

OPINION & EDITORIALS



The CENTRAL NEWSPAPER

Founder & Publisher: Joe Ingino

136 Simcoe St. N., Unit 4. Oshawa ON L1G 4S7

Tel: 905-432-2657

Email: newspaper@ocentral.com

Well Written, Well Read - Time Tested And Proven - #1 Newspaper Across Durham Region - Supporting Local Businesses

Canada is sleepwalking into soft despotism

by Gerry Bowler

Democracy doesn't disappear. Citizens just stop showing up and government is left to the elites

Winston Churchill once remarked that "democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." Really? We might begin by asking the question, "If democracy is so great, why is its failure rate so high?"

The Athenians who invented democracy discovered that it had a very short shelf-life, perishing in less than 200 years. The democratic elements of the Roman Republic were erased by the senatorial class. The city-states of the Italian Renaissance fell into the hands of powerful oligarchs and bankers like the Medici. The French Revolution of 1789 lapsed into authoritarianism, followed by the rule of a general who crowned himself an emperor.

The First World War was to make the world "safe for democracy," and sure enough, 1919 saw the appearance of nine new republics. By 1939, only Finland remained a democracy. In the post-war period we can see the same mass failure of democratic states in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Arab world. History suggests that democracies rarely collapse all at once; they more often decay slowly as citizens cease to defend them.

Democracy depends on citizens and participation. Canada's democracy weakens when citizens disengage and democratic accountability declines

Canada still looks like a democracy, but it's not functioning like one. And most people don't seem to notice. Given the fact that few democracies have ever survived into old age, how much hope should we place in the expectation that the Canadian version will long endure? I think the facts will show that, in Canada, the citizenry prefers the low-calorie version, all the appearance of a real democracy but with none of the hard work it takes to sustain the reality. Like other democracies before it, a system that depends on active citizens weakens when those citizens stop participating.

Ask yourself what causes the greatest anguish to our souls: the Canadian men's hockey team losing to the Americans or the suspension of our civil liberties by two prime ministers with the same last name? What makes us more inclined to go "elbows up," Trump mocking us or our public universities ensuring that dissident ideas are suppressed? We are largely indifferent to the fact that our human rights tribunals don't protect the freedom of speech exercised by teachers, nurses or school trustees but are often the ones punishing them for wrongthink. When citizens accept such limits without protest, democratic accountability weakens.

We long ago ceased expecting that cabinet ministers would resign when proven to be failures. When the fisheries department kills off all the cod, when finance ministers make us more indebted and more unemployed, we shrug. Why get upset?

Canadians simply aren't enthusiastic supporters of the democratic process. Only about one per cent of Canadians join political parties, the lowest rate among Western democracies. Voter turnout places us roughly in the middle among NATO countries. Our civic culture accepts that a small number of extremists will always dominate debate and advance legislation because (a) most of us can't be bothered to make a fuss and (b) they are the only ones going to be allowed on CBC morning programs anyway.

Canadians long ago abandoned expecting a vigorous exchange of views in newspapers, allowing the monopoly of one-paper towns and forcing the nation's media class to feed from the government trough.

Right now, our federal politicians are taking time from their busy work in reducing food prices, making housing affordable and solving the immigration crisis to discuss three bills (Bill C-9, Bill C-63 and Bill C-254) designed to curb free expression.

There is little likelihood that Canadian democracy will be smothered by a revolutionary coup or fall prey to a smooth-talking dictator. Instead, we have lapsed into what Alexis de Tocqueville called a "soft despotism, trading active citizenship for a paternalistic administration."

If you don't like that state of affairs, what are you going to do about it?

Ottawa cut the carbon tax but your grocery bill didn't get the memo

by Sylvain Charlebois

Let's talk about the carbon tax.

Last year, Prime Minister Mark Carney reduced the consumer portion of the carbon tax to zero. That left many Canadians with the impression that carbon pricing had disappeared. It has not. The industrial carbon price remains in place. And an increase from \$95 per tonne to \$110 per tonne scheduled for April 1 will raise the cost of transporting food across Canada's supply chain.

On top of that, global energy markets are once again facing geopolitical uncertainty. With tensions in the Middle East and disruptions to oil supplies, higher fuel costs appear increasingly likely unless the current conflict de-escalates quickly.

Industrial carbon pricing raises food costs in Canada by increasing fuel and transport costs that move through the food supply chain to consumers

Canadians are paying the price of industrial carbon pricing every time they visit the grocery store. At the start of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Canada's carbon price stood at \$40 per tonne. For a truck hauling food between Toronto and Montreal once a week, the additional carbon-tax burden amounted to roughly \$2,000 per year, costs that pass through the supply chain to consumers. On April 1, the carbon price will more than double what it was when the Ukraine war began. For that same weekly Toronto to Montreal route, the additional carbon-tax cost alone rises to roughly \$6,000 per year compared with 2018.

Canada likely sees 800 to 1,200 long-haul food truck trips each day, many covering distances of roughly 1,000 kilometres. At a carbon price of \$110 per tonne, the diesel tax component alone represents approximately \$34 million to \$52 million per year in additional costs across those shipments, built into the price of food by the time it reaches store shelves.

This estimate excludes additional costs such as clean fuel regulations, refrigeration units, empty backhauls, secondary distribution routes and warehousing operations. Food distribution depends heavily on transportation and refrigeration, both of which are energy-intensive, so these additional costs compound quickly. In a country as large as Canada, regions located far from major population centres, such as the Prairies or Atlantic Canada, face higher transportation costs. Distance already makes food logistics expensive, and added policy costs compound the challenge. By the time food reaches a distribution centre, its price already reflects higher costs at earlier stages, from farming to processing to transportation.

