

Carbon tax a necessary element

Balancing economy and emissions the Great Green Hope for our Alberta



PATRICK STRATTON

Most Albertans benefit from the production and sale of energy resources, but in the process of reaping these benefits, we drastically alter our natural environment. Despite the necessity of environmental change to power our economy, it carries huge costs—costs that our generation currently ignores. We have a great opportunity to acknowledge these costs by imposing economic penalties on ourselves, and therefore I propose instituting a carbon tax in Alberta. This will act to diminish our environmental impact, stabilize our thundering economy, and promote our place in Canada.

Many people would have you believe that a carbon tax would ruin our economy—and this may well be true. However, the effects of climate change can and will ruin us as well. Envision, for example, a day when glacial water might not run so plentiful in our rivers: this would mean less water for agriculture, less water for oil extraction, less water for cooling our coal power plants and less water for recreation.

Scientists tell us in overwhelming consensus that human activities are drastically altering the planet, and that to prevent these changes we must drastically alter our economic activities. But despite being a risk-averse species, we haven't acted on this matter. Instead, we

maximize industrial profits, using the atmosphere as an unchecked dumping-ground. Instead, Alberta's industrial greenhouse gas emissions increased 29 per cent from 1990–2002, despite the fact that the province's own goals dictate that these levels are supposed to be down by 50 per cent by 2020. Our planet simply cannot absorb this sudden and rapid economic growth.

A carbon tax will not solve housing and labour shortages overnight, but in our next round of growth, it may help rein in the over-investment we've seen this time.

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With much of our economic activity dependent on CO2 emissions—both directly and indirectly—taxing these emissions is just the solution for reining in future growth. We should tax the coal plants, refineries, cement plants and oil-sands developments—all of which positively benefit from high oil prices—and have the carbon tax as a percentage of the price of oil. This way, if prices tank, the burden on business is lessened. Conversely, if oil hits \$100 per barrel, then the tax decreases the incentive to emit carbon.

Options are available for diminishing our role in global warming. For example, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board and Alberta Geological Survey are currently evaluating the huge potential of carbon sequestration, a technique used to separate carbon from the atmosphere, here in Alberta. With a carbon tax, firms have a greater incentive to invest in this technology.

This proposed tax could be a revenue-neutral imitation of Sweden's nitrogen-oxide tax, where firms are taxed according to their emissions, and where money is returned to firms in proportion to their energy use, thus diminishing changes in competitiveness. If a firm sequesters 100 per cent of its carbon dioxide, it has no emissions and therefore pays no tax, yet still receives money from the tax pool.

Furthermore, this tax would give emitters the incentive to hire Alberta's scientists and engineers, allowing new businesses to emerge, all the while giving our province clout on the federal stage in terms of defending our resource wealth. If things don't change, Alberta will still be the eco-pig of Canada, increasing regional disparities and giving easy justification for federal intervention. Instead, we can show them that we've taken the lead on the environment by pre-emptively penalizing ourselves, making us not only Canada's economic engine, but Canada's conscience in diminishing drastic environmental change as well. So let's turn down the heat and keep the rivers flowing for future generations of Albertans and Canadians.

Just say no to rock, roll



JARED MILNE

They say university is a time to experiment. For many people, this might mean becoming sexually active, trying drugs, or being open to new viewpoints other than your own. For many, it's a time of freedom, a time to try and "find yourself."

Of course, not all people entering university necessarily want to do these things—some may prefer abstinence, others may not be interested in smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol, and many will find that they still adhere to their original views and ideas, rejecting the new ones they see and hear.

The catch is when those who aren't interested in sex or drugs, whether for personal or religious reasons, are then mocked and insulted. In some circles there's a tendency to deride people who aren't interested in "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" as somehow being prudish or nerds, or as being brainwashed by their religious upbringing. It's almost as if being "progressive" means being sexually active before marriage, engaging in casual drug use or spurning religion altogether, and furthermore, that those who don't do these things are somehow backwards, conservative or even morally inferior to those who do.

This strikes me as a double standard: certainly social freedoms are

to be cherished, but doesn't the freedom to do something also involve the freedom not to do something? Surely one doesn't have to do those things that are frowned on by mainstream society in order to live their lives to the fullest.

