a home!"

"Me too..."

After less than 5 minutes, we arrive in the downtown of Canada's national capital. We get off the train and explore the city centre. Ever since oil-based transportation was banned, it's a real pleasure to go downtown and breathe fresh air. The time passes quickly and it is soon lunchtime. Sami is hungry, so we head for the nearest restaurant, Vegemiam. I order two vegetarian hamburgers and grilled potatoes. We sit down and Sami devours his meal. Watching him eat, my memory takes me back 60 years, when I was 8 years old and ate ground beef hamburgers and French fries. Back then, we didn't realize just how harmful the meat and frying oil industries were for the environment. Industrial livestock farming emitted more greenhouse gasses than the entire transportation sector, and discarded frying oil destroyed aquatic ecosystems. Thanks to a national awareness campaign and government taxes on the meat industry, we were able to dramatically reduce our emissions of pollutants.

We finish lunch, I take little Sami's hand, and we walk to the city centre to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Canada's Confederation. I remember like it was yesterday when I went with my friends to celebrate the 150th anniversary. Back then, the future seemed dark, and humanity was heading straight for its own destruction. Environmentalists were sounding the alarm, but we turned a deaf ear. Our lifestyle was focused on consumption and profit, to the detriment of the planet. All the melting glaciers, droughts, and species extinctions should have awakened our consciences.

It's incredible how much has changed over the last 50 years. Today, thanks to our engagement and perseverance, we have managed to change directions. We have reduced our consumption of water, innovated our means of transportation, replanted our forests, and changed our eating habits to reduce our ecological footprint on earth. Our efforts stopped the hemorrhage of species extinctions and stabilized climate change. "We do not inherit the earth from our parents; we borrow it from our children." - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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