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the taxpayer

Fall 2024
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CANADA'S SINKING ECONOMY

P.28

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FROM THE PRESIDENT 

Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Bureaucrats

*Don't let 'em blow budgets or hand out big bucks
Let 'em be engineers and business owners and such*



By Scott Hennig,
President, Canadian Taxpayers Federation
shennig@taxpayer.com

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When my wife and I were debating where to send our first child to school, one option was the French immersion program. During a discussion, I lamented to my wife: "If our son becomes proficient in French, he might move to Ottawa and become a federal bureaucrat!"

Like most parents, I tell my kids if they work hard and get good grades, they can do anything they want. I'm happy for them to learn another language, like French, but I'm serious about steering my kids away from becoming bureaucrats.

Canada won't survive long-term unless we reverse the growth of government. Bureaucrats drain the productive economy and kill real jobs. They stifle innovation and make Canadians poorer.

It's not just the bad decisions, waste and corporate welfare they dish out for their political masters. Even the most well-meaning bureaucrats are paid with, and spending dollars forcefully taken from, the productive members of society. And those productive Canadians are punished for their success.

We know taxes are used to discourage certain behaviours. Want fewer people smoking? Hike cigarette taxes. Want fewer entrepreneurs? Hike capital gains taxes. Want people to work less hard? Impose punishing taxes on higher incomes. Then, as a final kick in the pants, use that money to hire bureaucrats who churn out punitive regulations and subsidize failing companies that compete against successful ones. This, my friends, is a surefire recipe for destroying our country.

Since 2019, government employment in Canada has grown by 13%, while private sector jobs only increased by 6%, according to a recent Fraser Institute study. Even more concerning, the number of self-employed Canadians dropped by 6%.

This trend holds true across most provinces. British Columbia saw a 22% growth in government employees between 2019 and 2023. Meanwhile, private sector jobs grew by 1%, and self-employed numbers fell by 2%. Ontario saw a 15% growth in government jobs, while private sector jobs increased by 7%, and self-employed numbers fell by 6%. Alarmingly, Manitoba and Saskatchewan experienced the largest declines in self-employed jobs, falling 19% and 20%, respectively.

Alberta and Nova Scotia were the only provinces where private-sector and self-employed job growth outpaced government jobs.

But no province has seen government employee growth like the federal government. Since taking office in 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau bloated the federal workforce by 43%. That's 110,738 more bureaucrats on the payroll – each with higher pay, gold-plated benefits, and the rare, expensive, defined-benefit pension plan.

Just look at the Canada Revenue Agency. It now has more than 59,000 employees. Compare that to the Internal Revenue Service in the U.S., which serves a population nearly nine times larger with just 83,000 staff.

For the sake of the country, it's time to get out the pink slips.



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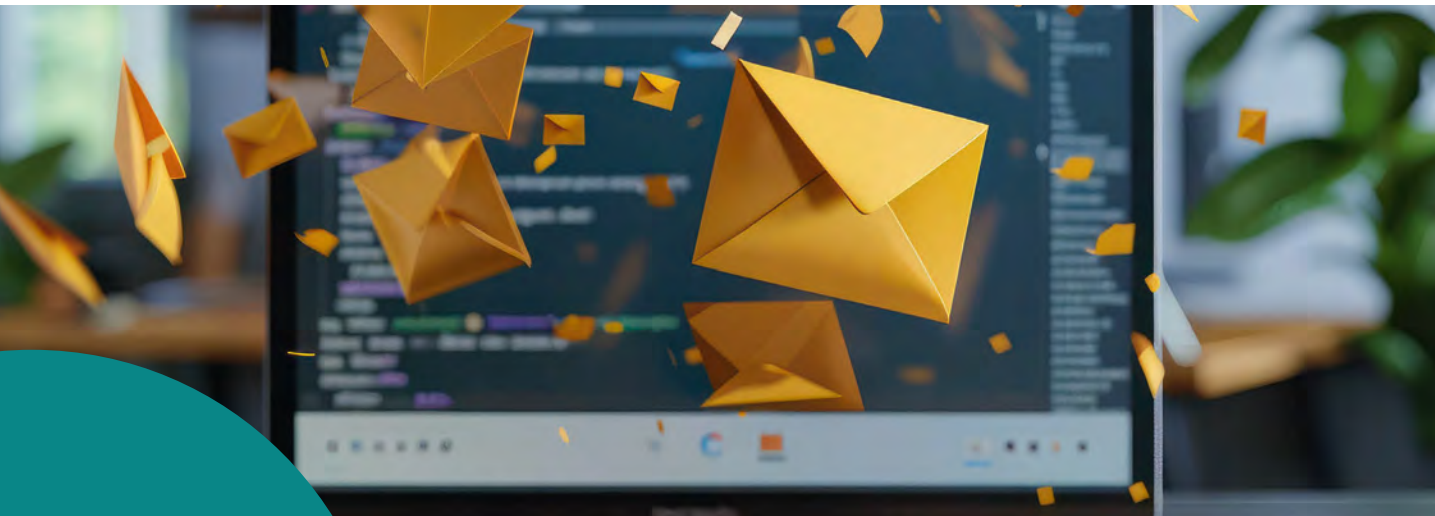
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Thanks for the very comprehensive coverage of many issues that interest me, as we look forward to a change of government in British Columbia and Ottawa.

The cost of housing and living has become a burden for many Canadians. The Bank of Canada and politicians allowed the situation to happen. As your articles point out, carbon and other taxes drive up the cost of housing and food. Never have I seen so many people living on the streets and so much public disorder.

You did not cover the fact that Liberal legislation, intended to correct the Indigenous incarceration rate, resulted in a catch and release process that led to high crime rates. Legislation to reduce drug overdoses also increased the number of addicts living in squalid conditions, pressuring first responders and ERs. Immigration policies increased the cost of renting. Not only immigration, but temporary foreign workers and international students added two million people to an already tight housing market. Total mismanagement.

The cost of these policies will far exceed the misspending mentioned in your articles. I think we will see changes in leadership in Ottawa next year. However, the past and present policies of the federal Liberals will make it impossible to balance budgets in one term. It will take decades to reverse policies that have failed the Canadians who will continue to pay the bills.

Keep up the good work. You might want to start a political party.

Phil Harrison
Comox, B.C.

Another great, but at the same time, depressing issue of *The Taxpayer*.

I did enjoy the interview with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith. However, I continue to be dismayed by the acceptance by nearly all politicians – federal, provincial and municipal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP or otherwise – of the prevailing yet quite silly climate change narrative that carbon dioxide and, additionally, methane are the bad guys.

According to this narrative, we must hobble if not destroy our economic well-being in order to mitigate the presumed greenhouse effect. By accepting this narrative, all parties cleave to the Liberal playing field, upon which they continue to flounder. It only takes a few minutes of judicious searching, including reading the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s “Summary for Policy Makers” chapters, to reveal how unscientific this narrative is. How could a few parts per million change of carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere (and likewise a concentration of just

under two parts per million of methane) have any significant effect?

In my view, it is irresponsible for politicians to avoid informing themselves about something so important and so draining of the economic well-being of the country. Politicians need to learn enough of the technical specifics, so that at just over 0.04% of the atmosphere, they understand that carbon dioxide cannot not control the climate. Despite the barrage of political and media pronouncements that seem to cow them, with minimal effort our politicians could easily be walked through the basic science in order to realize the whole climate change narrative is false, and give them the confidence to stand up and face down the environmental activists and the gullible, biased, mainstream media that supports it.

Brian Pratt, PhD
Saskatoon, Sask.

One of the most common controversies about government policies in Canada concerns whether taxes are too high. Many younger Canadians are largely indifferent to this issue, seeing it as one that affects mainly those with higher incomes, who they expect can “afford” to pay. As one of my friends blithely commented, “You have to make money to pay taxes on it.” A central message of every budget announced by the Trudeau government since it was elected in 2015 has been that “the rich must pay their fair share,” and that this is always more.

The perception that the cost of government expenditures are, and should be, borne primarily by those with higher incomes may have lulled most people into indifference about the overall trends in government spending, taxing and indebtedness. But forever increasing taxes on the wealthy is not without costs. They are a major source of investment and income growth for society as a whole, and if pushed too far can engage in a wide range of “tax planning” techniques, including ultimately moving to other countries where the tax systems are less punitive.

So are the majority of people right to be unconcerned about government spending and the level of taxes? To answer that question, one needs to look at all of the taxes being paid by Canadians, including the ones paid to federal, provincial and local governments.

In 2023, the average Canadian family, including both families and unattached individuals, earned a cash income of \$109,235. The total tax bill of the average Canadian family amounted to 43% of cash income. Personal income taxes accounted for less than a third of the total tax burden. Sales taxes, meaning the GST and HST, accounted for more than one-fifth. People pay sales taxes on virtually everything they buy, so the burden falls on people with all levels of income. Property taxes

are usually based on the commercial value of the property being taxed, so that may be somewhat more aligned with income levels. The “profit tax” is the share of the Corporate Income Tax that, while imposed initially on corporations, is passed onto consumers when corporations increase the prices of the goods and services they produce to recover the corporate taxes paid.

As taxes, revenues and government expenditures have risen, so too has the amount of money transferred through various programs to those with lower incomes. The fact that everyone pays taxes does not mean that everyone is left comparatively well off as the result of the taxation and expenditure process. It does mean that no income group in Canadian society can completely avoid the effects of the sharp rise in government expenditures over time. The message that people should take from this is that we are all taxpayers, and we should all be concerned that governments spend and tax wisely.

Bob Lyman
Saskatoon, Sask.


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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CTF EXCLUSIVE

Trudeau drops \$200,000 on airplane food

Beef brisket and mashed parsley creamy potatoes with truffle oil. Pan-fried beef tenderloin with port wine sauce. Braised lamb shanks with steamed broccoli and boiled baby potatoes. Baked cheesecake with pistachio brittle.

Those are some of the airplane meals Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his entourage dined on during his six-day tour of the Indo-Pacific region in the fall of 2023, according to records obtained by the CTF.

“Hot meals ONLY for VVIP will be transferred to China dish ware and garnished,” according to the records.

The records indicate a special request for the plane to be stocked with Flow Water, a premium brand of alkaline spring box water and a known Trudeau favourite, which has also shown up in his personal grocery expenses.

Trudeau toured the Indo-Pacific region from Sept. 5 to 10, 2023, meeting with business leaders in Singapore, the president of Indonesia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and attending the G20 summit in India.

The taxpayer tab for the trip was \$1.9 million, with \$190,000 spent on airplane food.



SOURCE: SHUTTERSTOCK

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gives a thumbs up to members of the public while in Halifax in July 2023.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Feds drop half-a-million on glitzy galas for bureaucrats

The federal government spent nearly half-a-million dollars throwing gaudy galas to bestow bureaucrats with expensive awards over the past decade, according to records obtained by the CTF.

Taxpayers got stuck with a \$476,000 party bill from 2012 to 2022. Combined spending on galas in the past two years alone came to \$118,000, with about \$80,000 going towards custom-designed trophies.

In 2022, the feds dropped \$37,243 on the party, with the trophies for winners described as a “plaque in bevelled black

glass,” featuring “clear crystal overlay with silver standoffs” and a “personalized inscription deep-etched and silver-filled.”

In 2021, the party was held virtually over three days. A speechwriter was hired for \$2,000 and trophies cost \$15,000.

In 2019, the feds dropped \$23,000 on the gala, which included a literal red carpet and a professional photographer so bureaucrats could experience a flashy photoshoot.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau spends \$1.7 million on global carbon tax push

The federal government is dumping \$1.7 million into a failed bid to get countries around the world to impose carbon taxes, according to records obtained by the CTF.

The Trudeau government launched the Global Carbon Pricing Challenge at the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in 2021.

But the results are dismal for the government.

Only 24% of global emissions are currently covered by a carbon tax, according to the World Bank. About 70% of

countries do not have a national carbon tax.

The World Bank further notes that three of the four largest emitting countries – the United States, Russia and India, do not have a national carbon tax.

Only 12 countries, including Kazakhstan and Chile, have signed onto the Global Carbon Pricing Challenge as “partners,” alongside the European Union. Côte d’Ivoire is listed as the lone “friend” of the program.

There are 195 countries in the world, according to the United Nations.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Feds spend \$3M on Dubai climate junket

The federal government spent nearly \$3 million sending 182 people to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, for the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), according to records obtained by the CTF.

That includes a \$1.3 million “Canada Pavilion” held during the summit, which featured a rapper (who just so happens to be the son of a Liberal MP) performing a song while giving a shoutout to Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault.

COP28 was held from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12, 2023. The nearly \$3-million tab included \$825,466 for transportation, \$472,570 for accommodations and \$295,455 for meals.

At the Canada Pavilion, rapper Baba Brinkman, son of Liberal MP Joyce Murray, performed rap on “climate disinformation.”



SOURCE: ALAMY

Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault scrums with reporters at COP28 in Dubai.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Bonuses for ArriveCAN execs

Federal health executives who oversaw the ArriveCAN scandal received \$340,000 in bonuses, according to records obtained by the CTF.

Between March 2020 and September 2022, eight executives from the Public Health Agency of Canada were assigned to the ArriveCAN project in various capacities, according to the records.

Five of the eight executives received an “at-risk” bonus for 2020-21, while four of the eight received a “performance” bonus. Six of the eight executives received an “at-risk” bonus for 2021-22, while two received a “performance” bonus.

All told, the PHAC executives working on the ArriveCAN app received a combined \$342,929 in bonuses for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 fiscal years.

The ArriveCAN app launched in April 2020 with a price tag of \$80,000, before costs quickly spiralled out of control. Canada’s Auditor-General pegged the true cost of ArriveCAN at \$60 million.



CTF EXCLUSIVE:
Moving election means
tens of millions in
extra pensions



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh

The Trudeau government's plan to push back the next federal election could cost \$120 million in extra MP pensions, according to CTF estimates.

MPs are eligible for a pension after six years of service. MPs first elected in the 2019 election are not eligible for the pension until Oct. 21, 2025.

The federal government introduced legislation that would move the next scheduled election from Oct. 20 to Oct. 27, 2025.

This would mean 80 additional MPs would be eligible to collect a pension. The additional pensions could total up to \$120 million if all 80 MPs lose their seats.

The annual starting pension ranges from \$32,000 to \$49,000.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau drops \$1M on "affordability" retreats

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his cabinet ministers spent \$1.3 million on three "affordability" retreats over the course of a single year, according to records uncovered by the CTF.

The first retreat was held in Vancouver in September 2022 and cost taxpayers \$471,070. Receipts obtained by the CTF show Trudeau and his ministers expensed taxpayers for filet mignon, grilled Dijon salmon, ceviche, prawn ravioli and key lime pie during the retreat.

Trudeau and company then descended on Hamilton, Ont., from Jan. 23 to 25, 2023. They spent \$32,000 on hospitality, \$20,000 on meals, \$50,000 on hotel rooms, \$48,000 on meeting rooms, \$26,000 on rental equipment and \$71,000 on audio and visual services.

Food purchases included \$3,493 worth of pop and juice, \$542 worth of potato chips, a \$250 cheese board, \$240 worth of cookies and a \$220 pita chips and hummus spread, among other items.

In August 2023, Trudeau and his ministers, alongside their support staff, racked up \$485,196 in expenses during another retreat, this time in Prince Edward Island, including \$100,000 spent on hotel rooms and nearly \$75,000 on meals and catering.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Feds dish out one million pay raises in four years

The Trudeau government rubber-stamped more than one million pay raises, according to records unearthed by the CTF.

The federal government gave 319,067 bureaucrats a raise in 2023. The government has consistently declined to disclose how much those annual pay hikes cost taxpayers.

The cost of the federal payroll hit \$67 billion in 2023 - a record high, representing a 68% increase since 2016.

In 2020, the federal government issued 373,134 pay raises to bureaucrats, followed by 266,646 in 2021 and 162,263 in 2022.

All told, the feds rubber-stamped 1,121,110 pay increases since the beginning of 2020.

Interest charges on federal debt balloon

Ten cents out of every dollar the Trudeau government takes from taxpayers is now going to interest charges on the federal debt.

Statistics Canada released a report in January 2024 showing interest charges on the federal debt grew by 37% over the previous year.

The government's 2023 Fall Economic Statement shows that in 2024-25, interest charges on the federal debt will surpass health care transfers to the provinces. By 2028-29, interest charges will consume every penny the feds collect from the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Federal interest charges will cost taxpayers \$46.5 billion in 2024.

Source: Statistics Canada



Governor General Mary Simon, seated next to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, during the Canada Day celebration in Ottawa in 2023

CTF EXCLUSIVE: GG gets \$11,200 raise

Governor-General Mary Simon received a \$11,200 raise in 2024, her third pay bump since being appointed to the role in 2021, driving her salary for this year up to \$362,800.

The Governor-General's salary has increased by \$60,000, or 20%, since 2019. On top of the \$362,800 annual salary, the

Governor-General receives a range of lavish perks, including a taxpayer-funded mansion, a platinum pension, a generous retirement allowance, a clothing budget, paid dry cleaning services and travel expenses.

Former governors-general are also eligible for a full pension, of about \$150,000 a year, regardless of how long they serve in office.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: Taxpayers billed for \$700,000 worth of circus, concert, sports tickets

Federal bureaucrats bought hundreds of thousands of dollars in tickets to circuses and concerts, balls and ballets, galas and award shows, football and hockey games, dance festivals and musicals - then sent the bill to taxpayers.

Bureaucrats spent \$721,000 on event tickets between January 2023 and June 2024, according to records obtained by the CTF. Average monthly spending during that 17-month period was \$42,400.

In May 2023, bureaucrats at Global Affairs Canada spent \$6,800 on tickets to Cirque du Soleil in Vienna, Austria, which

retailed for \$284 apiece. Months later, GAC bureaucrats expensed \$512 worth of Cirque du Soleil tickets in Seoul, South Korea.

GAC also racked up \$24,484 in spending on tickets to the musical Come From Away in Australia, Japan and the United States. The department also dropped \$20,000 in taxpayer cash on tickets to a ball in Taipei, Taiwan in November 2023.

Event tickets were purchased across Canada and the United States, as well as countries around the world, including Poland, Norway and Turkey.

CTF EXCLUSIVE: DND bankrolls feminist report calling outer space sexist

The Department of National Defence funded an intersectional feminist report on outer space that chastised contemporary practices as sexist.

Current approaches to outer space are "heavily Western, state-centric, militarized, masculinized, and colonial," and encourage practices that are "racist, exploitative, elitist, and environmentally destructive."

DND funded the report to the tune of \$32,250 in taxpayer cash. The report trumpets the need for feminist and decolonial approaches to space security and space exploration.

"Terms such as 'mankind,' 'astronauts and envoys of mankind,'

'man's entry into outer space,' 'manned and unmanned stations of the moon,' 'manned spacecraft,' and 'man-made' are... gender-biased," according to the report.

The report claims "colonial-based terms like 'exploration' and 'conquest'... normalize violence and exploitation" by depicting space as a "hostile and desolate environment that is unpeopled/inhuman and controlled so it can provide an extractable resource."



Julie Payette, former astronaut and Governor General

The project was pitched to DND as an opportunity to "draw on" feminist theory to "apply a [Gender-Based Analysis] understanding to Canadian and international space security policy."

SUPREME COURT RULES TRUDEAU'S NO MORE PIPELINES LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL



CTF Federal Director Franco Terrazzano stands with the CTF's lawyer Bruce Hallsor outside the Supreme Court of Canada.



Ryan Thorpe, CTF Investigative Journalist

The ruling was a big win for taxpayers, Canada's energy sector and natural resource workers across the country. And the CTF played a major role in this fight.

This unconstitutional law gave the feds the power to block major natural resource projects across Canada by tightening an already onerous regulatory process. As a result, the CTF knew it had to fight this law in court. After all, when governments stop major natural resource projects, politicians tend to raise taxes to make up for lost revenue. Developing Canada's resources is critical to creating jobs, reducing taxes and paying for major infrastructure, like hospitals and schools.

Thanks to generous donations from CTF supporters, our lawyers represented taxpayers at the Supreme Court. The CTF's lawyers argued the law blurred federal and provincial accountability for resource development and created

duplication within federal and provincial bureaucracies. In fact, the Supreme Court's judges cited the CTF's legal arguments in their ruling against Trudeau's law.

The CTF also fought against Trudeau's anti-resource policies in the court of public opinion. In 2019, the CTF launched a national pipeline tour to sound the alarm that when politicians roadblock natural resource projects, taxpayers end up footing the bill. Calculating the pipeline deficit could cost taxpayers \$13 billion, CTF staff blew up inflatable oil barrels with a clock showing the cost going up in real time. The CTF toured with this display, hosting press conferences in major cities in every province.

