

MYTHS, REALITIES ABOUT ONTARIO'S NEW CARBON TAX

The carbon tax has arrived. The four provinces that refused to adopt carbon pricing plans of their own - Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba and Saskatchewan - are facing higher prices on gas, natural gas, home heating oil and propane. We're paying about four cents per litre more at the pumps, along with five cents per litre more for home heating oil, just under four cents per cubic metre for natural gas and just over three cents a litre for propane.

Let's talk myths and realities.

MYTH: We're only paying this extra money because of Justin Trudeau. **REALITY:** Only true in part. We're being hit with the carbon tax because our provincial government didn't have its own plan to put a price on carbon. We had a perfectly good and working cap-and-trade system that would have allowed us to avoid the tax, but Doug Ford scrapped it, along with the millions in revenue it had generated that would have gone to schools, roads and community centres.

MYTH: The carbon tax will lead to a recession. **REALITY:** That's what Doug Ford said, but numerous economic experts have confirmed he's making that up. At worst, respected economists say, it might cause economic growth to slow modestly. And it might not even do that. British Columbia has had a carbon tax for more than 10 years and it has and continues to have one of the strongest economies in Canada.

MYTH: You don't need a carbon tax to fight climate change. **REALITY:** Maybe not, but you need something. Ford and Andrew Scheer are fond of saying we don't need the tax, but neither will say what we do need. Cap-and-trade is a valid option. But by saying they will kill the tax, what Ford and Scheer are really saying is they'll do nothing. And doing nothing about the biggest threat facing the planet and future generations cannot be an option.

MYTH: The carbon tax is an invention of Liberals, progressives and "the left." **REALITY:** Canadian conservative icon Preston Manning publicly supports a carbon tax. Former Alberta treasurer Jim Dinning supports the idea. Mark Cameron, former policy director for Stephen Harper, has said the Trudeau carbon tax plan is a "smart conservative policy." In America, four former heads of the U.S. reserve - Janet Yellen, Ben Bernanke, Alan Greenspan and Paul Volcker argue for a carbon tax in their country.

MYTH: The tax will cost me hundreds every year. **REALITY:** The average Ontario household will spend about \$244 annually because of the tax. The same household will receive \$300 in federal tax rebates. Most Ontarians will end up with more money in the end.

Almost nobody likes new taxes.

But almost everyone agrees on the need to do something to mitigate climate change.

Right now, this is the best idea on the table, certainly better than other political leaders are putting forward.

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AN AWFUL MESS. OR IS IT?

TIPS TO IMPROVE
YOUR MENTAL
HEALTH, WRITES
MELANIE MCGREGOR



MELANIE
MCGREGOR
Column

"What a disaster!" "This is a nightmare!" "It's a total crisis!"

When things go wrong, how often do we think these things to ourselves? When we feel overwhelmed and stressed and our coping strategies are maxed out, it's easy to blow things out of proportion and feel like they are worse than they really are. It was a psychotherapist named Albert Ellis who coined a telling term for this trend: "awfulizing".

Think of this example: you are planning for an important meeting at work tomorrow when your young child comes down with a stomach bug. Your brain can quickly ramp up with

something like, "Oh, no! Now I'll need to be home tomorrow! I'm going to miss my meeting, my colleagues are going to be mad, and everything will be a mess. This is the end of the world! Why does this always happen to me?!"

Your challenge has escalated into something awful and unmanageable, making you feel extra anxious, panicked, stressed, and scattered. Awfulizing is very common and can definitely take a toll on overall mental health.

So, what can you do to cope with and reduce awfulizing?

Pay attention to the words you say to yourself. Words like "nightmare", "crisis", and "disaster" can send your stress level through the roof. Take a step back and a deep breath and use more reasonable words.

Take time to manage your feelings. Challenges can catch you off guard, and feeling edgy, nervous, and flustered is typical. Cope with and contain these feelings with some deep breaths, positive self-

talk (like "I can handle this"), and accurate labels.

Focus on solutions. A concrete, reasonable plan can counter the awfulizing by showing that the challenge is manageable in at least some way.

Communicate what you need. Don't assume that others will awfulize the way that you might. They may be happy to reschedule the meeting or have you join by phone. And if they are not? Do what you can to activate your plan and keep up with your positive coping strategies to manage your feelings.

What's the opposite of "awfulizing"? Maybe we could call it "reasonablizing" or "manageablizing" - either way, keep it in mind to help cope with challenges.

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