On the one hand there's conformity to mainstream or family values, but on the other, when people make fun of those who aren't interested in following suit with new ideas and values, aren't they simply encouraging another type of conformity? I don't see, for example, how teenagers' being sexually active is at all "progressive"—if anything, the problems of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases probably wouldn't be as bad if more young people kept their hormones under control.

The backlash against "non-progressive" types is similar to the backlash that religious groups face. The actions of the likes of George Bush, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson are rightly criticized, but what about all the other religious people who help the poor and sick? Do these people deserve to be mocked and insulted simply because of their faith?

Of course, all of the above are generalizations: not everyone has this sort of contempt that I'm talking about, and there are certainly valid criticisms to be made. The point is that if people, particularly young people, don't want to experiment and prefer to hold on to some of their old values and beliefs, they shouldn't have to feel ashamed of it. If you don't want to get wasted, have sex, or get baked on a Friday night, you're entirely within your rights to refuse.

THE BURLAP SACK

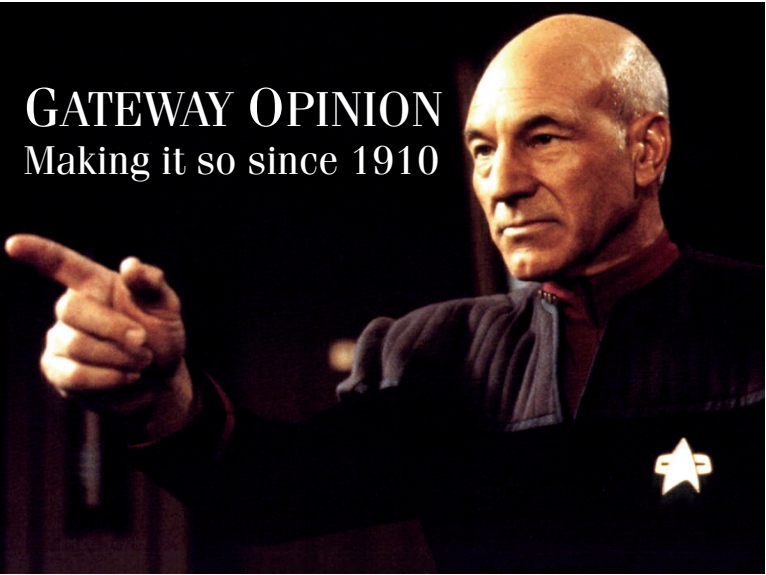
You've all experienced it before: you're drowsily gazing over the steering wheel, listening to the radio and quietly cursing yourself for registering in a morning class, when suddenly you're gripped with a primal rage. You white-knuckle the wheel; veins you didn't know existed bulge from your forehead; your teeth clench tighter than Lauren Pronger's grip on her husband's balls.

You try to focus, but all you can hear is the faint murmur of a man with a slight lisp over the violent pounding of your heartbeat in your ears. It's that fucking Spence Diamonds guy again, and just like that a rage seizure, he's knocked a significant number of days of your life.

For those of you who haven't heard them, consider yourself lucky. These ads are, without a doubt, the absolute worst thing that can happen to your ears. It's like being violated in the temporal lobe—or for the lay people out there, being skull-fucked via the ear.

At this point I'm betting some of you marketing students have started furiously scribbling a letter about how these ads work because most other people and I obviously remember them. And this is very true—these terrible advertisements are forever burned into our collective conscience. However, whenever I think of Spence's diamonds I don't think of "properly cut, well proportioned diamonds," I get a headache so bad I have to apply some Head-On directly to my forehead.

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\$750 Tuition Voucher
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3rd

Shopping Spree at Stylistics, a Digital Camera and a Coca-Cola 'Cool Pack'
[\$700 value] [Compliments of Stylistics Hair Group and Mini-Spa, HUB Photo and Coca-Cola]

4th

Eye Wear Package and Parking for 2 Months OR ETS Passes for 4 Months
[\$250-\$350 value] [Compliments of Bijan Optical, Parking Services and Edmonton Transit System]

5th

Eye Wear Package, HUB Cash and a Coca-Cola Backpack
[\$250 value] [Compliments of Bijan Optical, HUB Merchants and Coca-Cola]

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