The Supreme Court ruling represents a major win for taxpayers and the Canadian economy. And taxpayers wouldn't have had lawyers fighting on their behalf in Canada's top court without the generosity of CTF supporters like you.

Nova Scotia ends bracket creep

It's official.

As of 2025, every single provincial government will have its income tax system at least partially indexed.

Bracket creep is a sneaky, backdoor income tax hike. It happens when governments don't move tax brackets with inflation. As a result, inflation can automatically bump taxpayers into higher tax brackets, even though they can't actually afford to buy more. With bracket creep, the basic personal exemption amount is also eroded over time.

Until recently, Nova Scotia was the only province that did not index its income tax system. This bracket creep will cost Nova Scotia taxpayers up to \$500 in 2024. Since 2000, bracket creep in Nova Scotia cost a taxpayer earning \$50,000 annually more than \$1,100.

But in its 2024 Budget, the Nova Scotia government committed to ending bracket creep in 2025, saving taxpayers hundreds of dollars every year.

With the end of bracket creep, Nova Scotia joins a chorus of provincial governments who moved to end this backdoor tax hike in recent years, including Alberta, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island.

Trudeau's carbon tax carve out

The federal government announced it would remove the carbon tax from furnace oil for three years.

The good news is that some Canadians, predominately in Atlantic Canada, will get some carbon tax relief during the winter months. The bad news is this will impact only 3% of Canadians families who use furnace oil to warm their homes.

But even if you are not one of the 3% using furnace oil, this is still a victory for you.

The fact that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau imposed this carve out shows that his government is facing intense opposition to the carbon tax. And the polls show just how intense that pressure is.

A Leger Poll commissioned by the CTF shows 70% of Canadians, including the vast majority in every province and across every demographic, oppose Trudeau's latest carbon tax increase.

Trudeau's carve out also punched a giant hole in his favourite talking point: the carbon tax rebate leaves people better off.

But if the carbon tax makes people better off, why would Trudeau remove the carbon tax from furnace oil for three years? With his carve out, Trudeau admitted what Canadians living outside the Ottawa bubble already knew: the carbon tax makes life more expensive.

Trudeau's carve out proves the pressure is mounting against the carbon tax. And with your help, the CTF will keep fighting until the carbon tax is completely scrapped.



CTF Ontario Director Jay Goldberg hand delivered 1,000 "Gas Taxes Stink" air fresheners to Ontario Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy.

GAS TAX RELIEF A MULTI-PARTY WIN

There was some good news for taxpayers in Manitoba's 2023 Budget.

Provincial governments of every political stripe have now provided gas tax relief.

Beginning on New Year's Day 2024, Manitoba's New Democratic Party government suspended the province's 14-cents-a-litre fuel tax.

That tax relief was initially set to expire by the end of June 2024. But thanks to CTF pressure, the Manitoba NDP extended the gas tax cut not once, but twice. The relief will now be in place until at least the end of 2024.

Ontario's Progressive Conservatives cut fuel taxes by 6.4 cents a litre in July 2022. The typical two-car family filling up once a week has saved more than \$850 at the pumps since the gas tax cut was put in place two years ago.

The Ontario gas tax cut was set to expire at the end of June 2024, so the CTF mounted a pressure campaign to get the Ford government to extend it. The CTF's Ontario Director, Jay Goldberg, hand delivered 1,000 air fresheners emblazoned with the slogan "Gas Taxes Suck" to Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy.

In October 2023, the Ford government announced it was extending the gas tax cut, which will now be in place until at least the end of 2024. With that move, Ontario families can expect to save an additional \$225 at the pumps.

The Liberals in Newfoundland and Labrador cut its fuel tax by eight cents a litre in June 2022, with the tax cut in place until at least April 2025. And Alberta's United Conservatives provided fuel tax relief between April 2022 and January 2024.

Provincial politicians wearing every jersey colour have now provided fuel tax relief. That speaks to the influence CTF supporters like you have among politicians in every party.

EXPLORING FRUSTRATIONS WITH THE K-12 SYSTEM



Colin Craig
President,
SecondStreet.org

In the last issue of *The Taxpayer*, SecondStreet.org highlighted growing frustration with the K-12 education system in Canada. While one could make assumptions about what Canadians were frustrated about, there was no data to quantify concerns. That is, until now.

A new poll commissioned by SecondStreet.org explores Canadians' concerns with the public education system. The May 2024 poll, conducted

by Leger, asked Canadians about seven aspects of the K-12 system, plus a few other questions.

Notably, 55% of Canadians feel the public K-12 system has gone in the "wrong direction" over the last 20 years, in terms of equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in life. This is up from 32% in October 2020. Only 25% of Canadians believe the system has gone in the "right direction".

When asked about various changes to the system, Canadians were most concerned about discipline and accountability – a staggering 63% responded "wrong direction," while only 17% felt the system had gone in the "right direction." Respondents raised concerns about so-called "no fail policies," where students are shuffled along from grade to grade without demonstrating they have actually learned what's required. Others raised concerns about students being able to hand in assignments late without penalties. Violence in schools was also mentioned as an issue by some.

As you can see from the chart above, other top concerns included schools' priorities on what's being taught and changes related to sexual education and gender.

Needless to say, if one strictly looks at responses from the 55% of Canadians upset with the direction of the system, concerns about the seven issues identified in the table above are even more lopsided.

In terms of solutions, there are two broad options for governments:

1. Conduct extensive public opinion research to learn more about public frustration and then reverse or amend changes implemented over the past two decades.
2. Find ways to increase the education options available outside the public school system. This could include financial support for parents who want to home school their children or wish to send their kids to independent schools.

One thing should be clear – governments need to rethink many of the changes they've made to the K-12 system over the past two decades. Those who are paying for the system – taxpayers – overwhelmingly give the changes a failing grade.

QUESTION: Over the last 20 years, would you say the elements of the public school system listed in the table below have generally gone in the right direction or wrong direction?

	Right direction	Wrong direction	I don't know
Discipline/Accountability as it relates to students	17%	63%	19%
Schools' priorities in terms of lessons & skills that are taught	26%	50%	25%
Content related to sexual education and gender	31%	43%	26%
Report cards (how students' progress is assessed/reported)	26%	42%	32%
How subjects are now taught (new ways of teaching math, reading, etc.)	29%	41%	30%
The quality of teachers	34%	38%	28%
Content related to racial matters	40%	29%	31%

SURVIVORS OF SOCIALISM SPOTLIGHT: YALI'S STORY

On university campuses in Canada, it's not uncommon to see posters promoting 'young socialist clubs' and t-shirts bearing the face of Che Guevara, the mid-20th century South American guerilla leader, Marxist revolutionary and prominent communist figure in the Cuban revolution.

Why don't young people understand how evil socialism is?

Two years ago, SecondStreet.org launched its Survivors of Socialism project to highlight what it's really like to live under socialist and communist regimes, with the hope of showing young people that what they read in 19th century social theorist Karl Marx's work leads to horrific consequences in real life.

This series is continuing strong to this day. A new episode examines what life was like in China before the nation's economic reforms began.

Yali Trost, who now lives in Vancouver, grew up in China and shared her story with SecondStreet.org.

While activists and academics love to push socialist policies they claim will lead to a utopian state, and a brotherhood of man where everyone looks after each other, that couldn't be further from the reality in China.

Yali remembers being hungry all the time as a child. It was difficult to come across enough food to fill her belly. She could only eat meat about once a year.

She also faced discrimination because her grandfather supported the old Chinese government over Mao Zedong's socialist revolutionaries who, following the revolution, founded the People's Republic of China. Oppression against dissenters in China is a generational phenomenon.

Many Canadians are concerned about the state of free speech in this country, but it was and is much worse in China. While several economic reforms towards the end of the 20th century made hunger and poverty less common, dissent in the Chinese regime is still not tolerated. Yali mentioned that family members were encouraged to report each other to the authorities if anyone said something critical of the Communist Party.

Even more stomach-turning was China's one-child policy, which only ended in 2016. It's just as it sounds: the government tried to limit everyone to having only a single child to control the size of the population. Yali mentioned that to enforce this barbaric, authoritarian practice, Chinese police would even grab pregnant women, force them to have



Yali Trost sat down for an interview with SecondStreet.org to speak about her experience growing up under a dictatorship.

abortions on the spot and shame them by showing them the remains.

So next time you see a young person speak favourably about communism or socialism, share some of these stories. It's one thing to fantasize about a utopian state, but it's quite another to hear what it's like to live under these regimes.

And if they tell you that 'socialism and communism are different things!' Here's a quote from Vladimir Lenin, the first leader of the Soviet Union:

"The goal of socialism is communism."

Readers can watch stories from those who have lived under socialist and communist regimes by visiting www.secondstreet.org/socialism.

Colin Craig is the President of SecondStreet.org. If you have an interesting story to share or thoughts on these columns, send an email to colin@secondstreet.org

CANADIAN BONUS CORPORATION



Ryan Thorpe, CTF Investigative Journalist

CBC President Catherine Tait claims bonuses at the state broadcaster don't exist. And yet, each and every year, the CBC re-allocates tens of millions of dollars from its core programming responsibilities to cover the cheques.

The CBC just rubberstamped yet another round of taxpayer-funded bonuses for its senior executives and managers. In a notice posted quietly on its website on June 25, the CBC announced the approval of bonuses for 1,194 staff for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

That announcement came less than a week after the House of Commons broke for the summer recess. The CBC had good reason to try to bury the news during the summer break. With MPs back home in their ridings, it would be less likely to spark scrutiny.

In large part thanks to the work of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, both the public and their elected representatives in the House of Commons have grown tired of the CBC dishing out millions in bonuses while crying poor to the federal government.

Throughout 2024, MPs have repeatedly dragged Tait before parliamentary committees to explain the bonus bonanza at the state broadcaster.

This latest round of CBC bonuses will cost taxpayers \$18 million. In 2023, the CBC paid out \$15 million in bonuses; in 2022, it paid out \$16 million. All told, the CBC dished out \$132 million in bonuses since 2015, when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau first came to power.

That information only came to light thanks to the work of the CTF. The CBC does not proactively disclose the amount of money it hands out in taxpayer-funded bonuses each year. The CTF exposed the bonus totals by obtaining internal CBC documents through access-to-information requests.

In December 2023, just weeks before Christmas, Tait announced the public broadcaster would lay off up to 800 employees (346 jobs were eventually cut). Days later, Tait appeared on the CBC's nightly newscast, where her network's own anchor cited the work of the CTF and grilled Tait on the rubberstamping of executive bonuses while pink slips were being handed out to hundreds of employees.

That public relations disaster was followed by a series of brutal committee appearances for Tait, where she continued to be grilled on the topic of bonuses, this time by MPs. During her flailing appearances, Tait insinuated the CTF had been spreading "misinformation" about the CBC's bonus scheme.

It turns out Tait doesn't like the term "bonus." She prefers to call those cheques "performance pay." This is a hallmark example of what the British author and journalist George Orwell called "political language," which uses "euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness" in "defence of the indefensible."

What could be more "indefensible" than shaking down overtaxed Canadians to bankroll the never-ending gravy train at the CBC?

The CBC already receives more than \$1 billion from taxpayers annually. This year, CBC funding topped \$1.4 billion, a record high. During her committee appearances, Tait had the audacity to claim the CBC was subject to "chronic underfunding." And her highly public panhandling worked. The Trudeau government later gave the CBC a funding top-up of \$42 million to offset its so-called budget pressures.

“The CBC already receives more than \$1 billion from taxpayers annually. This year, CBC funding topped \$1.4 billion, a record high. During her committee appearances, Tait had the audacity to claim the CBC was subject to ‘chronic underfunding.’”

The CBC has yet to publish its so-called "key performance indicators" that trigger bonuses. But in its announcement, one of the accomplishments the CBC cited to justify the payouts is that, among Canadians who use its digital services, "each unique visitor... spends 37.6 minutes every month on its website." That's less than 80 seconds a day. If that's what the CBC considers "success," then it's no wonder bonus cheques are being shipped out the door just as fast as they can be



SOURCE: ALAMY.

CBC President and CEO Catherine Tait photographed in Berlin in February 2020.

printed. If the bar were any lower, it would be on the floor.

The CTF also has an ongoing legal challenge against the CBC over its refusal to disclose how much of its \$15 million in bonuses in 2023 went to its senior executives. It appears Tait and her fellow CBC fat cats don't think they should be subject to the same level of transparency they tell their journalists to demand from Canadian politicians or members of Canada's business community.

Despite the fact that taxpayers are paying the bills, the CBC seems to think taxpayers have no right to know how much its senior executives took in bonuses last year. In fact, taxpayers

don't even know how much they're forced to pay for Tait's salary. All we know is Tait takes home between \$472,900 and \$623,900 a year in total compensation, when her pay, bonus and perks are tallied up.

In its latest bonus announcement, the CBC acknowledged "the views expressed by some that [bonuses] should not be awarded... in times of financial pressures and associated workforce reductions." As a result, the CBC is "launching a comprehensive review of [its] compensation regime, including [bonuses]" to be "conducted by a third-party human resources consulting firm."

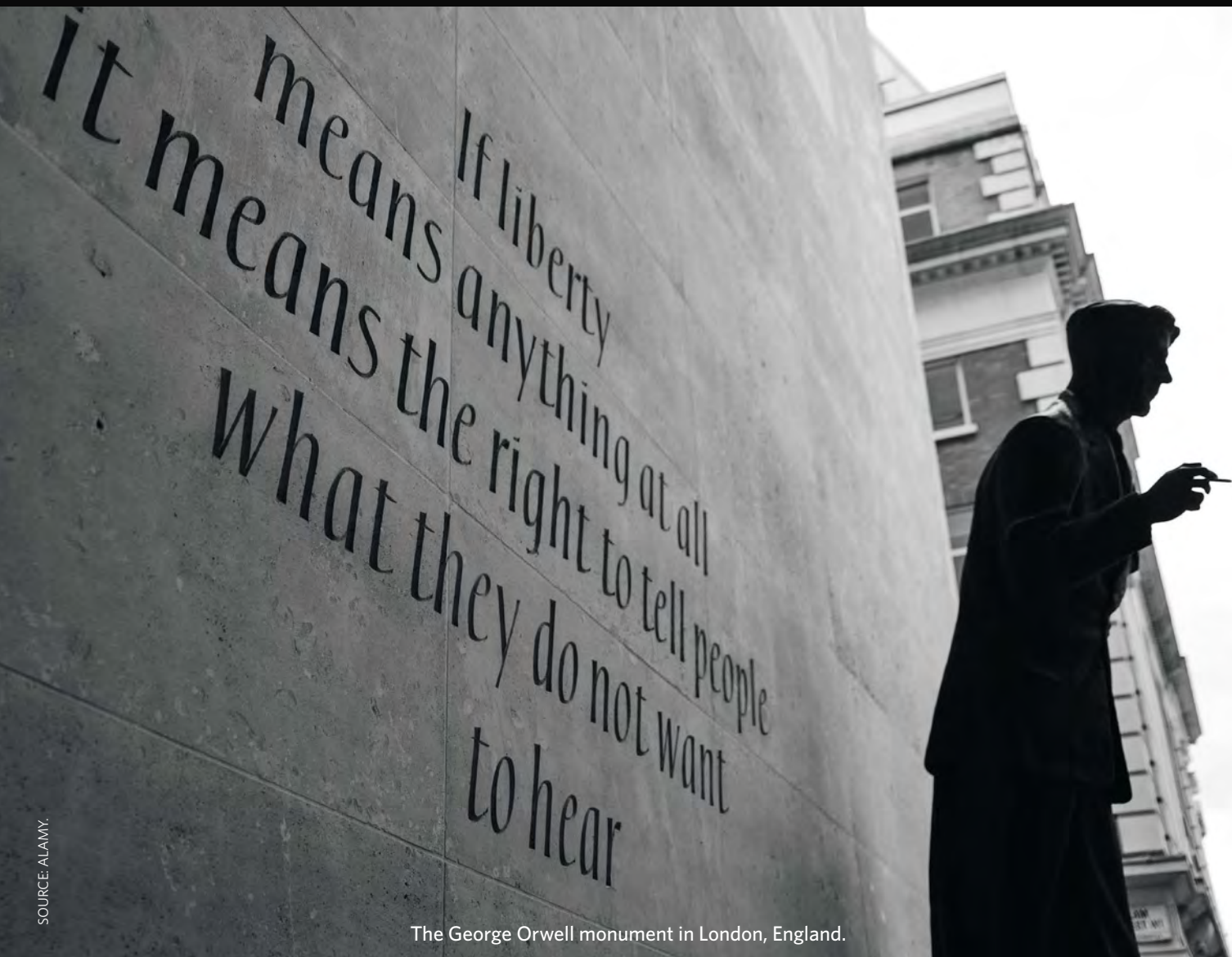
Translation: the CBC is going to

spend even more tax dollars hiring a bunch of consultants to tell them whether or not they should continue rubberstamping tens of millions in bonuses each and every year.

But here's the thing: there's no need for third-party consultants, particularly ones handpicked by the CBC. There's no need for another report, the CTF has done the research, we have the receipts. The CBC does not deserve a penny more from taxpayers. CBC President Catherine Tait just needs to do the right thing. And the right thing is obvious: stop the bonuses, once and for all.



TRUDEAU'S ORWELLIAN DIGITAL SAFETY COMMISSION



The George Orwell monument in London, England.

The Liberal government's so-called Online Harms Act, officially known as Bill C-63, isn't just a threat to the freedom of expression of Canadians, but also to their wallets. The bill has not been implemented yet, but the Trudeau government shows no sign of changing course, despite a flood of warnings and complaints from legal experts, civil liberties advocates and ordinary Canadians.

A July 2024 report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the federal government's independent, non-partisan fiscal watchdog, indicates Trudeau's online censorship bill will come with a hefty price tag for taxpayers. The PBO estimates the Online Harms Act will cost at least \$201 million over the first five years of its existence.

To make matters worse, if passed into law, the Online Harms Act will create an entirely new wing of the federal bureaucracy, officially called the Digital Safety Commission, staffed with 330 full-time internet censors.

To put things in perspective, Trudeau's army of digital censors will be roughly one-third larger than the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, the federal agency responsible for keeping Canadians safe on the roads and in the air. In 2021, the last year for which statistics are available, 1,786 Canadians died on the road, while another 8,185 were seriously injured. If this allocation of resources is any indication, the Trudeau government seems more concerned with mean internet comments than the safety of Canadians on the road or in the air.

The Digital Safety Commission's 330 new online censors will only add to an already bloated federal bureaucracy, which has expanded 42% under Trudeau's watch. By comparison, Canada's population grew just 14% during that same time period. Had the bureaucracy only increased in line with population growth, there would be 72,491 fewer federal bureaucrats today, saving taxpayers more than \$10 billion each and every year.

The PBO's \$201 million estimated price tag for the Online Harms Act is likely just the tip of the iceberg. The PBO warns the taxpayer tab will rise even higher if the Digital Safety Commission employs "significant external legal, IT or consulting services." And that seems like a safe bet, considering the fact federal spending on consultants hit a record high \$21.6 billion last year. In fact, spending on consultants increased in six of the past eight years. In an irony of all ironies, the Trudeau government spent \$669,000 hiring consultants to give them advice on how to spend less on consultants.

The \$201 million estimate also does not factor in the cost of an increased workload at the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which would be tasked with handling the quasi-judicial 'prosecution' of Canadians who posted information on social media platforms that is deemed to have run afoul of the law.

The Online Harms Act would also create perverse incentives for Canadians to report their fellow citizens to the government for online speech or political advocacy they find

“To put things in perspective, Trudeau's army of digital censors will be roughly one-third larger than the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, the federal agency responsible for keeping Canadians safe on the roads and in the air.”

offensive or objectionable. Canadians would be able to file anonymous complaints to the CHRC about the social media activities of their fellow citizens at no cost. If upheld, those complaints could result in a \$70,000 fine for the offender, with up to \$20,000 awarded directly to the anonymous complainant. What could go wrong?

"Bill C-63 enables blatant violations of expressive freedom, privacy, protest rights and liberty," according to an open letter signed by more than 20 civil society groups and legal experts. "It also undermines the fundamental principles of democratic accountability and procedural fairness by granting sweeping powers to the new Digital Safety Commission." Celebrated Canadian author Margaret Atwood went so far as to call the Online Harms Act "Orwellian."

