

Watt's Happening? #151

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Carbon Pricing 101

Ask pretty well anybody and they'd say that sure, they'd like to live in a house that is warmer in the winter, cooler in the summer and costs less to operate. Ask anybody and they'd rather drink clean water than polluted water, breath clean air rather than polluted air and eat clean wholesome food. Ask anybody and they'd rather have a stable, predictable climate than one spiraling into uncertainly and calamity.

These are things we all want, but somehow, every year, pollution continues to increase and all the things we don't want get worse, while the things we do want seem farther and farther away. Why?

POLLUTION IS FREE

As long as it is free to pollute, none of the things that we all need and want will ever come to pass. As long as it costs nothing to just dump our waste into the air and water and on to the land, then we'll all just keep dumping.

Sure, a bunch of us tree-huggers will do what we can, but if the whole system is indifferent to pollution, it's a losing, discouraging game we're playing with no good end.

That's what the new federal "carbon tax" is all about: putting a price on pollution. By collecting money from polluters and then giving it back to help them reduce their pollution, we can improve things, finally.

It also makes money available for grants and incentives: those new windows and a heat pump that will make my home more comfortable and less expensive to run become more affordable; that powerful new electric pickup



The new federal carbon tax is not "a tax on everything." It's a tax on pollution. By putting a price on pollution, the critical transition to clean energy will speed up while creating clean energy jobs for millions.

Bear Mountain Wind Park provides zero-carbon electricity to 35,000 homes in the South Peace Region of British Columbia. We know what to do and we know exactly how to do it. Let's get busy!

truck that will cost much less to run and maintain suddenly becomes affordable; those solar panels I can put on my roof to wipe out my electrical bills for the rest of my life are now within reach.

JUST A BIG TAX GRAB?

Is the new federal price on carbon just a big tax grab to fill government coffers with our hard-earned cash? Apparently not. One hundred percent of the money is to be returned as cash rebates and incentives, 90% back to households and the rest to small business and public facilities like schools.

IS INDUSTRY EXEMPT?

No, industry has a separate carbon pricing program. That's because industry has to remain competitive in the global market place, and also because industry does not make most of the pollution.

You and I make some five sixths of the pollution in Canada, driving around and heating our homes. Industry has also become more efficient than you and I have, simply because energy efficiency makes for higher profits and better competitiveness.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE?

Sure. Take your cash carbon rebate and buy more junk food and diesel if you want, and you have complete freedom to ignore the incentives and carry on just like you always have.

But over time, some things, like fuel and heat, will begin to cost you more and more as the cost of carbon pollution rises over time.

Sorry, but that's what happens when we put a price on pollution – polluters pay more, non-polluters pay less.

WILL IT DESTROY OUR ECONOMY?

No it will not. BC has had a carbon tax for some time now, and the economy has continued to grow while carbon pollution has decreased. China is implementing its own "cap and trade" carbon pricing system next year, and much of the world has already adopted carbon pricing of one form or another.

Not following suite will actually make us LESS competitive and our carbon-heavy products LESS VALUABLE in the global marketplace.

WHY BOTHER?

Canada is just one small country in a vast global economy, so why bother? Well, actually Canada is among the top ten worst polluters on the planet, and what we do here really does make a difference.

Not to mention that we'd be missing out on the biggest wealth and job creation opportunity in human history! It's a fact: while the demand for fossil fuels is decreasing around the world, the demand for clean energy and efficiency is increasing exponentially.

The clean energy economy is expected to reach a global value of \$26 trillion by 2030 and will create new clean energy jobs for many, many millions of hard-working folks like you and me, and a cleaner, healthier environment for us, our children, and their children.

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