Some industry observers have described carbon pricing in food logistics as a "silent killer" of competitiveness, and the description fits. Canada's vast geography and relatively small population already make it a challenging market for food distribution. Adding further cost pressures does little to attract investment in grocery retail and food distribution infrastructure.

If Ottawa genuinely wants to help the food supply chain cope with rising energy costs, it should at least consider pausing the scheduled April 1 increase or examining whether parts of the food system should receive temporary relief. When it comes to food, the stakes are too high to ignore the consequences, which are already visible in higher food costs across the country.

Research from the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University has repeatedly shown that carbon pricing can disproportionately affect lower-income households through higher food and energy costs. Yet when the carbon tax was first implemented in 2018, Ottawa conducted little analysis of how the policy might influence food affordability.

Eight years later, Canadians are paying the price in real time.

Letters To The Editor:

WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND? Send letters to newspaper@ocentral.com

Dear Editor:

I was at the airport and asked a student pilot to reflect on her first flight. Below is a transcript of her experience.

FIRST FLIGHT FEELINGS

The first time I flew an airplane I wasn't a passenger – I was a student pilot. Nothing could prepare me for how that would feel. As the engine came to life, the vibrations travelled straight through the seat and into my chest. I remember gripping the controls, suddenly aware that this airplane, this tarmac and the sky were no longer something I was observing – they were my responsibilities. The taxi to the active runway felt surreal, like a quiet inhale before a leap.

Then came takeoff. The plane accelerated, the nose lifted, and in a matter of seconds, the ground fell away beneath me and my instructor. Houses shrank, roads turned into mere lines, and everything familiar became very small. I wasn't just seeing the world differently – I was feeling it differently. There was a little fear, yes but it was paired with an overwhelming sense of both calm and awe. For the first time, I truly understood how much trust flying requires: trust in good training, trust in the airplane and trust in yourself.

As we levelled off the controls felt lighter, almost alive in my hands. Every small moment mattered. I was learning to listen to everything. When we touched back down, I realized something had really changed. The first flight wasn't just a lesson – it was a moment of discovery. I had crossed an invisible

line between dreaming about flying and my dream of becoming a pilot;

Wayne Ellis, C.O.P.A.

Dear Editor:

"Ontario's nearly 100,000 REALTORS® know the true value that homeownership brings. That's why the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) has made it our mission to keep the dream of homeownership alive by advocating for the Government of Ontario to focus on reducing barriers to housing affordability, bringing more supply to market, and supporting growth in our communities.

Today's 2026 Ontario Budget reiterates the Province's commitment to doing just that. OREA commends the Ford Government for their efforts to protect Ontario during these uncertain economic times by championing pro-housing policies, keeping workers on the job, and helping Ontarians keep more money in their pockets.

Their proposal to expand the HST exemption to all buyers of new homes, up to certain amounts, is a prime example of their ongoing commitment to give Ontarians financial relief. This proposal, pledged in partnership with the federal government, will help move the needle for those on the sidelines and help more Ontario families afford a home.

Lowering housing costs by providing incentives and new, innovative pathways to homeownership is a fantastic way to bring housing affordability within reach. To keep up that momentum, the Government of Ontario needs to prioritize policies that will have the most impact, including addressing the runaway costs of development charges (DCs) – which is why we are pleased to see today's budget commit to working with the federal government to find solutions to reduce DCs.

OREA stands ready to work with the government on solutions to fix the housing affordability crisis in Ontario and we know there's a lot to be done. We thank Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Finance Peter Bethlenfalvy for putting this budget forward and standing up for Ontarians, ensuring more young people and their families can make their homeownership dreams come true."

- Kim Fairley, 2026 OREA President

Dear Editor:

Wanting to make other parents aware of this safety hazard...

If you are close to and take your children to Nipigon Park in Oshawa (540 Nipigon St, Oshawa, ON L1J 4P8, Canada) it's between Gibbons and Park Road N, please be aware that the platform that children stand on to use the large twirly slide should not be used. I have spoken to the city and upon their phone call back to me they have said that they have thought about taking the park down but have not done so yet when it clearly needs to be removed and replaced. These are some pictures of their recent fix to this platform where they bolted on a sign and a sheet of metal to reinforce the hole in the platform but they reinforced these pieces of metal to the rotting platform instead of the thicker more stable metal which makes it a possible hazard/danger to heavier children or bigger children who may like to jump on this said platform. I requested for them to barricade this platform off and post a sign to not use this platform section but he said he is not sure when they will get to it. So I want to bring more attention to this because parents should know about it... Other pictures that follow the twirly slide pictures are of other reinforcements that the city did to the other 2 slides, the bridge and the other platforms. All of which have been reinforced by thin brackets that are already cracking and were caulked.

Lisa McNally, Oshawa

Dear Editor:

My hat to you and your journalist. After reading last week column on Derek Giberson. I had to do something. I could not believe what you had reported. How could a downtown councillor not return phone calls.

So, I did the very unusual for me. I decided to put in a call to Mr. Giberson and see first hand what would happen.

Well, much to my surprise. No phone call. I called again and nothing. I then realized that your column was right on the money. We need to get rid of these deadbeat council members that do not have the decency to return taxpayers phone calls. Disgusting.

Nancy Doris, Oshawa

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



newspaper@ocentral.com

or

mail to 136 Simcoe St. North Suite 4 Oshawa