The Trudeau government claims Bill C-63 is needed to protect Canadians from serious online harms, ranging from targeted harassment to so-called hate speech and the distribution of child sex abuse imagery. But harassment, 'hate speech,' and the sexual abuse of children are already offences under the Criminal Code.

And if Trudeau were really worried about online criminality, then there's a simpler solution at his fingertips. With the \$201 million earmarked for the creation of his battalion of online hall monitors, the federal government could instead hire about 375 new RCMP officers. And there's a dire need for more officers in the RCMP's cybercrime investigative teams, according to a 2024 report from Canada's Auditor-General, which found that 30% of the jobs within those units are vacant.

So the RCMP units dedicated to investigating real online harms, like child abuse, are understaffed, and the bright idea from Trudeau's brain trust is to get hundreds of federal paper pushers snooping through the Facebook feeds of Canadians. Because everyone knows when you're worried about crime, you don't call the police, you call a bureaucrat.

CTF SUPPORTER SURVEY RESULTS

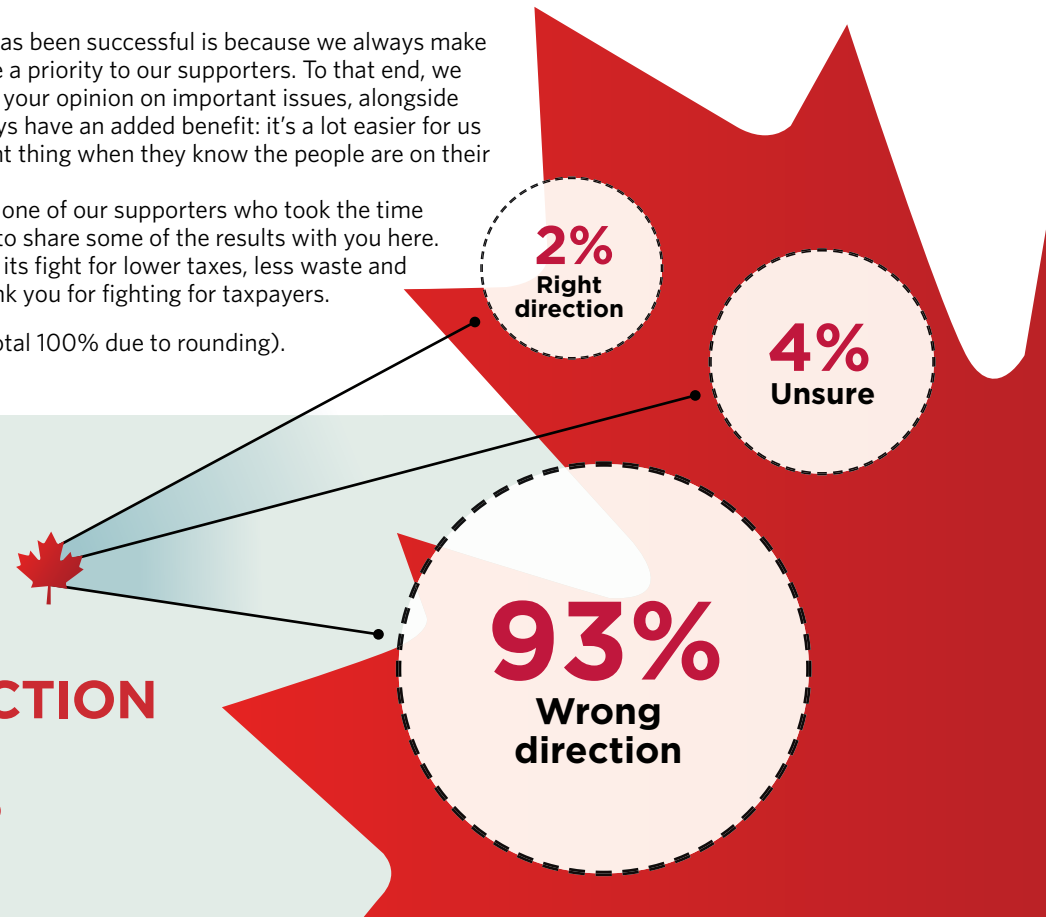
For more than three decades, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has been fighting for lower taxes, less waste and governments accountable to the people who pay the bills. The only reason the CTF exists is because of the support of hundreds of thousands of generous Canadian taxpayers from St. Johns to Victoria and countless towns in between. Our supporters are the reason for the CTF's success; our supporters keep the CTF growing.

One of the reasons why the CTF has been successful is because we always make sure we're fighting on issues that are a priority to our supporters. To that end, we use regular supporter surveys to get your opinion on important issues, alongside one longer annual survey. The surveys have an added benefit: it's a lot easier for us to persuade politicians to do the right thing when they know the people are on their side.

We'd like to thank each and every one of our supporters who took the time to respond to our latest survey, and to share some of the results with you here. Thank you for supporting the CTF in its fight for lower taxes, less waste and more accountable government. Thank you for fighting for taxpayers.

(Note: some percentages may not total 100% due to rounding).

IS CANADA GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR WRONG DIRECTION?



HOW SHOULD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BALANCE THE BUDGET?

83% SPENDING CUTS ONLY

11% SPENDING CUTS AND TAX HIKES
1% TAX HIKES ONLY
5% UNSURE



HOW SOON SHOULD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BALANCE THE BUDGET?

46% IMMEDIATELY

33% Within two to four years
13% Within five to 10 years
1% More than 10 years
4% Unsure



DO YOU SUPPORT THE FEDERAL CARBON TAX?

88%
Strongly oppose

CO₂ TAX

7%
Somewhat oppose

1%
Unsure

3%
Somewhat support

1%
Strongly support



*** POLITICIANS HAVE THREATENED TO IMPOSE AN EXCESS PROFITS TAX ON GROCERY STORES TO “STABILIZE” FOOD PRICES. DO YOU SUPPORT THAT PROPOSAL?**

61% STRONGLY OPPOSE

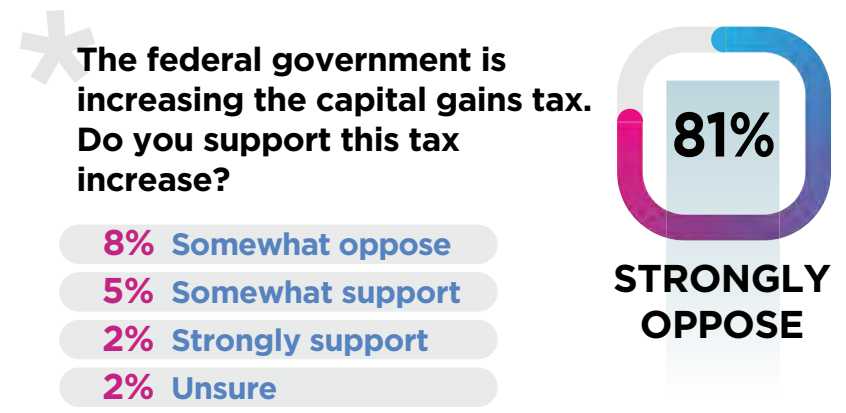
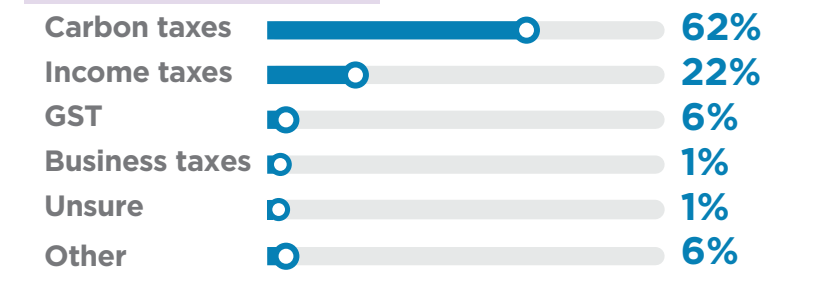
11% SOMEWHAT OPPOSE

10% SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

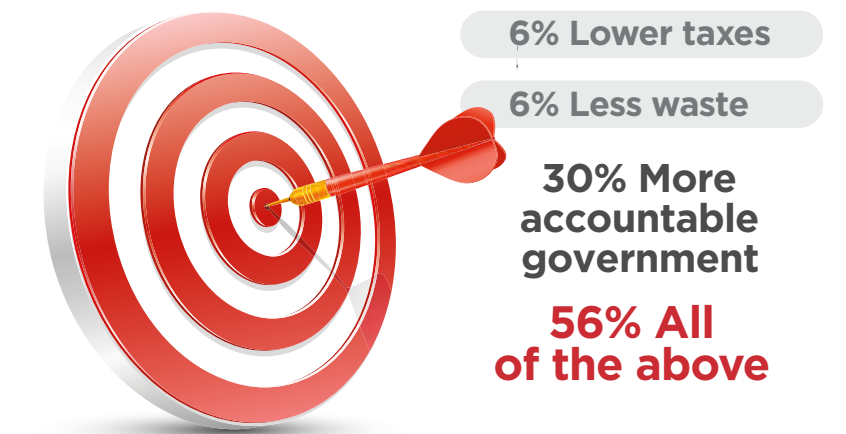
8% STRONGLY SUPPORT

7% UNSURE

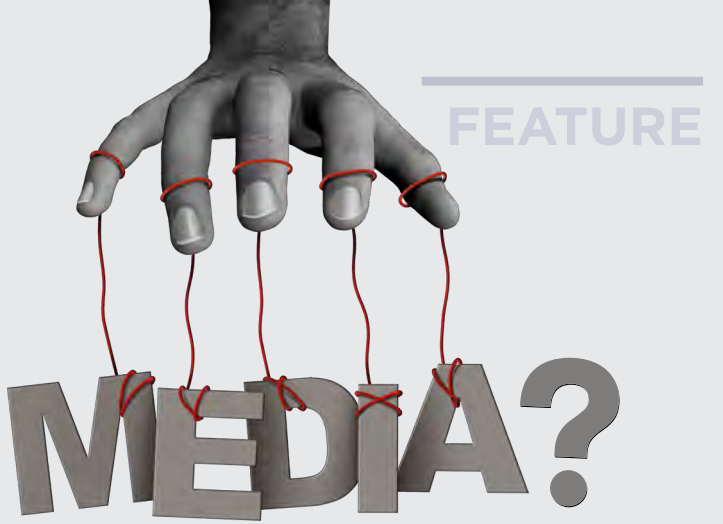
*** IF YOU COULD REDUCE JUST ONE FEDERAL TAX, WHICH TAX WOULD YOU CUT FIRST?**



*** WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE CANADIAN TAXPAYERS FEDERATION’S MANDATE?**



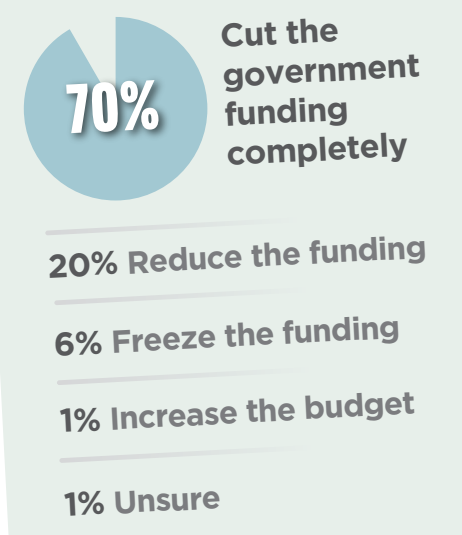
*** WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF TRUST IN THE TRADITIONAL MAINSTREAM MEDIA?**



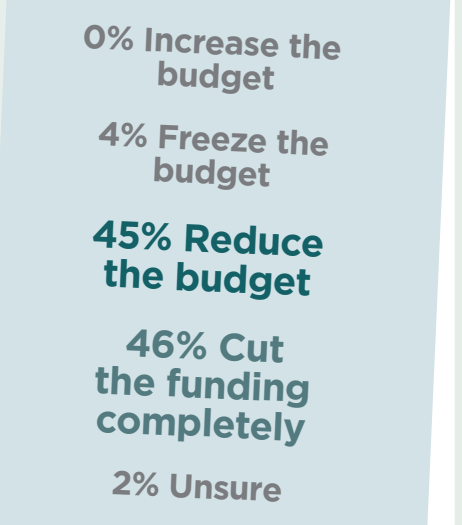
- 18% Somewhat low
- 7% Somewhat high
- 1% High
- 1% Unsure

71% VERY LOW

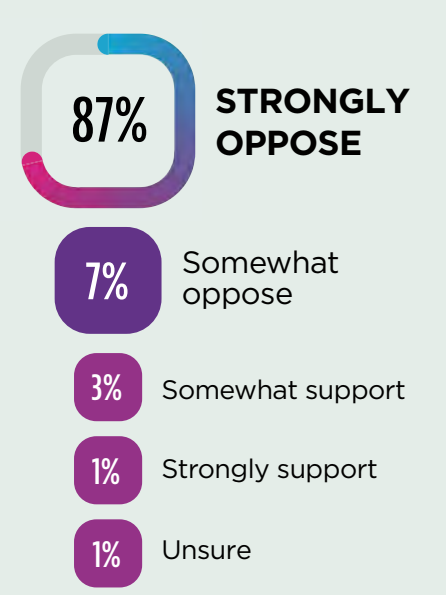
*** The federal government gives CBC more than \$1 billion every year. What should happen to that funding?**



*** THE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IS MORE THAN \$30 MILLION. WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO IT?**



*** The federal government released regulations to ban the sale of new gas and diesel vehicles and force Canadians to buy zero-emissions vehicles by 2035. Do you support banning new gas and diesel vehicles?**



SOCCER PITCHES AND TAXPAYER RICHES

SOURCE: SHUTTERSTOCK

A (BRIEF) HISTORY OF FIFA CORRUPTION SCANDALS

December 2010: An investigative report from the BBC alleges senior FIFA officials, who at the time remained involved with the organization at the highest levels, took bribes during bidding campaigns in the 1990s.

February 2011: FIFA's ethics committee upholds temporary bans imposed on members of its executive committee. The executive committee members were accused of wrongdoing and code of ethics breaches during the World Cup 2018 and 2022 bidding campaigns. The 2018 and 2022 World Cups were awarded to Russia and Qatar.

May 2011: Two senior FIFA officials are accused of offering "financial incentives" to members of the Caribbean Football Union. FIFA suspends the senior officials.

June 2011: FIFA bans for life a senior official after an internal investigation finds him guilty of bribery during bidding campaigns. Another senior official resigns to avoid an investigation.

July 2012: FIFA commissions a third-party report into corruption allegations.

November 2014: FIFA releases a summary of the third-party report's findings, claiming breaches of its code of ethics were of "very limited scope."

May 2015: Seven FIFA officials are arrested in Switzerland. U.S. authorities ultimately charge nine FIFA officials with racketeering, wire fraud and money laundering. The U.S. justice department alleges FIFA is guilty of "rampant, systemic and deep-rooted" corruption.



Carson Binda, BC Director

Taxpayers should watch their wallets, because the FIFA World Cup is coming to town.

In two short years, Vancouver and Toronto are scheduled to host a combined 13 games for the FIFA 2026 World Cup. Those 13 soccer games come with a projected price tag of \$961 million. To put that in perspective, for every minute of playtime, Canadian taxpayers will be on the hook for more than \$820,000.

Toronto taxpayers will be forced to pay \$380 million for the privilege of hosting seven games. In Vancouver, taxpayers will be sent a bill for \$581 million to host seven games. Taxpayer money will also pay for new VIP suites in Vancouver's stadium, a private VIP entrance to those suites and a walkway connecting the stadium to a nearby casino – when the soccer inevitably gets boring and it's time for blackjack.

To make matters worse, FIFA also demanded a blank cheque. "By unilaterally executing this host city agreement, the host city authority ... expressly and irrevocably waives any right to challenge in any manner such decision by FIFA and/or not to claim any compensation, costs expenses or other damages from FIFA."

Clauses like that in the contracts are a major problem. They shift responsibility for hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars away from our elected officials and into the hands of a nebulous, international soccer organization – one with a long list of corruption scandals and a history of financial mismanagement.

How can you justify spending nearly a billion dollars to host a few soccer games when countless taxpayers are struggling to make ends meet? You can't.

Vancouver and Toronto are two of the most unaffordable cities in the world. The average monthly rent in Vancouver and Toronto is \$2,950 and \$2,616, respectively.

Homelessness is spiking in both cities. Instead of cutting the taxes and red tape that make it so expensive to build and own a home, mayors Ken Sim and Olivia Chow are blowing tax dollars on soccer games. Why make life easier for the little guy when you can spend nearly \$1 billion wining and dining an international elite whose ethics records look like a Third World despot's?

Sim says he's "super pumped" Vancouver will host FIFA, claiming the decision will "pay off huge." When asked why he thinks hosting FIFA will be an economic boon to the city, he said this belief is based on how he "feels." When pressed further, Sim said "it's not my job to crunch numbers on these things." Needless to say, the decision to spend \$581 million on seven soccer games should be based on rigorous economic analysis, not the mayor's vibes.

Luckily for Sim, we did the math for him. The Vancouver games are set to cost up to \$581 million. Those costs are projected to be offset by \$230 million raised by Vancouver's 2.5% FIFA tax on hotels and \$37 to \$90 million in revenue from other sources, like venue rentals and fan festivals. Even at the highest end of those revenue projections, taxpayers will see a net loss of \$261 million. That Sim is unwilling or unable to do basic arithmetic should be worrying for Vancouver taxpayers.

For Vancouver's games, the federal government is also kicking in at least \$116 million, with "additional federal contributions expected." The remainder of the tab is being paid by B.C. and Vancouver taxpayers. To the single mom in Brandon, Man., or Swift Current, Sask., who has to line up at a food bank to feed her kids – don't worry. Sim promises the vibes 1,500 kilometres away in Vancouver will be well worth the cost of federal subsidies.

A similar story is playing out in Toronto. The federal government promised \$104 million to help cover the \$380 million FIFA tab. The federal contributions to Vancouver and Toronto mean mechanics in Lethbridge, Alta., and fishermen

in St. John's, N.L., are spending more than \$200 million so the international elite can watch soccer. It should go without saying those families would happily swap the FIFA games for some much-needed tax relief.

The Ontario government is also sending Chow \$97 million for the FIFA bonanza, while the rest of the bill will fall on Toronto taxpayers. Toronto will only see \$3 million in tax revenue from hosting the games. The fact that Toronto is spending hundreds of millions of dollars in exchange for \$3 million in returns shows what an abysmal investment this is.

In both Vancouver and Toronto, taxes have been going up. Sim slapped Vancouverites with a 7.5% tax hike this year, while Chow hit Torontonians with a 9.5% tax hike. Raising taxes on normal families to pay for international soccer games is a bitter pill to swallow. Vancouver went a step further and introduced a 2.5% FIFA tax on hotel stays in the city. Imagine a family coming to stay in Vancouver to be near a sick child receiving specialized care at B.C. Children's Hospitals, or a couple from Victoria hoping to catch a CFL game at B.C. Place. Those are the people who will be paying the FIFA tax.

Meanwhile, experts and academics have been clear that FIFA isn't coming with the promised benefits. FIFA "doesn't justify the economic benefit," said Concordia University Economist Moshe Lander in an interview with CTV, adding the World Cup will be "a very expensive two-week party." "Hosting the World Cup is ineffective in promoting tourism," according to research from the University of Hamburg in Germany.

The bottom line is that FIFA is coming with a huge taxpayer price tag and won't deliver significant economic benefits to Vancouver or Toronto. At a time when many Canadians are struggling to afford the basic necessities of life, it's wrong for politicians to blow a billion dollars on a two-week party.



A RECKLESS, FAILED EXPERIMENT



Dan McTeague

Canada is simply not ready for the wholesale adoption of electric vehicles. There is no scenario, in terms of economic viability, technology, grid capacity, infrastructure, battery availability, battery life, etc., where this is possible.

It simply cannot happen by 2035, no matter how many taxpayer dollars are poured into it. Canadian workers, families and those in rural

communities will be disproportionately affected by these electric vehicle mandates.

At the end of the day, individual Canadians and their governments will have sunk billions of dollars into a failed experiment. And taxpayers will be on the hook for generations to come.

Since it needs to be stated, here are a few of the central reasons why staying the course on electric vehicle mandates by 2035 is extremely reckless.

TECHNOLOGY

Let's start with the technology itself, which is incompatible with the reality of Canada's climate. As we have seen over this past winter, EV batteries do a bad job of holding a charge in cold weather. Battery technology is not yet robust enough to meet our country's requirements. Forcing Canadians to purchase vehicles that are unreliable in winter is political malpractice. It would leave your constituents out in the cold - literally.

