

Don't Axe the Facts



With all the hubbub over axing the carbon tax, I've been doing a bit of research, and I'm hugely puzzled by something. Why is it that 90% of Canadians think climate change is real and more than 70% want something done about it, but 50% also believe that the carbon tax should be scrapped?

It's a bit of a puzzle isn't it? Although, when you consider the impact of inflation, combined with the carbon tax hysteria whipped up by conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, it's not terribly surprising that so many Canadians - most of whom want to see decisive action on climate change – are up in arms about the tax.

Plus there are a few other factors at play here, like the fact that many Canadians don't really understand how the tax works or why it was initiated. A reality only exacerbated by a steady stream of misinformation and half-truths currently being broadcast on TV and social media by climate deniers, right wing fringe groups, oil lobbyists, and who knows who else.

So what exactly is the carbon tax and how is it supposed to work?

The short answer is it's an incentive tax – an incentive for big industrial and corporate polluters, as well as consumers, to switch to alternative energy, rather than using the carbon-based fuels that produce the carbon dioxide emissions that drive climate change. Switch to electric, wind, solar or geothermal et voila – you pay no carbon tax.

It's also important to note, that 90% of the tax paid by Canadian consumers for gasoline or home heating is returned to them in rebate cheques sent by mail or directly deposited into their bank accounts, 4 times a year. Which is why I'm gobsmacked when people fiercely proclaim that they've never received the rebates. I always assumed that most people kept track of what's deposited into their bank accounts. Apparently not.

“Okay,” I hear you say. “So maybe I do get the rebate, but what's the point? Why tax consumers at all, if most of it is returned?”

Well, people being people, the theory behind the carbon tax is that by watching gas prices climb, we'll eventually see the advantage of switching to sustainable energy – say, a hybrid car or geothermal heating - and that we'll use our quarterly rebate cheques plus government grants to switch energy sources.

As for big industry polluters, there is no rebate. They can buy or invest in carbon offsets as a way to reduce what they pay to the Federal Government, but they'll still face a steadily increasing carbon tax until they realize that switching to renewable energy is a whole lot cheaper.

Now, some of you will probably say it's not that simple, that the carbon tax is one of the main factors driving inflation. Turns out the answer to that is – no, not really. In fact, according to the Bank of Canada, the carbon tax contributes less than 0.2% to our current inflation rate. And if that sounds relatively small, that's because it is.

“But wait!” the axe the tax crowd chimes in. “What about the knock on effects of the carbon tax. It's driving up food prices, because all those long haul truckers have to pay more for their gasoline.”

Hmmm. That one sounds a bit more convincing doesn't it? So let's take a look at how much the big grocery chains have made over the past few years, despite the higher cost of transporting their goods.

In the first four months of 2024, Superstore for example, reported almost \$500 million in profit, about a 10% *increase* over the first quarter in 2023. So given those record-breaking profits, why

has the cost of food risen by an estimated 11% over the past 2 years, especially given that higher gas prices account for a mere 0.3% of the price hikes we're seeing?

I leave you to answer that.

In fact, as far as I can see the only group that may need carbon tax relief are family farmers and they should definitely get it, along with the incentive grants needed to switch their barns and grain driers to sustainable energy by 2030.

You know, Mark Twain once said, "Never let the facts get in the way of a good story," and he's right. Because after doing a little research, I've discovered that the stories circulating about the carbon tax are, indeed, more fiction than fact.

So what's moral of this story? Well, if you find yourself worried sick about climate change and its potential impacts, then stop shouting "axe the tax" and stick to the facts. Like the fact that *without* the tax, our carbon emissions would have been an estimated 20 mega tonnes higher in 2022.

Which, by the way, is the equivalent of all the emissions produced in Manitoba in just one year.



In a summer of brutal heat waves, that's already witnessed the burning of Jasper and thousands of acres of its surrounding national park, I know that everyone who reads this understands the urgency of the moment. The health and environmental impact of bigger, more intense wildfires driven by climate change are exacting a heavy toll on both human health and the natural environment. We can't afford a federal government that will reverse the gains we've made on emission reductions. So please, when you go to the polls, vote for your grandkids, their kids and our small blue planet. And encourage everyone you know to do the same.

