

Artificial Intelligence is killing the internet (and the planet)

THOSE HOPING FOR another kick at the Whistler DOGE can this week will have to wait—at least until we start talking about next year's municipal elections a bit later this fall.

But this week's topic, Artificial Intelligence (AI), is at least in the same vein, as AI tools promise massive efficiency gains in all areas of life in the months and years ahead.

If you've spent any time playing around with ChatGPT or other Large Language

to your property."

But that's not to say humans are entirely negated in the equation.

"While AI can accelerate planning processes and offer fresh insights, its outputs must be combined with other data sources and assessed by professional planners and decision-makers," said the City of Vancouver in a statement to *BIV*. "Relying solely on AI, or any single source of information, can pose risks when making complex, impactful decisions."

Even so, there's no denying the transformative potential of the tech—implementing AI can help municipalities and other organizations redistribute workflows and better prioritize resources.

Whistler is still working through the implications itself.

"The Resort Municipality of Whistler is actively discussing AI and how it could be used within our processes. The first step in this process has been to digitize our paper records. The project is ongoing and is expected to be largely complete by the end of 2025," a municipal communications official said in an email to *Pique*.

"Once this important step is completed,

Ready or not, the AI revolution is upon us—and it seems most of us are still completely unprepared for what's to come.

But before it takes all of our jobs, AI is already hard at work destroying the internet, and any semblance of remaining trust we might have had in what we're seeing and reading online.

The models have developed so fast they can now produce photos and videos in an instant that are near indistinguishable from the real thing. Just ask Greg Witt, president of Osprey Silviculture Operations, which contracts wildland firefighting as one of its services. Earlier this month, as hundreds of firefighters battled the Wesley Ridge fire on Vancouver Island, Witt mistakenly shared AI-created images of the fire on Facebook in congratulating his crew.

"It just pissed me off," he told *BIV*. "There's enough real stuff going on that people should be concerned about.

"But there I was—I stumbled right into it."

Deepfake AI videos are being used to create fake ads of politicians to shill crypto, or sway elections. The current U.S. president recently shared an AI video of a former

case for long.

LLMs are already seeping into everyday life. People are using ChatGPT to write their emails, or fight their arguments on Facebook and Reddit—once you know what to look for, the signs are unmistakable. And research is already showing it contributes to personal brain drain.

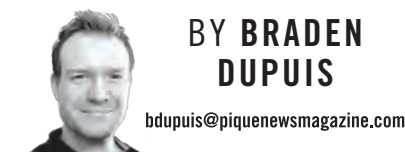
In a study published in the journal *Societies* in January, Swiss researcher Michael Gerlich found increased reliance on AI tools is linked to diminished critical thinking abilities. The study points to "cognitive offloading" as a primary driver of the decline.

Basically, if we allow the robots to do too much thinking for us, we forget how to think properly at all. The potential dystopian futures ahead of us almost write themselves. It sounds like a mix of *Idiocracy* and *Wall-E*.

And this is all to say nothing of the environmental costs attached to AI use: the data centres that run LLMs require huge amounts of water to cool servers—about nine litres per kWh of energy used, according to *Forbes*—along with massive energy consumption.

Scientists estimate the power

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BY BRADEN
DUPUIS

bdupuis@piqueenewsmagazine.com

Models—or LLMs—you'll know they can spit out the equivalent of a municipal staff report in less than a few minutes with a single well-worded prompt. And they won't charge you anything to do it!

This isn't a shot at municipal staffers—journalism jobs are just as exposed to the impending revolution, or any that use a computer first and foremost, really.

But some municipalities, like the City of Vancouver and City of Kelowna, are already using AI to find efficiencies.

"Say you make an application to re-zone a property today from residential to a mixed-use commercial zoning, and we figure you need to upsize your water and your sewer," explained Ryan Smith, divisional director of planning, development and climate sustainability with the City of Kelowna, in an interview with *BIV* in December 2024.

"Today, we have someone look at the pipe sizes. Someone has to compile it and put it into a memo which gets sent to the developer. We're working on automating all of that so that the system's smart enough to go in and check pipe sizes and know what the standard would be, what the pipe size is today, and be able to figure out, 'OK, well you need to upsize your water line to this, you need a new sewer line and it's got to be this,' and give you a list of the civil-engineering-related improvements

we can then explore where AI could streamline processes such as permit reviews. The RMOW is also working on a policy to govern the use of AI to ensure that appropriate safeguards are employed to protect sensitive and personal information. We are also paying close attention to where AI is being successfully implemented in other communities and creating connections to teams who have expertise in this area."

political rival being arrested and dragged away in handcuffs. You can bet a good chunk of his followers still think it was real.

AI videos of strange animal behaviour—like a fluffle of wild rabbits jumping on a trampoline—are racking up millions of views online.

If you are capable of critical thinking, most of the time it's possible to distinguish between AI and reality. But that won't be the

requirements of data centres in North America increased from 2,688 megawatts at the end of 2022 to 5,341 megawatts at the end of 2023, according to MIT, driven partly by generative AI. By 2026, the electricity consumption of data centres is expected to approach 1,050 terawatt-hours.

So yes—AI will make humans more efficient. All it will cost us is our jobs, our water, and our very humanity. ■

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Dave Brown
Personal Real Estate Corporation

davebrown@wrec.com
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