COST

Right now, the electric vehicle market is largely reliant on subsidies. But these cannot continue forever. The cost of purchasing an electric vehicle is high and the cost of replacing a damaged battery is unbelievable. Some people are going to dealerships only to be told a new battery will cost more than \$20,000. That's not something regular people can afford.

GRID CAPACITY

Canada does not have the electricity available to charge electric vehicles. The Fraser Institute estimates the government's EV mandate would "require the construction of ten new mega dams comparable to B.C.'s Site C." To put things in perspective, the Site C dam was approved by the B.C. government in 2014 and construction began in 2015. As of 2024, construction remains ongoing and the cost of the dam has more than doubled to \$16 billion.

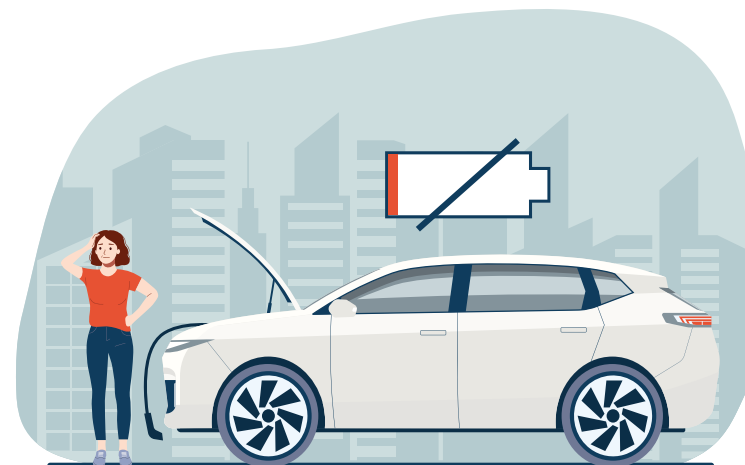
TRANSMISSION CAPACITY

There has been shockingly little research done on how much additional transmission capacity would be needed for Canada to reach the 2035 target. The massive numbers of new EV charging stations required to meet government targets will mean distribution networks are vulnerable to highly variable energy loads. The variable nature of EV electricity demand means that careful planning and research is necessary, but there is little evidence that such planning and research has taken place.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Canada will need between 442,000 and 469,000 public charging ports by 2035, according to 2022 projections from the federal government. As of March 1, 2024, there are 27,181 public charging ports. (Note that these are the projected number of public charging stations Canada will require, which doesn't include the private charging stations Canadians will need to have installed in their homes.)

The idea that Canada can build the necessary number of charging stations in the required time is ludicrous.



The 2035 target simply tackles the actual production of vehicles. The cost to transform the grid is so outrageous that it is difficult to comprehend the enormity of this undertaking.

But all of these big numbers are purely hypothetical - the reality is we simply do not know what a fully electric vehicle market would look like in Canada. To charge ahead with overly-ambitious targets is reckless.

All of those considerations aside, at a fundamental level, this push for electric vehicles is putting the market economy on its head in the name of emissions reduction. The Canadian economy is founded on the market principle that the consumer will drive the economy. If there is a demand, there will be a supply. In this case, the government is operating on the questionable assumption that if you create a supply, there will arise a demand.

This is not how economics works. And the reality is that EV sales have been slumping around the world in 2024, despite governments throwing billions of dollars at them. The Trudeau government has already announced more than \$50 billion in corporate welfare to companies that make EV batteries. Despite the high bill already sent to taxpayers, it represents just a drop in the bucket when it comes to the amount of money the government will spend pushing this delusion.

The government should not continue down the path of subsidizing this lunacy. It should let the market decide. It is not the government's job to pick winners and losers, especially in the ever-changing realm of technology. This is what the market is for. That is how innovation happens.

Hard-working Canadians don't need the federal government telling them which vehicles to buy. Canadian families don't need politicians telling them which minivan they should purchase. Farmers, ranchers and rural Canadians need reliable vehicles to get around and to do their work. All of them know their own needs and can decide for themselves which vehicle best serves those needs better than Ottawa can.

What we've been seeing is an illustration of the sunk costs fallacy. The idea that once you've invested enough of your time and money into something, you must continue to pursue it even after it becomes clear it makes no financial or practical sense. Our government needs to face reality and abandon the notion that somehow all, or nearly all, Canadians will be driving electric vehicles by 2035.

Let the market decide. Let Canadians decide.

The Hon. Dan McTeague was a federal Liberal Member of Parliament for 18 years and is now an energy affordability advocate with Canadians for Affordable Energy.

CANADA'S SINKING ECONOMY



Franco Terrazzano
Federal Director

Do you ever get the feeling that if you don't work for government, then you're falling behind? That's because Canada's economy is falling behind. Let's cut through the government spin and see how the real economy is doing.

Your standard of living

Economists usually use gross domestic product (GDP) per person as a broad measure of standard of living. It's not a perfect measure, but it is a relatively good proxy for each citizen's income.

Canada's per person GDP declined in the first quarter of 2024 - the sixth decline in the past seven quarters. Canada's per person GDP is a mere 0.7% higher than it was in the third quarter of 2015 - the last quarter before Justin Trudeau became prime minister.

Let that sink in. In about nine years, the typical Canadian's economic standard of living has improved by less than 1%. And even that likely exaggerates your economic fortunes if you're not working for the government.

That's because the size of government is one of the factors that makes up GDP. While total GDP (not per person) has increased by less than 15%, government has increased by more than 21%.

Translation: the size of the taxpayer-funded government overstates how well Canada's weak economy is really doing.

Canada vs. the rest of the world

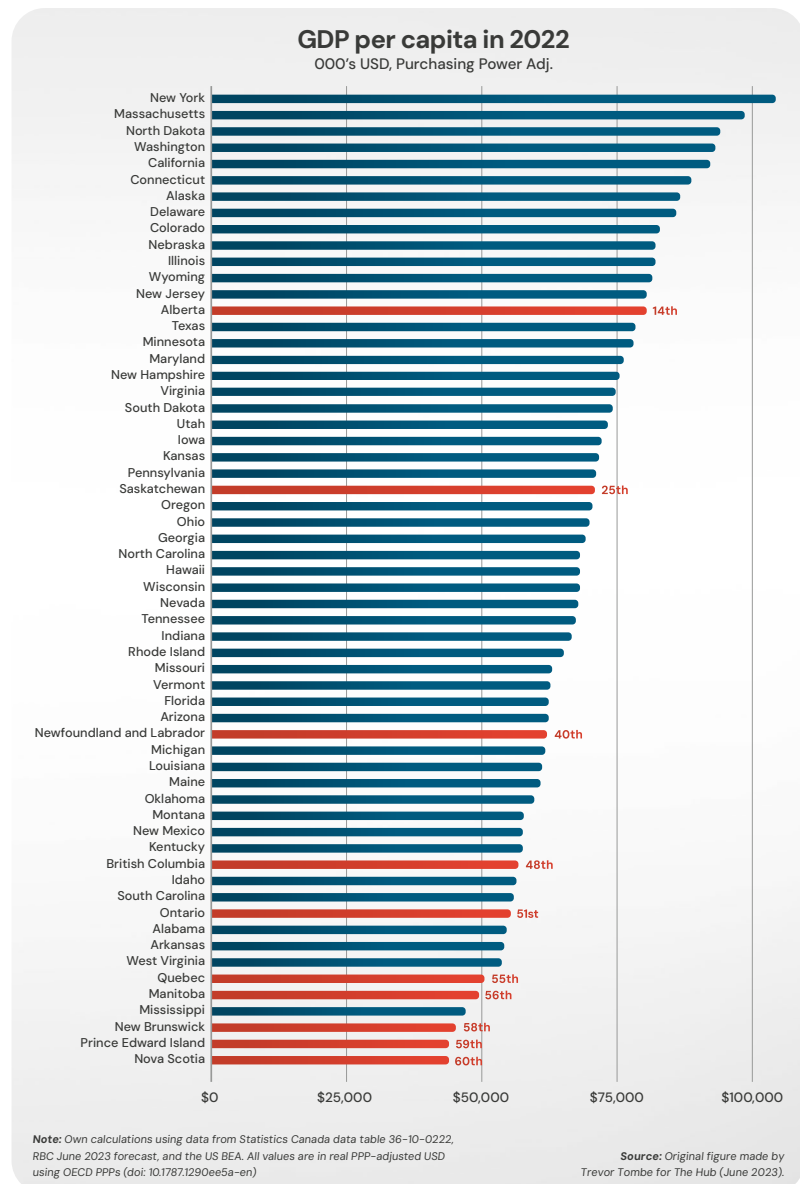
Individual Canadians' standard of living has barely increased in nine years - growing by 0.7%. Over the same time period, GDP per American has increased by almost 16%.

Many Canadians will remember growing up in one of the richest economies in the world. But that's no longer the case.

In 1981, Canada had the sixth richest economy, as measured by GDP per person, among the 37 industrialized countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In 2022, Canada ranked 15th.

"We are no longer one of the richest countries on Earth," wrote Globe and Mail columnist Andrew Coyne. "Among the richer countries, we are on course to being one of the poorer."

And the future doesn't look much brighter under the current trajectory. The federal government's own 2022 budget acknowledges we will have the slowest growth in per capita GDP among OECD countries out to 2060.



Canadian provinces vs. American States

In 2023, University of Calgary Economics Professor Trevor Tombe compared the per person GDP of Canadian provinces with American states, and his findings are startling.

Despite the federal government's attack on our energy industry, Alberta is still Canada's richest province. But Alberta falls behind 13 states on economic standard of living. North Dakota, Alaska, Delaware, Nebraska and Wyoming are among the states with higher per person GDP than Canada's Wild Rose province.

British Columbia ranks 48th, just behind Kentucky.

Ontario is ranked 51st, wedged in between South Carolina and Alabama. Far from being elite, the Laurentians are doing about as well as the Cotton State.

Even after all its equalization payments, Quebec has the 55th worst per person GDP, just ahead of Mississippi, the poorest state in America.

The worst three economic standards of living among all provinces and states go to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Jobs

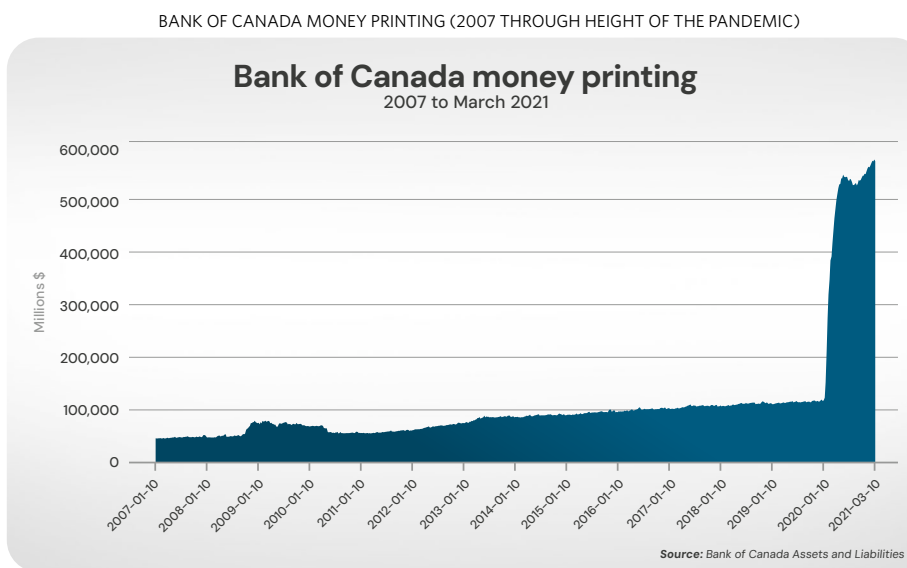
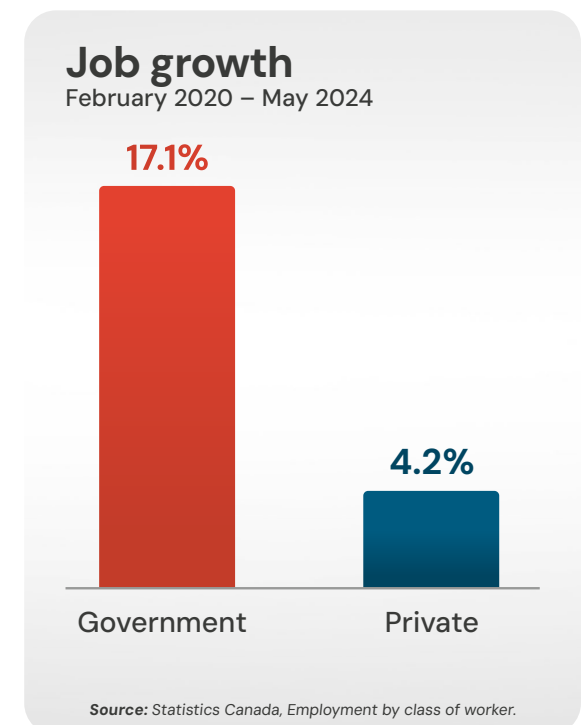
Since the beginning of 2020, we've experienced a tale of two Canada's. One full of pain for businesses and workers. The other full of financial gain for bureaucrats shielded behind the golden gates of government.

This sad tale is illustrated by Canada's jobs numbers.

Over the last four years, the number of jobs in Canada increased by 6%. The number of government jobs increased by 17%. Meanwhile, the number of jobs outside government increased by just 4% - an average of just 1% per year.

Key takeaways on the federal bureaucracy

- The cost of the federal payroll reached \$67 billion last year, a record high, representing a 68% increase since 2016.
- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hired an extra 108,000 bureaucrats since taking office - a 42% increase.
- Trudeau handed out more than one million pay raises to bureaucrats over the last four years, while taxpayers lost their businesses and jobs and struggled to afford the basic necessities of life.
- The feds dished out more than \$1.5 billion in bonuses since 2015.
- More than half of all day-to-day federal spending is consumed by the bureaucracy.



Inflation

The key economic issue facing most Canadians' day-to-day lives is how expensive everything is. From ground beef to rent to fueling up your car, you know the necessities of life are more expensive than ever.

But you may have seen recent media reports that inflation is coming down. Even if you believe the government's inflation numbers, this is misleading. When you hear someone say, "inflation is coming down," that doesn't mean life is getting more affordable. All it means is that prices aren't increasing as fast as they were last year. Prices are still going up,

even though the official inflation rate is coming down.

Years of growing inflation adds up quickly. Prices are now 17% higher than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last 20 years, prices have increased by 54%.

What's the cause of the steady drum beat of higher prices?

Many factors influence day-to-day price changes: tax increases, shortages and new businesses entering new markets. But there is only one factor that causes general prices to increase over time: printing money.

As economist David Howden explains, "The supply chain crisis cannot explain inflation. It explains why specific prices increase. Since consumers spend more on those goods, other prices will be depressed. Inflation is across the board. Only an increase to the common factor - [an increase in] money - can

explain this."

The government's central bank (Bank of Canada) money printer was running on overdrive during the last few years. The Bank of Canada prints new money out of thin air when it buys a financial asset like a Government of Canada bond (debt). Between February 2020 and the end of 2021, the Bank of Canada printed more than \$300 billion.

That 300% growth in the bank's assets is significantly higher than what occurred during the recessions of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It's even higher than the growth from the beginning of 2008 to the end of February 2020. In fact, 300% growth rivals the growth in assets held by the central bank during the entire six years of World War II.

Government debt

Folks, they did it!

The Trudeau government officially doubled the federal debt this year.

Turns out the budget doesn't balance itself. Trudeau's current deficit is \$40 billion, even after imposing a massive capital gains tax hike. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer (the government's independent, non-partisan budget watchdog) doesn't expect the feds to balance the budget until 2035. And, that assumes steady economic growth, relatively low interest rates and no new spending.

Given the government's track record, assuming it won't find new ways to spend money is like assuming you're going to pass on a second piece of pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving - a nice idea in principle, but it's never going to happen.

Massive deficits for years mean billions more wasted on interest charges. This year, interest charges on the federal debt will cost \$54 billion. That's more than \$1 billion every week wasted on interest charges, which is about the cost to build a new hospital. That \$54 billion is more than the feds will send to the provinces in health transfers this year. And it's the exact same amount of money the feds will collect from taxpayers through its Goods & Services Tax (GST).

Yup, welcome to Canada, where you pay a federal sales tax to cover the interest charges on the federal government credit card.

Taxes

Take your paycheque and rip it in half because that's all that's left for you after the taxman takes his share.

Taxes now consume more than 45% of the average Canadian family's earnings, according to the Fraser Institute. The average Canadian family now pays more of its income in taxes than it spends on basic necessities like food, shelter and clothing, combined.

In 1961, the first year the Fraser Institute measured the total taxes paid by a Canadian family, taxes accounted

for just 3% of the average family's budget. Since then, taxes increased 2,778% - much higher than consumer prices, which increased 863%.

And the tax bill doesn't even include the amount of federal debt your kids and grandkids must pay back. Every baby born today already owes more \$30,000 each in federal government debt.

Getting out of this mess

How can we turn around the sinking ship? Sometimes the solution is

simple - shrink the size of government to decrease its operating expenditures, reduce employee headcount and minimize long-term debt.

Slumping economic growth, the high cost of living and smaller private sector paycheques all trace back to one central problem - the government is way too big. And Canadians are paying the economic price for big government.

Inflation was out of control because the Bank of Canada printed hundreds of billions of dollars to finance massive deficits in Ottawa.



The solution? Turn off the money machine and balance the budget. In fact, the government could balance the budget today if it just stuck with the spending projected in Trudeau's big-spending 2021 pandemic budget.

Canadians can't afford necessities like gasoline, groceries and home heating. The solution? Scrap the carbon tax. Even better, stop charging a tax-on-tax. The federal government charges its sales tax on top of its carbon tax. This tax-on-tax alone will cost Canadians \$6 billion by 2030.

Brownie points: provide fuel tax relief. Manitoba's New Democratic Party government suspended its fuel tax. Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberals are also providing fuel tax relief, and so have Conservative governments in Alberta and Ontario. The United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, South Korea, the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, New Zealand and Portugal also provided fuel tax relief.

Canadians' paycheques are spread too thin. The solution? Stop taking so much money from us.

The taxman takes almost half of a family's earnings every year. Think of how much better off Canadians would be if all that money didn't go to government. And think of how much more money Canadians could invest in their futures or spend at local businesses.

This year, the Trudeau government increased payroll taxes - again. If you make \$73,200 or more, you'll be paying an extra \$347 in payroll taxes this year, for a total tax bill of \$5,104.

Your employer will also be forced to fork over \$5,524 this year.

Canada's economy is stalling. The solution? Get government out of the way. Just take Canada's energy sector, for example. Since 2015, Canada has seen nearly \$670 billion in natural resources projects suspended or canceled.

Things are bad. The economy isn't growing for ordinary Canadians who don't have the ability to syphon money from their fellow taxpayers. The basic necessities of life are still unaffordable. But life in Canada doesn't have to be this way. The good news is the solution is relatively straight forward - shrink the size of government.

Whether there is a political appetite to do so is another question. But that's why we have the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and our Taxpayer Army. To get out of this mess we need the Taxpayer Army (that's you) to push our politicians to cut, cut, cut.

“The solution? Turn off the money machine and balance the budget. In fact, the government could balance the budget today if it just stuck with the spending projected in Trudeau's big-spending 2021 pandemic budget.”



Here are just some of the Trudeau government policies that have harmed our energy sector and resource workers:

- The Impact Assessment Act
- The oil tanker moratorium
- The moratorium on offshore Arctic oil and gas licensing
- Industrial carbon tax
- The UNDRIP Action Plan
- Rejection of the Northern Gateway pipeline
- Methane regulations
- Fuel regulations (second carbon tax)
- The proposed Clean Electricity Standard
- The proposed emissions cap for the oil and gas sector

Q&A

WITH JOHN GORMLEY

John Gormley is a lawyer and former member of Parliament, but he's best known for his 25 years as host of his own Saskatchewan-wide radio talk show. The John Gormley Show debuted in September 1998 and aired across Saskatchewan until November 2023. During this time John interviewed newsmakers and culture shapers, including former U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. He also interviewed almost all Canadian Prime Ministers during his tenure. Due to the popularity of his radio show, John Gormley is a household name in Saskatchewan. Since his retirement from radio, John has returned to the legal profession, practicing management-side employment law with Seiferling Law, based in Saskatoon.

Canadian Taxpayers Federation President, Scott Hennig, caught up with John to get his take on federal and provincial politics and the current state of traditional media.

