

O'Toole's Carbon Tax Betrayal

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As we all know, death and taxes are sure. Many Canadians cynically assume that the breaking of promises by politicians after an election is just as sure. It ought not so to be. But Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, has astounded small-c conservatives by breaking his promise before a general election! Actually, it was a promise he made before being elected as Leader of the CPC, a promise to eliminate the federal carbon tax imposed by the Trudeau Liberals. In a bizarre bait-and-switch, Mr. O'Toole now proposes to replace the federal carbon tax with a federal "levy" on fuel purchases, one that would rise eventually to \$50 per tonne. That's \$10 higher than the current federal carbon tax.¹

Mr. O'Toole seems to be assuming that voters in the next election will appreciate his about-face on carbon. However, when seeking the support of card-carrying Conservatives for his leadership bid, he knew that his base has always rejected any carbon tax and acted accordingly (apparently that is still the mood of most members, judging by results at their recent virtual policy convention where the delegates voted down a motion to add "Climate change is real" to party policy).²

Go back less than a year to June, 2020, when Mr. O'Toole—during the heat of the leadership contest—signed the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's pledge to "repeal the Trudeau carbon tax and reject any future national carbon tax or cap-and-trade scheme."³

So what was he saying then and what is he saying now? As leadership contestant, seeking the confidence of CPC members, particularly those in the West, he said carbon taxes were:³

- "unfair on seniors and families;"
- "make the poorest pay more;"
- hurt "small and medium-sized businesses;" and
- "do nothing for the environment."

We agree with those statements made back then and with the substantial majority of small-c conservatives who have not changed their opinions, but now are angry and frustrated at the betrayal of their confidence. Last Thursday, when the CPC Leader surprised friends and foes with his newly-minted proposal, he said: "the most efficient way to reduce our emissions is to use pricing mechanisms." "Pricing mechanisms" is a euphemistic phrase employed to avoid using the hated word "tax." In fact, he denies that his proposed scheme should be considered a tax at all, since the fees would be collected at the pump by industry, accredited as "green points" in a personal account held by the consumer and redeemable for the purchase of "green products" from an approved list. He prefers to call it a "levy."⁴ The intent is the same, the impact on fuel costs is the same, the negligible benefit to the environment is the same, the increased cost of heating one's house and driving one's car is the same, the corresponding price increases on all consumer products is the same. Only the name has been changed to protect the guilty. To the average Canadian, it's still a tax.

Critics of O'Toole's new carbon tax also point out the complexity of his scheme. It involves establishing a new organization to track fuel consumption, allocate the points accumulated, apply credits to the list of "green"

reward items, etc. Whether run by government or industry, the management of such a system costs money, and the overhead will again fall on the consumer. As my dad used to say, “Skip the gimmicks; just give me the product at the lowest possible price.” Complexity in administration is never a virtue. If I want to buy a “green” product or service, I’ll buy it. I don’t need the government manipulating my travel, my purchases or my environmental outlook.⁵

The CHP has consistently opposed any form of carbon taxes. There are plenty of environmental issues we need to deal with, but CO₂, a harmless gas—beneficial for plant growth⁶—is not one of them. Fuel additives, man-made chemicals, disposal of biomedical waste, pharmaceutical pollution, plastics and raw sewage going into the ocean, genetically-modified “terminator seeds” that force poor farmers around the world to purchase seed and chemicals from multinationals, invasive species and the loss of resident species, space junk, industrial particulates . . . all these are challenges deserving of our attention. Patting ourselves on the back for reducing emissions of a harmless atmospheric gas (to the worldwide production of which Canada contributes about 1.5%) is insanity.

Mr. O’Toole has now thrown consumers and his own supporters under the bus with a broken promise; some of his own MPs first learned about the new tax plan when they heard it on the news. In January, he showed his disdain for social conservatives in his caucus by expelling MP Derek Sloan on the flimsiest of excuses; clearly a move designed to highlight his own pro-abortion credentials.⁷ In February, he demoted his brilliant Finance Critic, Pierre Poilievre.⁸ He refuses to support backbench Cathay Wagantall’s Bill C-233 on sex-selective abortion. It’s unclear how Mr. O’Toole thinks he can win an election by scattering and demoralizing his forces.⁹ As terrible as the Liberals have become, it appears that Mr. O’Toole is doing everything in his power to give Mr. Trudeau a third term. His own prospects of becoming Prime Minister have faded.

We, in the CHP, still hold to our principles; our candidates will offer voters in as many districts as possible the choice to vote for Life, Family, and Freedom. For the record, a CHP government would scrap the federal carbon tax, cut government waste, work towards balanced budgets, and end the unconstitutional restrictions on personal freedoms now destroying Canada’s economy and social fabric. We invite you to join us in the battle!¹⁰

Footnotes

¹ www.cbc.ca/news/politics/carbon-tax-conservatives-1.5988407

² spencerfernando.com/2021/03/20/day-after-otoole-says-debate-is-over-on-issue-conservative-delegates-vote-against-adding-climate-change-is-real-to-party-policy/

³ www.taxpayer.com/newsroom/o'toole-set-to-break-carbon-tax-pledge

⁴ www.ctvnews.ca/politics/not-a-tax-at-all-o-toole-on-party-s-carbon-price-loyalty-program-1.5390946

⁵ edmontonsun.com/opinion/columnists/gunter-otoole-turns-back-on-supporters-with-carbon-tax-proposal

⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDWEjSDYfxc

⁷ westernstandardonline.com/2021/01/breaking-sloan-ousted-from-tory-caucus/

⁸ thenationaltelegraph.com/national/erin-otoole-demoting-pierre-poilievre-is-another-wound-to-the-conservative-party

⁹ nationalpost.com/news/politics/erin-otooles-faces-backlash-from-surprised-and-frustrated-conservatives-over-carbon-pricing-plan

¹⁰ www.chp.ca/get-involved/

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