



Mark Carney and The Rhetoric Versus Reality Gap

Like many Canadians, I was initially impressed by Prime Minister Carney's Davos speech. Largely because it was the first time, in my memory, that a politician stood on a global stage and admitted that the so-called "rules based order," established after WW2, was too often applied to the benefit of the few to the detriment of the many . Or as he put it:

"We knew that the story of the international rules-based order was partially false. That the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient. That trade rules were enforced asymmetrically. And that international law applied with varying rigour, depending on the identity of the accused or the victim..."

He then observed that countries, like ours, which benefitted from that order, "largely avoided calling out the gaps between rhetoric and reality."

Sounds great, doesn't it? In fact, as the speech goes on, it sounds as if he's suggesting that in any new world order, wealthier, middle powers like Canada should be guided by higher values in their dealings with those with less power and wealth. That a new world order should be more symmetrical, just, and sustainable.

But there's just one glaring problem with Carney's speech. When you attempt to apply his logic to the economic priorities he's promulgating right here in Canada, you begin to see very large gap between his rhetoric and the real world implications of his domestic policies.

Take, for example, his refusal to impose a wealth tax on Canada's 1%. Specifically, the 86 billionaire families in this country that control as much wealth as 6.2 million of the country's poorest families.

Then there's the cancellation of a capital gains tax increase that will benefit just .13% of Canadians. And you can do doubt guess who that fraction of a percent represents.

Add to that a rumored cut to the luxury tax on things like private jets and you begin to get a sense of what Carney's nation building project is all about.

And if you require more evidence, you need only look at Carney's plan to address Canada's housing affordability crisis. Instead of investing our tax dollars in the construction of publicly built and owned housing for our more vulnerable neighbours, he has chosen to partner with the private sector to build more affordable units.

The same sector that has been orchestrating the ever escalating cost of housing over the past few decades.



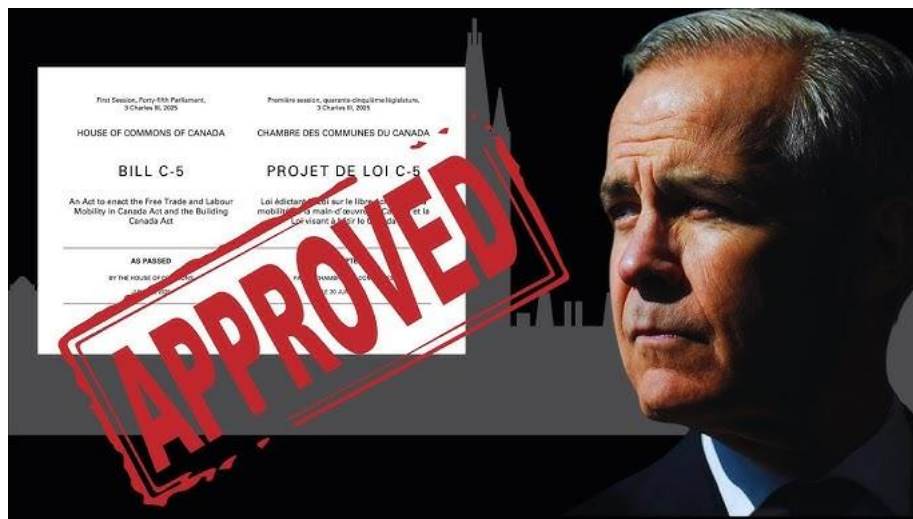
And just to make matters a little worse, Build Canada, the agency tasked with constructing more affordable homes, has no clear definition of what, exactly, affordability means. Moreover, as a number of experts have pointed out, Carney's Build Canada plan will have little or no impact on the high priced housing and rental units currently on the market.

But in no other area are the gaps between the Prime Minister’s rhetoric and our particular reality more glaring than in his approach to climate and the environment.

In an effort to soften the blow of a tariff war launched by the orange one down south, Carney has opted for a so-called “pro-growth” economic strategy that throws both climate action and environmental regulation under the bus.

What we get instead is the repeal of the consumer carbon tax and a delay in both electric vehicle sales targets and the application of carbon caps. This, combined with a commitment to increased liquid natural gas (LNG) production, may lock us into a carbon dependent future for years to come.

Then there’s Bill C5 which bestows draconian powers on Carney and his cabinet to toss environmental regulations out the window, in favour of fast tracking so-called “nation building” projects.



This from a man who once condemned global leaders for focusing solely on the problems of today and failing to address the greatest threat to our future – climate change.

Now, it would seem, Carney has become precisely the kind of politician he once disparaged.

Worse still many Canadians seem to have swallowed the Carney Kool-Aid, posting glowing reports about his “elbows up” approach to threats from the south.

But here’s the central problem with the elbows up approach – while we may win the battle against a rogue American president, we may well lose the war against a much larger and

more dangerous enemy. An enemy we've unleashed called climate change that could blow our so called "nation building" economy out of the proverbial water.

So, I think we need to communicate that reality, strongly and clearly, to Carney and his government, if we want our leaders to change course. If not for our sake, then for the future safety of our kids and grandkids.

Erna Buffie is a writer and environmental activist. Read about her upcoming book, ***Out on a Limb*** @ <https://www.ernabuffie.com/new-out-on-a-limb>