Scott Hennig: How did you get into the radio business so young?

John Gormley: It's one of those inexplicable things. I'm 17 years old, 12th grade. I'm on student council. I'm at the local radio station in North Battleford, paying bills because we're hiring a band for a dance, and the manager of the radio station is a close friend of my dad's. I said to him, 'Is there a job around here where I could learn to work on radio?' And so, no training, no nothing, they hired me in the evenings. I was literally sweeping floors, reading a newscast or two. And that's where it started. Without any training, without any formal education, it started at 17.

SH: By the time you were 20-ish, they gave you your own show?

JG: By that time, I was in Saskatoon, and I was a morning news reader. I was at university in the afternoons, on radio in the mornings. A funny story. It was 1978, the provincial election. And CKOM had a one-hour talk show, and the man who hosted it was named was Raymond. The general manager phones

me at home and says, "Would you like to host the open line show three days this coming week?" I'm 20, I'm terrified. I said, "Why me?" He said, "Reagan's in a phase where he doesn't believe in politics, and the provincial election is on, and I've booked Premier Blakeney on Wednesday, the Tory leader Dick Collver on Thursday, and the Liberal leader Ted Malone on Friday, would you do the show?" And I said, "But why me?" And he said, "Every time I walk by the newsroom, you're opining and explaining politics to everybody." As only a 20-year-old, know-it-all could. So that's how it began.

SH: So your first time hosting your own show was with the premier of the province?

JG: First show. Even a well-trained chimpanzee could host an Open Line show in an election with a premier. Because the phone lines flood, half the callers are trying to ask softball questions to support the premier, the other half are trying to do whatever they can to make the premier look bad.

The phone lines, for all three days, rang. It was a great experience.

SH: Despite your early success on the radio, you decided to run for MP in 1984. What inspired you to run for office?

JG: There are few things in the world smarter than 25-year-old men. I've often said if that were a decision I was

making even 10 years later, I might not have made it. Those were the days of a Prime Minister named Trudeau, of the National Energy Program, where people in Calgary were handing back the keys. We had a federation in real distress. I would have a parade of federal Liberal ministers in my studio, and I remember thinking, "These guys aren't that good. Surely I could try to step up."

SH: What was the biggest lesson you learned during your stint as a politician?

JG: It's been said Canada is a country with too much geography and too few people. And given that geography we're fundamentally ungovernable. That was the learning piece. Even where we thought there were some contiguous interests, Alberta issues

would sometimes not be Saskatchewan issues. So you had this amazing regional identity. And then of course, all politics is local. My riding started just west of Saskatoon, where the North Saskatchewan River at the Borden Bridge turns north. The riding started there, went to the Alberta border, and then to the Northwest Territories, so it was a quarter of Saskatchewan, 69 communities, 23 First Nations. It was a



John Gormley (left) and Scott Hennig (right) chatting in Saskatoon.

To watch the full interview, visit the CTF's YouTube page: youtube.com/taxpayerDOTcom

fascinating opportunity to learn, and a bit intimidating when you see the scope of it all.

SH: What was the best part about being MP?

JG: The learning. At the local level, there were specific issues on transportation. You were always out to see, 'Are there ways we could twin more highways, do more bridges?' Very local. And of course, you had to make sure that huge array of communities was getting what they needed from government.

SH: You were an MP during an interesting time. You came to office during a time of recession, massive deficits and the country having grown tired of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. The PCs elected a massive majority during that 1984 election. We're now a year away from the next federal election, where we could be in a recession, the deficits are massive again, and the polls show the country is tiring of Justin Trudeau. What advice would you give to Pierre Poilievre as he's poised to take power under circumstances similar to those in 1984?

JG: That's a great question. If he becomes Prime Minister, he should be true to the priorities of the people who put him there. Prime Minister Mulroney was one of the most eloquent speakers I've ever seen in my life. He was a bridge builder. He was very good. But this was a well-established downtown lawyer from Montréal. Notwithstanding the boy from Baie-Comeau and the first Mulroney who ever went to university, Brian Mulroney was a power broker in the second-largest city in Canada. When we got elected, the deficit was nudging \$50 billion. Mulroney got it down into the low-30s. But when it came to making really tough decisions, he defaulted to the Laurentian elites. The media elites and the Laurentian elites said, "This is the way you govern Canada." If Pierre Poilievre becomes Prime Minister, he should avoid this idea

that he's being nativist, or populist, or radical, or right, or whatever, and instead be true to exactly the values of the Canadians who sent him. A good example, and I tease Mr. Poilievre every time I see him, to the point he said to me once, "Why when we do interviews, do you always open with the question, 'Will you defund the CBC?'" I said, "Because I don't believe you'll ever do it." Because the consensus in Canada, and I mean consensus, outside the real world, is the CBC can never be defunded. But ask the average Canadian and most people don't even know why we have a CBC.

This huge monolithic rabid left wing political elite structure that broadcasts, you don't need that in today's Canada. In fact, what you're doing is forcing out innovation and competition by having the government spending nearly \$2 billion a year. I don't believe he will ever defund the CBC. There are way more important things than the CBC, but it's a litmus test. In Ottawa, he will be greeted in the bureaucracy, in the media, in the chattering classes with, "You can't touch it."

SH: Similarly, the polls are projecting if an election were held today, there would be a Conservative majority with 218 MPs. Assuming 190 of them would be backbenchers and probably half of them rookies. What advice would you give to a rookie backbencher in a Poilievre government?

JG: This is always good advice for a new job: talk less, listen more, and find the people who can give you a good sense of perspective. When I was elected, we had university presidents who were back-benchers. Mulroney's cabinet had some of the most gifted people I've ever encountered, but it was the people who weren't in cabinet for a long time. Have patience. Pick your targets, pick your priorities. The learning curve is incredible. I used to reflect that in year four, I was almost an entirely different politician than I was in year one.

SH: You lost your seat in the 1988 election along with a few dozen of your PC colleagues. What do you chalk that loss up to?

JG: The free trade issue. We went into that election, Saskatchewan had 14 seats. We came out with 10 New Democrats and four Conservatives. These were all MPs that got killed because of free trade.

Here's a story. I got pulled over for a speeding ticket the morning after the French debate between John Turner and Prime Minister Mulroney. The RCMP officer is writing me the ticket and I know that I can't get out of this. And I've got the van festooned with [campaign] posters. And he said to me, "You are the Conservative?" And I said, "Yeah." He says, "Mulroney did well last night." And I said, "Well, thank you." Then that night was the English debate. And Turner hit Mulroney hard on drawing the line, at the Canada-U.S. border, and how we'll all become Americans. The day after the English debate, everything turned. You'd have lifetime conservatives saying, "I like you. I'm a conservative. I voted for Diefenbaker, but the Americans are going to throw grandma out when all the American companies buy our nursing homes." It was this idea that the free trade agreement was way larger than trade. It was cultural. It was an assault on our Canadianness. Of course, none of that turned out to be true. It was the single greatest economic policy, I would argue, in the 20th century. But try telling that to Saskatchewan voters who were very much dialed into the NDP messaging that this was a bad thing. So that was the tough part of the '88 election.

SH: Sometimes it takes a bit to get Saskatchewan onside. Even the Wheat Board issue was a tough one in this province.

JG: In '84 to '88, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was a proxy for the NDP. The National Farmers Union was the more radical left. You had all of these formalised structures for the NDP



John Gormley in his radio studio shortly before his retirement.

agenda. Now you look at the NDP, once you move it beyond organised labour, there aren't that many proxy organisations. Saskatchewan was always a province where they voted for Tommy Douglas provincially and John Diefenbaker federally. It was very much an agrarian, rural conservative set of values, but found its home in the old traditional co-op-based NDP. So free trade didn't work in that paradigm because free trade was a threat, people thought.

SH: The Reform Party ran candidates

for the first time in that 1988 election. Could you tell at that time that the mood in the West was changing?

JG: Absolutely. 'The West Wants In' was the slogan. And I remember saying, "The West wants in"? The West had the most powerful positions in the cabinet through the entire Mulroney first four years, save for Mike Wilson, who was the finance minister. Every other senior portfolio was west of the Lakehead. So, "The West wants in." I

said, "What the hell? The West is in. Come on, stop it." But the turning point, and again, this was one of those fascinating flash points, was the CF-18 maintenance contract that was going to go to Bristol Aerospace in Winnipeg. But the decision was made to shift it to Montréal. This was, yet again, Québec using political manipulation to get jobs and contracts. And I remember we had hundreds of letters from loyal supporters saying, "The Mulroney government is just like the Trudeau

government. When Montréal says jump, you say how high?" In retrospect, that was probably the flashpoint. And I think history has borne out pretty solidly that the Reform Party helped reconfigure conservative politics in a good way. I don't bear any grudges.

SH: After the 1988 election, you went back to school and got your law degree, was this always your plan, or was it something about your time in Ottawa that pushed you in that direction?

JG: I had always wanted to study law and life had gotten ahead of me between radio and politics. I remember waking up the morning after the election and it was a funny feeling. It's like reliving 12th grade. You wake up the next morning, you literally have the world ahead of you. I had a few offers to go back into radio, and I said, "I appreciate it, but no, if I don't study law now, I never will."

SH: You practised labour and employment law in Alberta before going back to radio in Saskatchewan.



John Gormley served as a Progressive Conservative MP from 1984 to 1988

How did that opportunity arise and what was the drive to get back on the air?

JG: Like everything else in my life, it was serendipity combined with coincidence. I was actually at a broadcaster's convention, and the legendary Peter Warren was being honoured. He did the talk show in Winnipeg for decades, and he was vaguely aware of who I was based on my earlier talk career, and I was a fan of his. And we were talking and I'm sort of lamenting the state of talk radio. Gordon Rawlinson, who owns Rowlco Radio, was at the table, and I had known Gordon for years. And he phones me up a little bit later and says, "You seem to have lots of opinions on talk radio. We're looking at taking CJME and CKOM, which were oldie stations, and going to the news talk format." And I said, "Thank you, but no, I'm entirely happy in Edmonton practicing labour law." But Gordon, as is his way, kept going. And then about a year later, I ended up saying, "Well OK, I'll try it." I also worked with Gordon as his in-house labour counsel, so I kept practising labour law for 25 years. And it was a bit of a hedge in case he got tired of me, or I got tired of radio, but it didn't happen. At that time, Regina and Saskatoon were the last two urban markets in Canada to go to the news talk format. It was new, it was exciting. And it worked out pretty well.

SH: I would say so, and it's still going. Was it like riding a bike, or did it take a while for you to get your voice again?

JG: We set out very early to say, "This would be an editorially driven opinion-based talk show." And it's important. Some talk radio's not easy to listen to, but it still does a news thing. The host never takes an opinion, "There's this, there's that." We decided this would be a strongly opinion focused show. I learned pretty early that authenticity is huge. People used to say to me, for years and years, "You must make that stuff up." And I said, "Do you understand how hard it would be to

remember? What did I think of this?" That's fakery. Everything I did on the show was what I believed.

SH: You also covered the Saskatchewan Party's first election in 1999 after being founded a couple of years prior. At that time, did you think this was going to be the death knell for the NDP or an uneasy marriage doomed to fail?

JG: I don't know what I knew at the time. I was living in Alberta in '97 when they were formed, and four conservatives and four liberals joined. I remember thinking, "That's really innovative." In Saskatchewan, the NDP from 1944 until 2007 were the natural governing party. But they rarely got 50% of the vote. Saskatchewan's NDP from 1944 had vote splitting down to an art form. In '97, I look at this and think the Liberals were clearly the party that had the most support. The Tories were in rough shape. And I thought, "Gosh, could they get their act together?" I thought it addressed the historic vote splitting, but if there was enough of a fringe on each side, they'd continue to split. '99 was the shock. This party had been in existence two years, and they got more votes in the '99 election than the NDP did. The NDP had to form a coalition with three Liberals who got elected, put two of them in cabinet, make one of them the speaker. Roy Romanow's last term was actually a coalition propped up by the Liberals. In '03, Lorne Calvert gets a majority, wins the NDP majority back. And then '07, the Sask Party. But I think the beginning of that death-knell was in '99. Because if a new party could get more votes than this political machine, that's showing there's an appetite for doing it differently.

SH: You authored a book on the Saskatchewan NDP's time in government. What prompted you to write a book and what did you hope readers would take away from reading it?

JG: The book was autobiographical.

A lot of people thought it was a book about Saskatchewan politics, but it was a book about a kid who comes to Saskatchewan with his immigrant parents at the age of three, and I wanted to tell the story about growing up in a Saskatchewan as a political person who always felt the province underperformed. The whole book was about this NDP machine that had governed this province for so long, but always for some reason kept falling short and didn't aspire to improve it. It was defending the status quo. I took a historical perspective, and then I pulled out and unpacked what I saw as some of the issues. And I sold a lot of books. It was written just two years after Brad Wall was elected in '07. The purpose was to explain, "This is how it happened." And then it was a bit of a clarion call to voters, "This is how you keep Saskatchewan non-NDP and also how you hold the right accountable."

SH: We're now many years into the Saskatchewan Party's governing. What do you see for the future?

JG: Organically, governments run out of steam at 10 years. The Sask Party is now at 17, with two leaders. They have to be able to keep that coalition of the centre right. They're still dominant in the rural areas. Small cities, they're very dominant. They'll still win seats in Saskatoon and Regina. The old days where the NDP totally ran the cities and the non-NDP ran the country, we're not there yet. I've met few political leaders with a focus on details like Premier Moe. This guy is a policy fiend when it comes to details. He has to start resetting what his cabinet's going to look like, an urban presence, an improvement for new Canadians, more women in positions of responsibility in cabinet. Premier Moe is going to have to move that way and then ask himself, "How much longer do I have?" If parties want to stick around long, they have to continue to adapt.

SH: Talking about your show, who



John Gormley's 2010 book *Left Out: Saskatchewan's NDP and the Relentless Pursuit of Mediocrity*.

were some of the biggest personalities that you got to interview?

JG: Just before I left, I had Jerry Seinfeld on. The first question, I said, "Hey, I saw you in Vegas." He said, "Yeah, I saw you there." And I said, "Yeah, I was sitting over on the left side." He said, "No, I'm sure you were on the right side." Also Bob Newhart. Speaking of comedians, we had a number of comedians over the years who were absolutely delightful people. Charmian Carr, who has since passed away, was one of the most delightful

people I've ever sat in the studio with. She was Liesl in *The Sound of Music*. Ted Neeley, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, hung out actually in the studio with me for the whole morning, then we went out for lunch. We went through a wrestling phase, Mick Foley back in the *WWE Days*. Jesse "the Body" Ventura, but we had him as the governor. And there were of course political figures. I think I interviewed probably every minister I ever wanted to interview. The only prime minister I never did was Justin Trudeau, who decided some

time ago that I was an enemy of his people.

SH: Other than Justin Trudeau, any that got away? Any ones that you pursued, but you couldn't get?

JG: There's a few. Usually, they were Hollywood types. We'd hear that somebody was available. I had Bill Shatner on once, and he was a splendid man. He was actually in the province at a Comic-Con event. There were different stars who I would fanboy on. Even in Water World, I was a fan of Kevin Costner. Long before Yellowstone, I'd been a huge hardcore Costner fan my whole life. And we would try him periodically on different things and just never caught him.

SH: The people who made themselves available whenever you called were the Canadian Taxpayers Federation directors.

JG: All the time.

SH: Who would be your favourite CTF director you interviewed over the years?

JG: Walter Robinson, because he got involved in the boxing match. You remember the Trudeau boxing match? Walter Robinson signed up and I forget who he boxed. But I thought when somebody in middle age can train knowing you're going to get punched in the face, that's a particular bit of courage. John Williamson, I think, went onto a career in politics. They were memorable. And of course you. It's been a great run.

SH: Do you miss being on air?

JG: That's a tough question because there are aspects of it I miss. But I reached the time to pass on the baton. I'm not getting younger. I've got lots of other things I want to do, from kids and grandkids to practicing law, to doing some government relations work. Those are passions of mine. The time was right. But the debate, the

issues, the people, the callers, it was a joy, so I miss that now. What I don't miss is getting up 4:30 in the morning, the day and night preparation for every segment. To do talk radio in a way that the listeners will tolerate is a lot of work.

SH: The media landscape has changed a lot over the last 20 years. Where do you see traditional media going over the next 20 years?

JG: I see it disappearing, if it doesn't change. Two things happened to the media. One was externally imposed, that was the internet. And the media was late coming to the party, they thought they were too big to fail. The big newspapers were more powerful than social media, when it started. Not now. They didn't adapt in quite the right way, although I think they still could. But bigger than that, the media consciously decided, and this started in the late 80s and proliferated in the 90s, to hire journalism school grads who are advocating specific positions and who report with a motive. And the motive is to advance climate change, EDI, gender politics, harm reduction. There's a checklist of media issues that predominate. The only problem is when you take that list of issues and you go to a person living in Red Deer, or a person living in downtown Toronto, the consumers say, "Whose opinion was that? That's not my opinion." Tara Henley, who broke away from the CBC a couple of years ago, wrote an incredible Substack piece. She said, "Without trust, you don't have an audience. Without an audience, you don't have revenue. Without revenue, you don't have a future." The media on this trajectory will be gone. They will all go, and the opportunity will be very much digitally based. We'll have different revenue generating models. Journalism will always be here, but in the next 20 years it's going to look a lot different.

SH: Do you think that radio is more immune to media changes because it's

often listened to in cars and can report news instantaneously, unlike print newspapers and 6 o'clock TV news?

JG: Yep. Talk radio, and radio in general, continues to do very well. Talk radio when it's done right, has all of those benchmarks. It has authenticity, it has honesty, it has consistency. It's a trusted vehicle. In my case, as a political conservative, you knew what you were getting, you knew where I was coming from. Talk radio, when it's opinion based, if it's done right, has loyalty.

SH: Have you thought about hosting your own podcast or something like that?

JG: That was suggested when I retired, but I'm really enjoying this life where I can dedicate myself to interests and where I'm not a public figure. I'm channeling Gandhi these days who said, "Speak when it improves on the silence." I'll let others speak. For now, I'm pretty happy not being a public figure.

SH: I'm sure you had opportunities to go back into public office, provincially or federally. Did you ever think about it?

JG: Not really. I was blessed to have the time I had. Politics is not easy. And particularly, I wasn't there in the time of social media. I couldn't imagine what politicians go through now. I leave it for another generation. I still am passionately interested in it. I still give advice to people and I'll continue to do that, but no, I won't run.

SH: What's your all-time favourite movie?

JG: I've seen The Sound of Music nearly 100 times. My wife thinks I'm a kook. Even my kids, who grew up with The Sound of Music, would like me to let it go. The Sound of Music is the best movie ever made.

SH: Wow. I would not have guessed



John Gormley (left) and Scott Hennig (right) chatting in Saskatoon.

that would be your answer, but that's a pretty good answer. When you're driving your car, what's on your radio?

JG: I'll usually try to find a talk station or 70s on 7. I am an old 70s rock and roll guy. It's the music that I came of age to.

SH: Any book recommendations?

JG: Just finished Nellie Bowles book. Nellie Bowles and her partner, Bari Weiss, are the people behind the

Free Press, which is one of the best reads anywhere. Her new book is called Morning After the Revolution: Dispatches From the Wrong Side of History. And Nellie Bowles is young, she's a progressive left-winger, but she accounts in a painfully accurate and very funny way how you could be wrong about everything all the time. And she takes cancel culture, she takes the politics of division, she takes identity politics, and she destroys it. I highly recommend Morning After the Revolution. It's a great read.

SH: What was your first concert?
JG: My first two concerts were within a couple of weeks. April Wine and Lighthouse. 8th grade, first time I could get into a big arena by myself and rock out.

SH: John, this has been great. Thank you so much for joining me today.

THE ANTI-CAPITALIST DICTIONARY



Peter Shawn Taylor

In Lewis Carroll's classic, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, an imperious egg-shaped Humpty Dumpty scolds Alice for suggesting he stick to the accepted definitions of words.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

Humpty's take on etymology is in ascendency these days. And not just in fairy tales. Today, basic economic concepts such as capital, profit, private property and the free exchange of goods and services have been turned into nasty pejoratives by the political left. How we talk about markets has become yet another political battlefield.

Here's the dictionary you need to figure out what modern-day Humpty Dumpty's are talking about.

CHILD CARE DESERTS

Common usage: "Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of children living in child care deserts by far." David MacDonald and Martha Friendly, *Not Done Yet: \$10-a-day child care requires addressing Canada's child care deserts*, May 2023.

A child care desert refers to an area that is underprovided in daycare spaces. And while the federal government's \$10/day program was meant to unleash a torrent of new spaces at a phenomenally low cost, Canada appears awash in deserts these days as parents everywhere complain about a dire shortage of spaces. The main reason for this desertification is the federal plan explicitly discriminates against for-profit daycare providers. In many provinces, private operators deliver a majority of spaces. And if you want to boost supply, the private sector is always nimbler and more cost-effective than the government or non-profit sector. Ottawa's attack on private operators



An illustration of Alice and Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's 1871 book *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*.

has done great harm to parents. It is no coincidence that Saskatchewan is Canada's worst child care desert, as it also has the lowest share of for-profit child cares of any province.

Suggested alternative: "No one ever fixed a supply problem by attacking the private sector."

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Common usage: "Environmental racism is a direct by-product of colonialism." Canadian Human Rights Commission, *Fast Talk on Environmental Racism in Canada*, February 16, 2023.

Environmental racism is a deliberately provocative term that refers to the fact low-income families generally live in less desirable neighbourhoods. Prior to the modern-day habit of declaring every situation that involves an unequal outcome to be "racist," this process was known to economists as Ricardian land rents, after 19th century British economist David Ricardo. He observed the price of land is determined by its most productive use. If land on the outskirts of town or nearer a pulp mill is less desirable or productive, then it will also be cheaper. And for this reason, these areas tend to attract low-income residents. There is no racism involved - it is simply the market at work.

Suggested alternative: "Cheap land equals cheap rent."

FINANCIALIZATION

Common usage: "Financialization is a process in which finance capital has come to dominate the economy and everyday life, and in which money is increasingly made through financial channels rather than by making things." Martine August, *The Financialization of Housing: A Summary Report for the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate*, June 2022

Financialization, or what used to be known as ready access to capital, has lately become the all-purpose bogeyman for Canada's housing crisis. Rather than pointing to the obvious imbalance between supply and demand caused by runaway immigration, the Federal Housing Advocate, a federally appointed advisory position, repeatedly argues profit-oriented investors are the true cause of high housing prices. But it will be impossible to deliver Canada's required 3.5 million new homes by 2030 without mobilizing the enormous financial resources of motivated real estate investors.

Suggested alternative: "If you want to build a lot of houses, you'll need a lot of money."

LIVING WAGE

Common usage: "The living wage is a bare-bones calculation that looks at the amount that a family of four needs to earn to meet their expenses." Living Wage for Families BC website.

Promoted by social advocacy groups as a replacement

for the minimum wage, a living wage is always much higher since it is intended to allow the earner to support a family with things such as holidays, savings accounts and a gift budget. But research from the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses shows only 1.5% of minimum wage earners are single parents with a child to support. Rather, the vast majority are under 25 and living with their parents. Replacing minimum wages with a living wage of \$25 per hour or more will not make life better for struggling families. It will harm the youngest and least employable workers in the economy by making them too expensive to hire.

Suggested alternative usage: "The fairest wages are those set by the market."

ORGANIZATIONAL ELDER ABUSE

Common usage: "Lions Housing Centres and the Lions Club of Winnipeg have been accused of inflicting 'organizational elder abuse' on seniors because of the way they sold Lions Place to a for-profit real estate company in 2023." Kevin Rollason, *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 23, 2024.

This phrase is an invention of the leftwing lobby group, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), to describe the sale of a non-profit seniors home in Winnipeg to a private firm. The very fact the new owner intends to make a profit while delivering necessary services to the residents amounts to "elder abuse" in the eyes of the CCPA. It is meant as an insult to the private sector and is reminiscent of other campaigns seeking to banish for-profit operators from other sectors also dominated by high cost, inefficient government unions, such as health care and child care.

Suggested alternative: "An asset sold by a motivated seller to a willing buyer."

RENOVICTION/DEMOVICTION

"Renoviction is a huge source of housing loss." ACORN Canada, *Ontario Renoviction Report 2024*, February 2024.

A renoviction/demoviction involves a landlord evicting existing tenants in order to make substantial renovations on an apartment or to tear down a building to put up something new. While this process is perfectly legal under certain conditions, it has lately become a nasty insult used by housing advocates and politicians to denigrate landlords. Some cities are even enacting bylaws to prevent it, a clear affront to the property rights of landlords. Investing one's own money to improve the local stock of housing used to be considered a good thing. Now, apparently, politicians would rather let it rot.

Suggested alternative: "Improving Canada's housing stock at no cost to taxpayers."

Peter Shawn Taylor is the Senior Features Editor of C2C Journal, a Canadian magazine that publishes original commentaries, stories, reviews and investigative reports from a pro-market and pro-liberty perspective. Peter's work has appeared in numerous publications, including Maclean's, National Post, Globe & Mail, Toronto Star, Saturday Night, Reader's Digest, National Review and Walrus.

GENERATION SCREWED IS FIGHTING BACK



Leam Dunn
Executive Director,
Generation
Screwed

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation initiated the creation of Generation Screwed in 2013 to inform young Canadians about the dangers posed by high-taxing, big-spending politicians and never-ending deficits. Today, Generation Screwed is a nationwide network of student leaders dedicated to fighting for a better economic future for all Canadians.

It was a busy summer for Generation Screwed, which hosted a series of events across the country aimed at strengthening our organization and preparing our coordinators for the upcoming academic year. The highlight of the summer was the much-anticipated Generation Screwed Annual Retreat, which brought together 17 of the most passionate, dedicated student leaders Canada has to offer.

Students from the universities of British Columbia and Fraser Valley, the universities of Alberta and Calgary, and the universities of Toronto and McGill, among others, descended on the picturesque village of Hodgeville in southern Saskatchewan for the retreat. Known as the “coyote capital of Canada,” the small rural community has a population of 150, and is located about a two hours’ drive from Regina down the Trans-Canada Highway. The retreat was held at a former elementary school that had been retrofitted into a motel. For the two-day event, held from Aug. 16 to 18, that former elementary school was transformed into a different kind of learning environment: a comprehensive training ground for the tax fighters of tomorrow.

A handful of CTF staff also made the trip out to Hodgeville, providing participants with top-notch training to ensure they left well-versed in the intricacies of fiscal policy and advocacy. CTF Prairie Director Gage Haubrich led a session on economics, while CTF Director of Digital Projects Jake Klassen taught a session on filing access-to-information requests. CTF British Columbia Director Carson Binda walked participants through the art of writing opinion editorials. And CTF Alberta Director Kris Sims, alongside CTF Vice-President of Communications Todd McKay, delivered a crash course in media training.

At the retreat, Generation Screwed coordinators also received training from some of the most successful student activists in Canada. These sessions were designed to



Leam Dunn and Amiel Pion of Generation Screwed tabling in Calgary in February 2024.

empower coordinators with the skills and confidence they need to lead campaigns, mobilize students and drive change. Needless to say, the participants left equipped with the tools needed to make an impact on their campuses during the current school year.

During their down time, participants explored the community, which features a single restaurant with a pool table. They also made use of the former elementary school’s gymnasium, where volleyball and ball hockey games were

organized. The students also watched a UFC fight one night, and rumour has it there may have been a couple cold ones cracked for the occasion.

One of the most valuable aspects of the retreat was the opportunity for students to connect and network with their peers from Generation Screwed. This diverse group of young leaders, each bringing unique perspectives and experiences, had the chance to share ideas, collaborate on campaigns and build lasting relationships. This network will serve as an important support system, as well as a source of inspiration, as they work towards common goals during the school year.

The annual retreat culminated in the awarding of the Trottier Morgan Cup, sponsored by the Gwyn Morgan and Patricia Trottier Foundation. The Trottier Morgan Cup has been awarded annually since 2015 to the retreat participants who perform best in a series of challenges that test the skills taught to them. This year’s winners were Daniel Villegas from the University of Toronto, Joe Latam from the University of British Columbia, Massimo Mazza from McGill University and Nathan Taieb from the University of Ottawa – the latter three of which also served as CTF interns this past summer. We congratulate the winning team for taking home this year’s Morgan Trottier Cup.

The training and networking opportunities provided at the Generation Screwed Annual Retreat will help ensure these young leaders are ready to tackle any challenge that may come their way – be it during the academic year, or at any point after that. They left Hodgeville with a renewed sense of purpose, equipped with the knowledge, skills and connections they need for upcoming fights. After the



Michael Harris of Generation Screwed tabling alongside other pro-liberty student groups

retreat, participants returned to their home communities with a powerful mission: to lead the charge in advocating for a better, more fiscally responsible Canada. Not only are these Generation Screwed coordinators the trailblazers of tomorrow, they’re also ready to make a difference today.

In addition to organizing the annual retreat, Generation Screwed was busy growing our membership base this summer, bringing more tax fighters into the fold. Our approach involved actively scouting events hosted by partner organizations in search of talent. At these events, we met passionate individuals who share our vision for a financially secure future, and we managed to recruit new coordinators who are enthusiastic about joining our cause and contributing their unique skills and perspectives.

Looking ahead, we have big plans for the coming semester. Our primary focus will be on hosting events focused on student affordability. We recognize the financial challenges many students face, from rising tuition fees to the high cost of living, and we are committed to addressing these issues head-on. Our events will include workshops, panel discussions and advocacy campaigns aimed at providing practical solutions and support to students struggling with financial burdens.

Stay tuned for more information on our activities in future editions of *The Taxpayer*. We are confident that with your continued support, we can make a difference in the fight for a more affordable and financially responsible future for all Canadians, including students. Thank you for supporting Generation Screwed. Together, we are driving change and making a lasting impact.



This year’s participants of the Generation Screwed Annual Retreat, posing for a photo in Hodgeville, Sask.

MEET THE INTERNS



This summer, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation hired three interns through its annual internship program. This year's interns were Joe Latam from the University of British Columbia; Massimo Mazza from Concordia University; and Nathan Taieb, a recent high school graduate who is entering into his first year at the University of Ottawa. All three spent time in the nation's capital working out of the CTF's Ottawa office.

Nathan, Massimo and Joe stood out from other applicants with their passion for advocating for responsible government spending and their dedicated and innovative approach

to tackling fiscal issues. Their hard work throughout the summer was impressive, with the interns taking on a range of projects from researching tax policies, to filling access-to-information requests and helping organize press conferences. Most importantly, they embodied the spirit of future tax fighters. Their contributions were invaluable, and we are excited to see them continue to grow and make an impact in the future.

Below are interviews with Joe, Massimo and Nathan reflecting on their time in the CTF internship program. Their answers have been edited for clarity and length.



Nathan Taieb is a student at the University of Ottawa, where he is pursuing a double major in law and political science. He was raised in Montreal.

Q: What was your favourite part of the CTF internship?

A: I think it allowed a lot of initiative, which most internships do

not. I could make my own decisions. If I had a lead that I thought was worth exploring, I could and I didn't need permission. The CTF actually encouraged me to think for myself, to find solutions by myself, and that's pretty rare. That's something I really enjoyed about the CTF internship.

Q: What public policy issue is the biggest concern for you?

A: The carbon tax. It's a bit of a classic, but I think it's really important. There are indirect costs with the carbon tax all around the country. Even in a province like Quebec, where we don't have the federal carbon tax, it still affects us a lot, because there are indirect costs on everything that is manufactured in Canada, there are indirect costs on everything that is transported in Canada. The carbon tax really matters and it's

something worth fighting.

Q: How will the internship help you in your future career?

A: I think the internship will help me a lot with thinking outside the box and having the leadership to think on my own, to take initiative, to find a solution. There's always something different we can do, when it comes to a problem we're trying to solve, there's always a different way to think things out. The CTF really helped me think outside the box, and I learned how to deal with and communicate with the government. I think those are things that will really help me in the future in my career.

Q: Would you recommend the CTF internship to others?

A: I would. I think it's an excellent opportunity if you're interested in fighting for taxpayers. If you're interested in politics, it's an amazing place to do an internship. It gives you a lot of opportunities. I had the opportunity to travel to Saskatchewan. Another colleague of mine was able to go to B.C., to Alberta, to travel across Canada. And that's not something you get to do with most internships. If you're interested in politics and government, then it's a great opportunity to learn and get involved.



Joe Latam is a graduate of the University of British Columbia, where he majored in political science and minored in history. He lives in Abbotsford, B.C.

Q: What was your favourite part about the CTF internship?

A: My favorite part about the internship program has been all the

cool research I got to do. I was taught how to properly analyze government documents. That's been really interesting and was something I didn't know how to do before. Also getting to meet all the people involved in the CTF and the other organizations around it. It's been really fun.

Q: What public policy issue is the biggest concern to you?

A: For me, it's the gun buyback and then the freezes on private property. I think it's a complete waste of money that won't make Canadians safer. I just want to delve

into it even more and make people realize how bad the gun buyback is.

Q: How will the internship help you in your future career?

A: I think it's going to provide me with valuable experience. Through researching, networking and media training, it will help me branch out into politics or criticism of politics. I think it's multifaceted and will help me a lot because many internships are just doing things like filing papers. Sometimes you're just doing research, but I got a good breadth of experience with this.

Q: Would you recommend the CTF internship to others?

A: Absolutely. I had a great time. I love the staff here. I've got to do a lot of very interesting things, and it actually educated me on a lot of stuff I didn't know before.



Massimo Mazza is a student at Concordia University where he studies economics. He lives in Montreal.

Q: What was your favourite part of the CTF internship program?

A: I would say my favourite part of the

internship were the opportunities I had to meet like-minded people and gain a better understanding of how politics and budgets work. I've also developed better research skills, particularly in knowing where to look for specific information. It's been an invaluable experience.

Q: What public policy issue is the biggest concern for you?

A: I would say housing is a significant concern for me, especially in light of the current crisis and the difficulties many Canadians are facing. Additionally, crime and drug policy are areas I find quite interesting and important.

Q: How will the internship help you in your future career?

A: One of the main benefits of this internship is the networking. I've met a lot of exceptional people, both within the CTF and at various events. Working with Generation Screwed and meeting people from the Montreal Economic Institute has been invaluable. I've made great connections, and you never know where these connections will lead. I believe your network is your net worth, and this internship has proven that to be true.

Q: Would you recommend the CTF internship to others?

A: Absolutely. It's been very fun, and I've learned so much. I can't think of a better opportunity if you're interested in politics, tax issues, and related fields.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

PARKS CANADA BLOWS \$12 MILLION ON SIDNEY ISLAND DEER CULL

An aerial view of Sidney Island in British Columbia.

SOURCE: SHUTTERSTOCK



Carson Binda, BC Director

Bambi would be a different story if it were set on Sidney Island, B.C. Instead of Thumper and a few local hunters with their old rifles, the characters would include legions of Parks Canada bureaucrats, \$12 million from taxpayers and airborne snipers from New Zealand and the United States. Instead of tunes like “Love is a Song” or “Little April Shower,” the soundtrack would be the steady whooshing of helicopter rotors and the sharp booms of semi-automatic rifle fire. On Sidney Island, Bambi would look a lot less like a light-hearted Disney movie, and a lot more like *Apocalypse Now*.

The \$12-million Fur to Forest program is a Parks Canada project to eliminate the European fallow deer population on Sidney Island. Fallow deer were introduced to the Gulf Islands in the early-to-mid 1900s for hunting. At the time, no one could have imagined that Parks Canada would be hunting the deer a century later with a helicopter and high-powered rifles.

Parks Canada dreamed up the most exotic and expensive hunting techniques imaginable. Sharpshooters from New Zealand and the United States circled the island in a helicopter, using semi-automatic rifles equipped

with silencers to hunt deer during phase one of the program, which occurred in late 2023 and cost \$800,000.

The foreign hunters shot 84 deer. Of the 84 deer killed in phase one, at least 18 were the wrong species. Who would have guessed that foreigners hunting from a helicopter would make the wrong call 18 times? It’s worth noting it is illegal to harvest the wrong species of animal during a hunt in B.C. Phase one cost taxpayers \$10,000 for every deer the government shot.

For comparison, residents of Sidney Island organized their own hunt last fall where the locals culled 54 deer at no cost to taxpayers. When locals are willing to do the hunt for free, it’s baffling that Parks Canada instead chose foreign marksmen circling the island from a helicopter.

But that first phase is only the tip of the iceberg. Documents obtained by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation through an access-to-information request show the true cost is \$11.9 million for the entire program.

About \$2.3 million is going towards salaries for Parks Canada bureaucrats working on the Fur to Forest Program. Analysis and surveys of the three-square-mile island cost another \$1.4 million. The government budgeted \$800,000 for “Indigenous Participation,” while the deer eradication itself will cost a total of

\$4.1 million. Miscellaneous costs come in at \$3.3 million.

Credit where it’s due, at least Parks Canada harvested around 800 kilograms of meat from the deer killed during phase one. That works out to around \$1,000 per kilogram of venison. With prices like that, someone should call the Guinness Book of World Records, because we’ve found the most expensive deer sausage in history.

Since 2014, local, ground-based hunters have removed more than 1,800 deer at no cost to taxpayers. The waste we’re seeing on Sidney Island is emblematic of a rotten culture in Canada’s bloated federal bureaucracy. Only government could dream up a way to spend \$12 million killing deer. When locals are willing to do the job for free, there’s no reason for Parks Canada to burn through our tax dollars role-playing Rambo.

“**Only government could dream up a way to spend \$12 million killing deer, when locals are willing to do the job for free.**”

“**At \$3.86 billion dollars, the North Shore Wastewater Treatment Plant in North Vancouver will end up costing roughly twice as much as the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world and the crown jewel of Dubai’s skyline.**”

SOURCE: METRO VANCOUVER



A rendering of the North Shore Wastewater Treatment Plant in North Vancouver.

TAXPAYERS LOSING FAITH IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

As scandals rock British Columbia municipalities, calls for accountability grow louder. Recent months have seen a series of high-profile screw-ups from local governments. Taxpayers deserve accountability and the province must step up to ensure we get it.

At \$3.86 billion dollars, the North Shore Wastewater Treatment Plant in North Vancouver will end up costing roughly twice as much as the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world and the crown jewel of Dubai’s skyline. Back in 2018, when construction on the plant began, it was supposed to cost \$700 million and be open by 2020. Four years later, the costs have ballooned by more than \$3 billion.

Hundreds of dollars per year are going to be added to property taxes in the coming decades because of that project alone. But instead of pink slips, the politicians and bureaucrats overseeing this mess are being richly rewarded with sky-high salaries and platinum perks.

Metro Vancouver’s Chief Administrative Officer, Jerry

Dobrovlny, will receive more than \$700,000 from taxpayers this year. That’s roughly \$100,000 more than the premier and prime minister make combined. It’s hard to justify paying the bureaucrat overseeing the worst municipal cost overrun in B.C. history more than most people make in seven years.

But it’s not just municipal bureaucrats who have their snouts buried deep in the taxpayer trough. Mayors and local politicians want you to believe they’re entitled to lavish travel and a life of luxury – all paid for by taxpayers, of course.

Four mayors, along with Dobrovlny and two other bureaucrats, all traveled to the Netherlands for a conference on urban drainage. While the costs from that trip aren’t yet known, one of the mayors let slip during a radio interview that the trip cost at least \$10,000 per person. There was absolutely no reason for taxpayers to spend tens of thousands of dollars flying four municipal political leaders to the Netherlands. Mayors Malcolm Brodie, Brad West, Mike Hurley and

John McEwen went anyway. Metro Vancouver’s former board chair, Mayor George Harvie from Delta, has also raised eyebrows over his travel expenses. On one trip, he spent \$17,000 on airfare.

B.C.’s local governments need a dedicated watchdog to keep spending under control. Up until the B.C. New Democratic Party formed the provincial government, we had one. The Auditor-General for Local Governments was established in 2013 to keep an eye on how municipalities spend taxpayer money. But in 2020, the NDP abolished the office, claiming the municipalities didn’t like the added accountability.

Removing the auditor-general because the municipalities didn’t like it is a bit like removing the guard dog from the henhouse because the fox doesn’t want him there. The B.C. government should bring back the Auditor-General for Local Governments to stop the steady drumbeat of spending scandals that emanate from our cities and towns.

KEEPING LOWER TAX PROMISES



SOURCE: SHUTTERSTOCK

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith giving a speech at an Airdrie pub in 2022.

Kris Sims
CTF Alberta
Director

The United Conservative Party won the 2023 provincial election and yet Albertans are paying higher taxes. Wait, what? Yes, that's the unfortunate reality for Alberta taxpayers as of summer 2024.

During the 2023 election, the UCP campaigned on "tax cuts for all Albertans," promising to reduce the lowest provincial income tax bracket from 10% to 8% for the first \$60,000 of income. According to the election promise, that tax cut would save workers about \$750 each, or about \$1,500 per family. But the UCP government now says it will get around to reducing the provincial income tax sometime in 2025.

This isn't in keeping with the promise or with the "Alberta Advantage" reputation of the province. Plumbers and police officers who move to Alberta from British Columbia are going to notice a bigger tax bite coming out of their paycheques – and that bite is thanks to provincial income tax.

A quick glance at simple online tax calculators shows this. A worker earning about \$100,000 a year in B.C. pays about \$5,857 in provincial income tax. That same worker in Alberta, however, will hand over about \$7,424 in provincial income tax.

But that's not the only tax problem here. A year ago, when the UCP won the election, Alberta drivers were not paying the provincial fuel tax at the pump. Citing serious affordability

issues, Premier Danielle Smith did the right thing and announced she was fully suspending the provincial fuel tax in 2022, saving drivers 13-cents-per-litre of gasoline and diesel.

That move saved people a considerable amount of money. Drivers saved about \$10 every time they filled up their minivans and about \$15 when they filled up their pickup trucks. Truckers filling up their big rigs with diesel saved about \$130.

Fast forward to New Year's Day 2024 and the Alberta government went back to the original fuel tax reduction blueprint created by the UCP, and, citing the lower price for a barrel of oil, partially raised the fuel tax back up to 9 cents a litre.

This was especially tough to take for Alberta taxpayers because, over in Manitoba, the NDP government led by Premier Wab Kinew completely suspended the province's 14-cents-per-litre fuel tax, also on Jan. 1. To add insult to injury, the Liberal premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Progressive Conservative premier of Ontario have both kept their provincial fuel taxes cut in half.

It's an all-party fuel tax cut, but Albertans aren't invited anymore. Wait, it gets even weirder.

Remember when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hiked his dreaded carbon tax on April 1 this year? The mandatory federal carbon tax is now costing Canadians 17-cents-per-litre of gasoline, 21-cents-per-litre of diesel and 15-cents-per-cubic-metre of natural gas. The average Alberta family will pay more than \$400 extra because

of the carbon tax to heat their homes with natural gas this winter. Families camping out at the rodeo in Sundre or driving through the Crowsnest Pass to visit grandparents in the Okanagan this summer will be coughing up about \$20 extra in carbon taxes just to fill up a light duty pickup truck.

That was a bad tax hike. But the Alberta government also hiked its provincial fuel tax all the way back up to 13 cents per litre on the same day as the carbon tax increase, creating a double whammy tax hike for Albertans. Between the foot dragging on the income tax cut and the full-strength fuel tax, how is this "tax cuts for all Albertans," as the UCP promised?

The UCP government has done some very good things for taxpayers. It has passed balanced budget legislation. It has strengthened the Taxpayer Protection Act. It has started paying down the debt and saving money in the Heritage Fund. All great moves. Most importantly, it now has a law requiring the government restrain spending increases below the rate of inflation, plus population growth.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has been urging the government to restrain spending in that manner since the mid-1990s. Calculations done by the CTF show that, if the government had passed such a law back then, the province would have saved more than \$300 billion by now.

Those budget rules are very good, but a promise is a promise, and this government has to deliver on its promise to cut taxes for all Albertans.



Edmonton City Hall

Edmonton City Hall HAS A SPENDING PROBLEM

Taxpayers want city halls to keep their neighbourhoods safe, their services efficient and their property tax bills reasonable. But that's not what's happening in Edmonton.

Edmonton taxpayers are facing an 8.9% property tax hike in 2024, with Mayor Amarjeet Sohi saying it's for necessities. But what are these necessities?

Budget documents show spending at Edmonton City Hall has skyrocketed over the past decade. During that time, city spending went from \$2 billion to an estimated \$3.4 billion, an increase of about 36%, adjusted for inflation. Edmonton's population grew by about 22% during those years.

City bureaucracy is also growing in all the wrong places. The city has 392 people on its communications and engagement team. A decade ago, in 2013, there were just 71 full-time positions listed under corporate communication. That's a jump of 449% in communications staff, with operating costs spiking from \$7.7 million to \$34.2 million. Were the good people of Edmonton suffering from a communications drought?

Compare that to the people who do the real work of keeping the city clean. In 2021, Edmonton had 512 full-time staff collecting garbage. Back in 2013, there were 465 employees in waste management, an increase of 10%.

Some good news: in 2013, the city reported 1,957 chunks of litter on its streets, while in 2019, 1,024 pieces were counted. That's a tidy 47% decrease.

What about crime prevention and protecting property? Most taxpayers in Edmonton will list crime as a major concern, with 68% of Albertans saying crime and violence

are getting worse. Violent crimes have skyrocketed over the past 10 years in Edmonton, with a 42% increase in crimes, such as assault with a weapon and threats.

How has City Hall prioritized this? In 2013, there were 2,294 full-time positions with the Edmonton Police Service. About 10 years later, there were 2,833 full-time spots listed, an increase of about 23% over 10 years.

But wait, there's more. The city isn't only hiking taxes because it keeps hiring more narrative whittlers, it's also blowing money on pointless projects.

Edmonton spent about \$60 million on a fleet of electric buses. But the bus batteries apparently don't enjoy Edmonton's chilly weather. Three quarters of them are stuck in repair shops and the company that makes the needed replacement parts is now bankrupt.

Last year, Edmonton City Hall decided to spend \$100 million on bicycle lanes – in a city that can see snow on the roads from October to May. And after spending all that effort swiping the Edmonton taxpayer credit card, Sohi still found enough time to give himself a raise.

After the raise, Sohi takes \$215,585 per year. His car allowance is \$1,200 per month. To put it another way, the mayor of Edmonton is paid more than Alberta Premier Danielle Smith. Edmonton's 12 councillors are paid \$122,363 per year, with a \$600 monthly car allowance to boot.

It's time for Edmonton City Hall to get back to basics and stop wasting taxpayers' hard-earned money on ill-considered electric buses, spin doctors and overpaid politicians.

SASKATCHEWAN'S LEGACY OF DEBT



Gage Haubrich, Prairie Director

The Saskatchewan government needs to do something about its debt problem. At this point, anything would be better than the nothing taxpayers are currently getting.

It's frustrating to see the government continue to pile debt on taxpayers, not only because of the real consequences it has, but also because Saskatchewan used to be on the right path.

Shortly after being elected in 2007, former premier Brad Wall's government paid down more debt than any government in Saskatchewan history. It also cut taxes and balanced two budgets with multibillion-dollar surpluses.

But nostalgia is a powerful drug. And nostalgia seems to be the strategy the current provincial government is pursuing when it comes to convincing taxpayers it can be trusted with all the money they are forced to send to Regina every year.

Because recent actions don't inspire confidence. Since Wall's initial two balanced budgets, the government has only balanced four of its last 16 budgets, leaving



CTF Debt Clock showing the increasing provincial debt outside of the Saskatchewan legislature in Regina on March 18, 2024.

taxpayers to pick up the tab for increasing debt and skyrocketing interest payments.

Ten years ago, Saskatchewan's provincial debt was \$6.4 billion. By the end of this year, it will be more than \$21 billion. That's a 227% increase.

That means each Saskatchewanian now owes \$16,850 in government debt, compared to \$6,937 10 years ago, after adjusting for inflation.

And all that growing debt means more taxpayer money wasted on interest payments. During that same 10-year period, the government spent about \$4.8 billion on debt interest. That's enough money to cut the provincial fuel tax for nine years.

When defending the so-called 'surprise deficit' last year, the government blamed the red ink on declining natural resource prices and a drought that led to a spike in crop insurance payments.

But the government's latest budget is no better. The 2024 budget projects a \$273-million deficit with \$728 million going towards interest payments.

The budget also claims the government will finally get back to balance next year, but that's what last year's budget said about this year.

There are some flickers of hope. When the government balanced the budget in 2022, it did pay down about \$1.5 billion in debt. But that mattered little when it immediately started to rack the debt back up again in the two years since.

Saskatchewan is in a bad financial place and, while politicians spin tales, the numbers don't lie.

Saskatchewan can't rest on its laurels. The government must look at what was done years ago as a fiscal roadmap to return to balance and pay down debt, not as an excuse to fail to do it now.

Over the last decade, the Saskatchewan government has increased the provincial debt by **\$14.6 billion**



Source: Public Accounts of Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan government has only balanced one out of its last 10 budgets.



Does this worry you?



Source: Public Accounts of Saskatchewan

In the last 10 years, the provincial government has wasted **\$4.8 billion** on interest charges on the provincial debt.

Fiscal Year	Interest Charges
2015-16	\$275,698,000
2016-17	\$295,956,000
2017-18	\$357,583,000
2018-19	\$414,789,000
2019-20	\$452,726,000
2020-21	\$480,514,000
2021-22	\$503,551,000
2022-23	\$586,095,000
2023-24	\$644,700,000
2024-25	\$728,200,000
Total	\$4,739,812,000



Source: Public Accounts of Saskatchewan

SASKATCHEWAN'S LONG FIGHT AGAINST THE CARBON TAX

Way back on Oct. 3, 2016, all the country's environment ministers gathered in Ottawa. At the behest of recently elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, they were there to discuss a national plan to combat climate change.

But it turns out this meeting wasn't a discussion of any sort. The meeting was simply a chance for Ottawa to tell the provinces they needed to adopt some sort of carbon tax scheme, or have one imposed on them by the federal government.

This didn't sit well with the Saskatchewan representative. Saskatchewan's then environment minister and now premier, Scott Moe, called the imposition of a carbon tax on the provinces a "betrayal" and walked out of the meeting before it finished.

And the Saskatchewan premier at the time supported Moe.

"The level of disrespect shown by the prime minister and his government today is stunning," said former premier Brad Wall following the announcement. "This new tax will damage our economy."

Wall was right then but it's only gotten worse as the federal government keeps cranking up its carbon tax. When the carbon tax was first imposed, it cost you about \$2.83 every time you filled up your car. This year it costs \$11.27, and by 2030 it will cost \$23.96.

Flash forward eight years and now almost everyone but Trudeau opposes the carbon tax.

But for a long time, it was the furthest thing from popular to oppose the carbon tax. And during that time, Saskatchewan stood alone.

Saskatchewan was the only province that did not sign onto the federal government's climate change plan in 2016. Saskatchewan was the first province to go to court to try to get rid of the carbon tax in 2018. That case ended up at the Supreme Court and Saskatchewan was then joined by the governments of Alberta and Ontario, who had come to their senses and started to oppose the carbon tax.

More recently, Saskatchewan went even further in its attempt to scrap Ottawa's carbon tax.

In late 2023, the Trudeau

government announced it would exempt its carbon tax from heating oil. It's a fuel primarily used in Atlantic Canada and used by almost zero Saskatchewanians.

In open defiance of the feds, Moe announced the Saskatchewan government would stop collecting the federal carbon tax on home heating in the province. The government estimates this move will save Saskatchewan taxpayers about \$400 per year.

But where Saskatchewan once stood alone, it now seems the tide is turning against the carbon tax. For example, polling shows 69% of Canadians opposed the latest April 1 carbon tax hike. Plus, the premiers of every province forced to pay the federal carbon tax (except Manitoba) also opposed the hike.

Groups like the Canadian Taxpayers Federation were and are instrumental in fighting the carbon tax and the cost it puts on taxpayers. But that fight would have been a lot harder if Saskatchewan had not held steadfast and opposed it from the very beginning.

GAS TAX CUT SAVES TAXPAYERS HUNDREDS



Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew cut the 14 cent per litre provincial fuel tax for gasoline and diesel on Jan. 1. The impact on taxpayers' wallets was immediate. Since the cut, gas prices in Manitoba have been consistently lower than in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Initially, the government predicted the average two-car family would save about \$250 over the six months of the planned cut. That's enough for a couple trips to the grocery store.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation



Gage Haubrich, Prairie Director



CTF Prairie Director Gage Haubrich discussing the cost of provincial and federal gas taxes in front of the Manitoba Legislature in August 2023.

then commissioned a poll that found 77% of Manitobans wanted the government to extend its gas tax cut beyond six months. It turns out Manitobans like saving money. The CTF directly presented the results of the poll to Finance Minister Adrien Sala.

Two months later, in the provincial budget, the government extended the cut, guaranteeing tax relief for Manitobans for at least three more months. The government now projects the extension will save a two-car family \$375 over the entire length of the tax cut.

The CTF continued to pressure the Manitoba government

to extend the gas tax cut. And in September, the Manitoba government did just that, extending the cut yet again until the end of the year. The CTF estimates this move will save families about \$147 more.

But Manitobans need to remain vigilant. Alberta previously had a fuel tax cut for two years and, because of it, Albertans enjoyed the lowest fuel prices in the country. The Alberta government has now hiked its fuel tax back up and stole relief from Albertans.

Manitoba taxpayers only got this latest gas tax cut extension because we stood up and made our voices heard. The fight isn't over until these savings at the pump become permanent.



CTF Prairie Director Gage Haubrich talking to media about Manitoba's rising provincial debt in front of the Debt Clock.

MANITOBA'S DEBT PROBLEM

Ten years ago, Manitoba's provincial debt was \$21.9 billion. This year, the government is set to increase the debt to \$35.4 billion. That 62% increase is something the government can't keep ignoring.

Manitoba's long-term debt load continues to rise every year the government fails to balance the budget. And more debt means more money wasted on debt interest payments.

The Manitoba government has only balanced two of its last 10 budgets. In the last decade, the government has wasted more than \$15.6 billion on debt interest payments because it keeps failing to balance its books.

If that money wasn't wasted, it would be enough to keep the government's current fuel tax cut in place for more than 38 years.

This year alone, interest payments on the debt will cost taxpayers \$2.3 billion. That's about \$1,520 per Manitoban. Put another way, that's four times more than the government plans on spending on roads and other infrastructure this year.

Despite this poor fiscal record, Manitoba Finance Minister Adrien Sala doesn't seem to be all that worried. His latest budget projects a deficit of \$796 million and shows the government only expects to balance the budget in four years' time, with a tiny \$18 million surplus.

And because it's taking so long to balance the budget, the government will waste about \$9.6 billion more on long-term debt interest payments over the next four years.

The government needs a change in fiscal course. Manitoba needs a balanced budget so taxpayers can stop spending so much money on interest payments while getting nothing in return.

HOW MUCH DO MANITOBA MLAs COST TAXPAYERS?

It's no secret that provincial politicians receive a generous salary. But what is the full cost to Manitoba taxpayers for the pay and benefits of Members of the Legislative Assembly?

Well, first there is that salary. This year, the base pay for an MLA in Manitoba is \$106,603. If an MLA is a cabinet member, the pay is higher, at \$164,967. Premier Wab Kinew can expect to make \$195,906 this year.

The average Manitoban earns about \$58,000 a year. MLAs make almost twice that amount.

With 57 MLAs, taxpayers can expect to fork over at least \$6 million every year to fund the salaries of politicians, but the buck doesn't stop there. Being a provincial politician also guarantees you a heap of other benefits taxpayers pay for.

Most notably, there is the pension.

Manitoba MLAs are enrolled in a defined benefit pension plan. This means they are guaranteed a certain amount of money in retirement, based on the number of years they were elected.

A major problem with defined benefit pension plans is they require the employer (in this case, taxpayers) to make accurate predictions 50 to 75 years into the future in regard to inflation, investment income and life expectancy. And that's because the pension is paid forever.

If the employee and employer have not contributed sufficient money into the pension to cover the payouts, it doesn't matter. The payouts still happen. And who gets sent the bill? Taxpayers.

The guarantee is on the backs of taxpayers, who will be forced to fork over more cash if the MLA pension fund does not perform well.

Only about 22% of taxpayers have pensions in their workplaces, by comparison.

But that isn't the only way taxpayers continue to fund politicians after they leave office. When an MLA retires or loses an election, they are also eligible for a severance payment called a transition allowance. After the last election, this allowance cost taxpayers about \$1.8 million, with an average pay out \$32,800 per former MLA.

Manitoba taxpayers who leave their jobs are not paid a bonus and they should not be funding one for politicians.

And MLAs are in the process of adding another item to the long list of taxpayer-funded benefits they receive. Currently, candidates and political parties are eligible to have up to 25% of their expenses reimbursed to them by the government after an election.

The government is now trying to hike that number to 50% - again, all paid for by taxpayers, of course.

It's difficult for politicians to understand the constituents they serve when they are disconnected from their financial reality. Unlike many Manitobans, it's unlikely any MLAs are having trouble making ends meet.

To help them come back down to earth, the government needs to cut back the benefits provincial politicians receive. A good place to start is eliminating the transition allowance for departing MLAs and scrapping political welfare for candidates running in the next election.



CTF Prairie Director Gage Haubrich and CTF Director of Digital Projects Jake Klassen presenting Manitoba Finance Minister Adrien Sala with the CTF's pre-budget recommendations for Budget 2024.



Manitoba Finance Minister Adrien Sala, seated next to Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew, presenting the budget on April 2, 2024

ONTARIO

FORD TO BLAME FOR ONTARIO'S SURGING DEBT

SOURCE: JULIEKZ, FLICKR

Ontario Premier Doug Ford meets with supporters during the 2018 provincial election.



Jay Goldberg, Ontario Director

Ontario's debt has erupted like a volcano under Premier Doug Ford's watch and he has no one to blame but himself.

Ford rode into office on a high horse. During the 2018 provincial election, he barnstormed the province, castigating the Wynne government as fiscally reckless. If elected, Ford pledged to end Ontario's debt dive and straighten out the finances.

But six years later, Ford has added \$86 billion to the provincial debt. That means Ford added more debt to Ontario's balance sheet than any other premier, save Dalton McGuinty.

Yes, Ford's fiscal record is worse than even his immediate predecessor, Kathleen Wynne.

Ford's apologists generally come up with three excuses to take the heat off his dismal debt record: the situation inherited from the Liberals, the pandemic and a lack of government revenue.

First, there's the "blame the Liberals" argument.

It's true that when Ford came to office, the Liberal government was running a large deficit. When the Wynne government presented its final budget shortly before the 2018 election, then-finance minister Charles Sousa laid out a plan to spend \$158.5 billion and run a \$6-billion deficit.

After the election, did Ford come

in and clean up the mess? Nope. Ford hiked 2018 spending to \$162.5 billion and increased the deficit to \$11.7 billion.

This is an apples-to-apples comparison: what the Liberals planned to spend during the 2018-19 fiscal year, compared to what Ford chose to spend. The deficit and spending went up, not down.

Second, there's the pandemic.

There's no denying the pandemic presented a difficult situation for governments across the country and Ontario was no exception.

The pandemic threw the province's finances off in 2020-21 and 2021-22. The year before the pandemic began, the Ford government laid out plans to run a \$5.8-billion deficit in 2020-21 and a \$4.6-billion deficit in 2021-22.

Instead, the Ford government ran deficits of \$16.4 billion and \$13.5 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Add the two pandemic years together and you get a deficit increase of \$19.5 billion, more than what the Ford government had planned to borrow prior to the pandemic.

There's no question the Ford government could have spent more efficiently during the pandemic, but for now let's give it a pass.

Even so, take \$19.5 billion off Ford's \$86-billion debt tab and you still get \$66.5 billion.

That means Ford added \$66.5 billion to Ontario's debt, even once you hand him a pass on the pandemic. That's still \$22.5 billion more than what

Wynne added during her five years in power.

Third, let's look at the revenue argument. Is it possible Ford hasn't been able to balance the books because revenue growth has been slow?

Just the opposite. When Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy presented his 2024-25 budget, it laid out a plan to bring in \$205.7 billion. That's \$54.9 billion more than the government's first year in office, 2018-19.

Instead of taking advantage of nearly \$55 billion in new revenue to balance the books, the Ford government drove up expenses by \$52 billion.

As a final indictment of Ford's record, let's look at Wynne's projected fiscal plans.

In 2018, in the Ontario Liberals' final budget (one Ford condemned as reckless), Sousa presented a projected spending plan of \$185.8 billion for 2024-25. Ford's plan, presented in this year's budget, is \$28.7 billion higher.

While inflation in recent years has been higher than Sousa anticipated back in 2018, Canada's supercharged inflation rates in 2022 and 2023 can only explain about half of the \$28.7 billion in additional spending.

Six years into Ford's time on the job, any excuses for his fiscal fiasco fall flat. He has vastly outspent the Liberals, jacked up the debt and won't balance the budget despite \$55 billion in new revenue.

It's time for the Ford government to quit the excuses, balance the books and pay down debt to put six sorry years of fiscal recklessness into the rear-view mirror.

How much the debt went up under each premier

Dalton McGuinty (2003-2013)

\$136 BILLION

Kathleen Wynne (2013-2018)

\$44 BILLION

Doug Ford (2018 - present)

\$86 BILLION



SOURCE: DOUG FORD, X.COM

Ford holds a press conference at a gas station related to his ongoing gas tax cut

FORD'S GAS TAX CUT SAVES ONTARIANS \$3 BILLION

Three billion dollars. That's how much Premier Doug Ford's two-and-a-half years of gas tax cuts will have saved Ontario taxpayers by Christmas.

Ford cut the gas tax by 6.4 cents a litre in July 2022.

The move has been meaningful at kitchen tables across the province.

The typical two-car family filling up once a week has saved more than \$850 at the pumps since Ford's gas tax cut was put in place two years ago. And thanks to the Ford government's plan to extend the cut through the end of the year, families can expect to save an additional \$225.

When the Ford government introduced its gas tax cut in July 2022, the finance ministry said the temporary six-month cut would leave about \$645 million in Ontarians' pockets. With that period now stretched out from six months to two-and-a-half years, Ontario taxpayers are set to enjoy savings of more than \$3 billion.

Ford's gas tax cut may seem like yesterday's news given that it's been in place for nearly two years. But the tax cut means Ontarians have had one of the lowest gas tax burdens in

Canada, behind only Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador.

And the Ford's gas tax cut has never been more important, given the Trudeau government keeps hammering families with higher costs.

Since Ford cut the gas tax in July 2022, the Trudeau government has raised the carbon tax twice, adding roughly 6 cents a litre to the cost at the pump. Ford's cut has helped struggling taxpayers blunt the impact of Trudeau's tax hikes when filling up to get to work, take the kids to school or head to hockey practice.

And that's part of the plan.

"With the federal government about to increase its costly carbon tax, it's never been more important to provide relief at the pumps and put hundreds of dollars back into peoples' pockets," Ford said this spring.

To Ford's credit, he has spent his entire political career speaking out about the damage of the costly federal carbon tax.

"Carbon tax schemes are no more than government cash grabs that do nothing for the environment, while hitting people in the wallet in order to fund big government programs," Ford said days after becoming premier.

Ontario taxpayers are also in the minority in terms of saving at the gas pump. Only Manitobans and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians also currently enjoy provincial gas tax relief.

More than 400,000 Ontarians are now working two jobs just to make ends meet. About 50% of Canadians say they're \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills. Ottawa has been tone deaf by imposing carbon tax hikes and Ford is fighting to defend Ontario taxpayers from the Trudeau government's reckless tax-and-spend fiscal policies.

From July 2022 to June 2024, taxpayers filling up two cars once a week saved nearly \$850 thanks to Ford's gas tax cut. That's real money that pays for a month's worth of groceries for a family of four.

There's more Ford can do to lower costs for taxpayers. He should look at putting his \$9 billion a year in corporate welfare on the chopping block to deliver even more relief for Ontario families through lower income taxes or a sales tax cut.

But the bottom line is that Ford deserves credit for implementing his bold gas tax cut for two whole years.



“\$870 million to renovate the Olympic Stadium. What, exactly, would all that money get us? A new roof.”

SOURCE: SHUTTERSTOCK

MONTREAL'S BIG O: NO TRANSPARENCY FOR MAGICAL ROOF

The new roof for Montreal's Olympic Stadium is projected to cost \$870 million.



Nicolas Gagnon, Québec Director

It's one thing for politicians to waste taxpayers' money, but it's quite another when they try to justify the waste with non-existent reports. But that's precisely what's happening with the Olympic Stadium in Montreal.

Quebec Tourism Minister Caroline Proulx held a press conference in February to announce the government's intention to spend \$870 million to renovate the Olympic Stadium. What, exactly, would all that money get us? A new roof.

This came as a surprise to Quebec taxpayers, who also learned they would be expected to foot the entire bill. That kind of money is enough to startle anyone. For the sake of comparison, the Centre Vidéotron in Quebec City cost taxpayers \$370 million. And for \$870 million, Quebec could build 21 new elementary schools.

But cost is not the only issue here.

To justify the spending, Proulx tried to reassure taxpayers by presenting projections too good to be true. According to government estimates, replacing the roof will enable Olympic Park to generate \$1.5 billion over 10 years, with annual economic spin-offs increasing from \$68 million to \$150 million, and commercial revenues rising from \$23 million to \$61 million. Proulx even suggested the new roof would increase events at the stadium from 30 to 100 per year and double paying visitors from one to two million.

That's one magical roof! It's even more magical, considering that no sports team has made the Olympic Stadium its home since the Expos left 20 years ago. But here's the problem: until proven otherwise, the Quebec Ministry of Tourism's economic impact studies are unfounded.

To date, access to information requests submitted by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation seeking further details on ministry projections have been stonewalled. But it's not just the economic impact studies that are

puzzling.

The government justifies its staggering \$870 million investment by claiming that dismantling the stadium would cost \$2 billion. This assertion is based on a single study dating back 20 years. No building in North America has ever cost so much to be destroyed. Examples like the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium in Washington, D.C., destroyed for \$20 million, and New York's Yankee Stadium, dismantled for \$25 million, show just how suspect the government's math is.

The CTF recently helped pressure the government to acknowledge additional costs for renovations to the Olympic Stadium, adding another \$91 million to the taxpayer tab. It's safe to say the more Quebec taxpayers learn about the magical perks of the new Olympic Stadium roof, the more they will come to doubt the government's claims.

A question for Minister Proulx: if you have nothing to hide, why not disclose the numbers?



KILLING THE FLOOR PRICE ON FUEL



SOURCE: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, FLICKR

Quebec Finance Minister Pierre Fitzgibbon at the World Economic Forum

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has been calling on the Quebec government to abolish its floor price on fuel since 2019. When the CTF first proposed this, the government refused, saying the floor price on fuel “makes it possible to maintain healthy competition.”

Was the government wrong? Quebec Economy, Innovation and Energy Minister Pierre Fitzgibbon now admits the obvious – yes.

On May 16, the Coalition Avenir Quebec government announced the impending end of the floor price on fuel. In a province where motorists are seen as lemons to be perpetually squeezed, it was surprising to see the government announce relief. But it happened, largely thanks to the work of the CTF and its supporters.

It all started a few years ago when the CTF received an anonymous tip from a Quebec gas station owner. “I just received a formal notice because my price was not high enough!” the tipster wrote. After some digging, it became clear the floor price on fuel was a threat to the wallets of Quebecers.

Quebec introduced the floor price on fuel in 1997. Administered by the Régie de l'Énergie, Quebec's energy regulator, the floor price had two aims:

to protect local distributors and to keep prices affordable for motorists. On both counts, the floor price was a resounding failure.

First, it should be remembered that for nearly a generation, the Régie de l'énergie has set an arbitrary minimum price every week, below which gas cannot be sold. This is officially known as the “minimum ramp price.”

Instead of letting service stations set their prices according to actual costs, the government – through its officials at the Régie de l'énergie – tried to determine the refining and acquisition costs of each barrel of gasoline, in order to set a “fair” price. Service stations must comply, or their competitors can file formal complaints.

Imagine the following scenario. You own a gas station. You believe that reducing the price by a few cents would attract more drivers. So you reduce your price, thinking you've made the right call for you and your customers. But the next morning, a registered letter is waiting for you on the stoop. It's a formal complaint from a competing service station. The reason? Unfair competition.

Your competitor accuses you, citing your price, which is lower than the minimum estimated by the Régie de l'Énergie. To avoid lawsuits and financial penalties, you have to raise

your price.

Does this scenario seem far-fetched? It's not. According to the Régie de l'Énergie's annual reports, it occurred nearly 4,787 times between 2018 and 2023. The losers? Quebec motorists. Fortunately for them, the floor price on gas will soon be a thing of the past.

But some think motorists should pay more. The Association des Distributeurs d'Énergie du Québec (ADEQ) recently spoke out against the abolition of the floor price. They argue the move will hurt local energy distributors. But here's the thing: even though the floor price was introduced, in part, to protect local distributors, it had the opposite effect.

In 2010, major fuel distributors held 49% of the Quebec market. As of 2024, they now hold 71% of the market. So not only did the floor price on fuel fail to protect motorists, but it also failed to protect local distributors.

In the end, the floor price did just one thing: it artificially raised the cost of gas, thereby forcing Quebec motorists to pay more. Fitzgibbon will officially introduce his bill to abolish the floor price on fuel next fall. And when he does, motorists all around Quebec should rejoice.



SOURCE: FLICKR

FUREY STANDS UP TO TRUDEAU ON CARBON TAXES

Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberal premier, Andrew Furey (pictured left), might end up being the man who finally takes down the Trudeau carbon tax



Jay Goldberg,
Interim Atlantic
Director

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's carbon tax consensus within his Liberal party is gone. Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberal premier, Andrew Furey, might end up being the man who finally takes down the Trudeau carbon tax.

After months of trying to get Trudeau to be more flexible on the carbon tax, Furey came out against the policy altogether.

Let's look back at how this came to be.

It's no secret opposition to the Trudeau government's punishing carbon tax was strong early on and has been growing ever since.

But a large chunk of that opposition was concentrated among conservative politicians.

Premiers like Doug Ford in Ontario, Blaine Higgs in New Brunswick and Scott Moe in Saskatchewan have all been calling on the Trudeau government to scrap the federal carbon tax since they came to power in 2018.

But until recently, Trudeau had the tacit support of most Liberal politicians at all levels.

As Trudeau hiked his carbon tax further and further, Liberal politicians couldn't keep selling the scheme, especially to constituents who don't live in tiny condos in downtown metropolises.

Over the past year, Furey, Canada's lone Liberal first minister, has gone from supporting Trudeau's carbon tax to becoming an outright antagonist.

Last year, Furey called on the federal government to stop charging the carbon tax on home heating oil, which a large percentage of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians use to heat their homes.

Soon after, Newfoundland and Labrador Member of Parliament Ken McDonald courageously voted to repeal the federal carbon tax and nearly launched a rebellion in the Liberal caucus among Atlantic Liberal MPs. In response, Trudeau carved out a carbon tax exemption for home heating oil for three years.

But Furey wasn't satisfied.

In the lead up to the Trudeau government's 2024 carbon tax hike, which occurred on April 1, Furey signed an open letter calling on Trudeau to cancel his planned hike. Six other premiers joined him in the effort.

But Trudeau was defiant and let the 23% carbon tax increase go ahead.

That's when Furey threw down the gauntlet.

In a letter to Trudeau, Furey declared openly what the vast majority of Canadians know: the carbon tax is the wrong approach when it comes to protecting the environment.

Unlike Canadians living in downtown Toronto or Vancouver, with tiny condos and easy access to public transit, Furey notes Newfoundlanders and Labradorians still need to drive to work and heat their homes, no matter how high the carbon tax goes.

The idea behind the carbon tax is that as prices get too high, consumers change their behaviour and use less carbon intensive methods to heat their homes and get to work.

But those living in rural Canada can't hop on the subway or rely on a heat pump.

About 70% of Canadians opposed Trudeau's carbon tax hike on April 1. It's a good bet that number will keep going up every time the tax does.

Furey is right to point out that obvious reality and the prime minister would be wise to listen.



SOURCE: FLICKR, OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Higgs turned on the spending taps in 2024, instead of delivering on tax relief.

Budget 2024 was a major missed opportunity for former New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs.

Taxpayers learned on budget day that government revenue is up \$1.1 billion over a year ago. For a province with a total budget of \$12.2 billion in 2023, that's a lot of dough.

Higgs could have seized the opportunity and used this fiscal room to deliver a sorely needed tax cut for New Brunswickers. Instead, Higgs chose to increase government spending by a whopping 9%, more than double the rate of inflation.

What could Higgs have done instead?

Higgs could have cut the provincial

portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax from 10% to 8%, which would have left \$384 million in taxpayers' wallets, for an average of \$818 a household.

With 50% of Canadians saying they're \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills, and more than a million Canadians working two jobs just to stay afloat, \$818 would make a real difference for families in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John and everywhere in between.

With \$1.1 billion of new revenue, Higgs could have cut the HST by two points and still have \$700 million leftover to spend on targeted priorities, such as health care and education.

That \$700 million would have equated

to a spending increase of 5.7%.

That's right: Higgs could have cut the HST and still increased spending big time.

Ask the average New Brunswick family whether they wanted to see an HST cut and a 5.7% spending increase, or a 9% spending increase with no tax cut. Dollars to donuts, taxpayers would have lined up behind option one.

Sadly, Higgs took that option off the table.

Higgs had a strong pro-taxpayer record. He reduced the province's debt load by \$2 billion, which means interest payments are going down this year, a stark contrast with most other provinces.

He tabled a balanced budget every year since he took on the top job in 2018, something no other premier in Canada can claim.

And Higgs cut taxes in the past. His government introduced income tax cuts in 2022 and delivered one-time affordability payments for families on multiple occasions.

But this year, the government failed to think big. There was room for serious tax relief. Instead of seizing the opportunity, Higgs took a pass.

Taxpayers are tired of sending ever-increasing sums of money to Fredericton and Ottawa, only to see politicians ramp up unsustainable spending. It's time for taxpayers to keep more money in their wallets and send less money to bureaucrats in their ivory towers.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD



Devin Drover is the CTF's new Atlantic Director and General Counsel.

After a stint as the CTF's Interim Atlantic Director, Jay Goldberg is stepping away from the role to focus on Ontario taxpayer issues full-time. And that's because the CTF hired a new Atlantic Director, Devin Drover, who will also serve as General Counsel.

Devin holds combined Juris Doctor and Master of Business Administration degrees from Dalhousie University, as well as a Bachelor of Science (Economics) degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Prior to joining the CTF, he spent five years in private legal practices, representing clients in legal actions against municipal, provincial and federal governments.

Devin lives with his wife in his hometown of St. John's, NL.



Prime Minister
Justin Trudeau's salary
in 2024
\$406,200

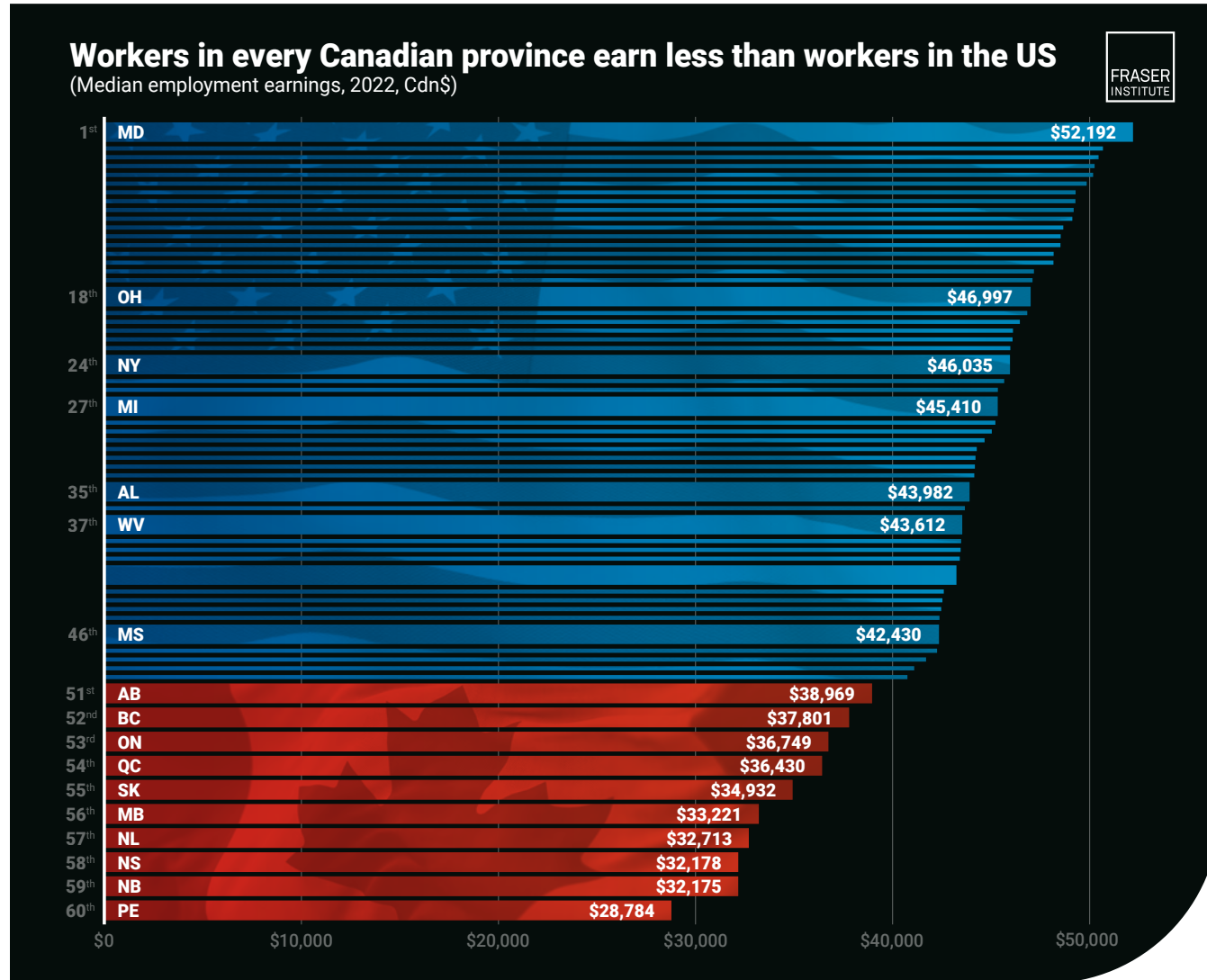
Governor General
Mary Simon's salary
in 2024
\$362,800

Environment Minister
Steven Guilbeault's
salary in 2024
\$299,900

Base salary for a
member of Parliament
in 2024
\$203,100

Average annual
compensation among
federal bureaucrats
\$125,000

Average annual salary
among Canadian
workers in 2023
\$64,550



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THE PERSON WINNING THE CARBON TAX FIGHT



Todd MacKay,
Vice President,
Communications

The end of the carbon tax is on the horizon and there's one person to thank for getting us here: you.

Of course, there's still work to do. It feels like driving to Regina on the TransCanada: the destination is visible long before arrival. But it still feels good to see the finish line. And it's worth remembering the rough road behind us.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau didn't campaign on a carbon tax. His first platform included a vague reference to carbon pricing. But he didn't mention Canadians would be paying more for virtually everything.

The lack of a mandate didn't stop politicians. Alberta imposed a carbon tax. The new Conservative government in Manitoba unveiled a surprise carbon tax. In 2018, the EcoFiscal Commission pushed polling claiming carbon tax supporters outnumbered opponents two to one.

Then former Conservative leader Erin O'Toole betrayed taxpayers and

broke his promise to fight the carbon tax by unveiling his own version in 2021. The *Globe and Mail* ran a column with the headline: "Carbon taxes are here to stay."

It was a lonely time to be in the business of fighting carbon taxes. The Saskatchewan government under Brad Wall and Scott Moe kept fighting. But other allies seemed to fade away.

Carson Binda went after the carbon tax in one of his first press conferences as our new director in British Columbia around that time. A reporter asked why he was wasting the media's time criticizing a "popular" policy like the carbon tax.

So why not give up?

Honestly, the CTF never considered that. Part of it is because of our leadership from our Board of Directors and President Scott Hennig. Part of it is because of our dedicated directors. (The O'Toole camp privately pleaded with Kris Sims not to attack the flipflop – it didn't work.) But those aren't the real reasons the CTF kept fighting the carbon tax.

It was you. All of you. Thousands of you. The end of the carbon tax is in

sight because of you.

You know those surveys you keep getting from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation? Your answers were our North Star in the fight against the carbon tax.

About 83% of you told us repealing the carbon tax was a high priority right from the start in 2016. Then came O'Toole's betrayal. Still, 83% of you strongly opposed the carbon tax. We asked if we should focus on fighting the Trudeau carbon tax, the O'Toole carbon tax, fight all carbon taxes or stop fighting. More than 77% of you told us to fight ALL carbon taxes.

In our most recent survey, more than 87% of you told us you're strongly opposed to the carbon tax. And here's the best number of all: 57% of you think the carbon tax will soon be gone.

We kept fighting the carbon tax because you made sure we did. And you did more than cheer from the sidelines. You were emailing politicians and donating to campaigns.

We're winning the fight against the carbon tax because of you.

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