

OPINION
& EDITORIALS

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The CENTRAL NEWSPAPER

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The gaps between Liberal rhetoric and reality...

Last week, our Prime Minister told the world that “we are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition.” He told heads of major companies and business leaders that “Canada has what the world wants. “We are an energy superpower” and he called out “the gaps between rhetoric and reality.” Well, today that gap has widened significantly. Instead of working with the opposition parties to develop greater strategic autonomy in our energy sector, the federal Liberals have doubled down by voting against introducing a ‘Canadian Sovereignty Act’ proposed by the opposition Conservative party that would basically unlock our potential, make our country more affordable and ensure that we can be strong and self-reliant. During a time of existential crisis, it’s business as usual for the Liberals, and it shows. Not a single law that blocks the development of national projects has been repealed, and the federal government has failed to get a single shovel in the ground or even grant approval to a new project.

While Mark Carney declares that “nostalgia is not a strategy” his government remains dewy-eyed when thinking about the past ten years, when projects were blocked, investment fled, and our workers suffered. Canadians are facing an affordability crisis like never before, with high housing costs and the worst food inflation in the entire G7. Clear, detailed solutions are needed right now if we are to get on with the business of solving the many problems we face, but Liberals have voted against worthwhile proposals brought forward by the opposition parties. While our nation is desperate for real change that will grow our exports, boost investment and restore an affordable life with stronger take-home pay, the Liberals have failed to meet the challenge, every time. The path we are on is unsustainable, and they know it.

Canada's hidden food taxes explained...

For months in the House of Commons, the federal government has been denying the reality that it is hidden taxes on food that are driving up the costs for Canadians at the grocery store. “These are imaginary taxes in the brain of the Leader of the Opposition that no one else seems to manage,” Steven MacKinnon, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, said. “There is no tax on food. There will never be a tax on food.” Seriously? Okay, then let’s break down the various taxes to see their actual impact.

The first tax applies to Clean Fuel Regulations. Since July 2023, the Liberals have required that gasoline and diesel used in Canada must meet carbon-intensity reduction requirements. This increases costs because companies are required to either blend more expensive lower-carbon fuels or buy compliance credits, the cost of which is undoubtedly passed on to consumers. That is also what makes the tax hidden, because when consumers look at their receipts, they don’t see the cost of the tax. Instead, it’s baked in with higher prices. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) it adds 7 cents per litre this year, and will rise to 17 cents per litre in 2030. When gasoline and diesel cost more, businesses face higher operating costs at every stage of production and delivery. This includes running farm equipment, shipping food to producers and transporting goods to warehouses and stores. By 2030, the PBO estimated the annual household cost would average \$573 a year.

Then there’s the Industrial Carbon Tax. While Prime Minister Mark Carney set the consumer carbon tax price to \$0, the Liberals decided to keep the industrial carbon tax, which continues to increase each year until reaching \$170 per tonne in 2030. They claim the tax only applies to large companies, but just like the Clean Fuel Regulations, the price is baked into everything Canadians buy. When the government taxes the factories, refineries, power plants and farms that make and move the things we rely on, those costs don’t simply disappear. They get passed on in higher prices for things like gas, electricity, groceries, and housing. Every step it takes to grow food, process it, refrigerate it, package it, and ship it uses energy that’s taxed. As Sylvain Charlebois, Professor of Dalhousie University’s Agri-Food Analytics Lab, noted, the industrial carbon tax “continues to erode competitiveness in the agri-food sector. “Many Canadians are unaware that processors and growers shoulder heavy costs, particularly in comparison to their U.S. counterparts.” This brings us to the effects of inflation, which is the worst form of silent taxation caused by government spending that increases food prices. Under Mark Carney, the deficit in his recent budget is double the previous Fall Economic Statement. Increasing government spending decreases investment as government bonds crowd out other options for investors. As the amount of money in the economy increases, so too does the cost of goods. Combined, this means that we get less innovation and productivity, meaning weaker paycheques for workers trying to pay for a higher cost of living. For food, this adds up to almost \$1,000 more per year at the grocery store to feed a family of four, according to the 2026 Food Price Report. That’s on top of the increase we already saw last year, with a 6.2 per cent increase in food prices from December 2024 to 2025. Among the biggest year-over-year price increases, roasted or ground coffee surged 41.2 per cent, coffee and tea spiked 26.5 per cent, and fresh or frozen beef sharply rose 16.8 per cent.

Lastly, there is the Food Packaging Tax. For restaurants, fast food and take-out establishments, the increasing cost of food is compounded with the costs of the Single-use Plastics Prohibition. It applies to cutlery, containers, boxes, cups, plates, bowls and straws used in the food service industry. This tax on food packaging is projected to cost \$1.3 billion from implementation. The food packaging tax comes after 7,000 restaurants were already forced to shut down in 2025 during a time when restaurant bills increased by 8.5 per cent year-over-year.

All of these policies add costs to the food Canadians buy, so let’s call costs imposed by the government what they are: a tax. This is clearly not a global problem, or we would see other countries facing these same issues. Instead, food inflation in Canada is double the U.S. and the highest in the G7, double what it was when Mark Carney became Prime Minister. While Liberals deny their policies make life more expensive, Canadians continue to struggle with rising costs at the grocery store. It’s time to make life more affordable by getting rid of the fuel standard and industrial carbon tax, ending inflationary spending and scrapping the food packaging tax.

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Letters To The Editor:

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

Dear Editor:

Yesterday, under the direction of Administrator and Acting CEO Jean Lépine, the Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO) announced eight key initiatives designed to create significant and meaningful changes for the organization. The Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) and our nearly 100,000 REALTOR® Members commend Mr. Lépine for his decisive actions and we support the new action plan put forward by RECO, which will go a long way towards restoring trust in the regulator and helping them get back to the basics.

OREA and Ontario REALTORS® are particularly encouraged to see the efforts and strategies to improve engagement with stakeholders, aiming to reconnect RECO with consumers and the real estate sector on important topics such as trust account oversight and education, issues that OREA has called on decision-makers to address and reform.

The regulatory modernization plan put forward by RECO in this list of initiatives is another great opportunity to drive even further real changes in the real estate industry, particularly with the next phase of regulations in the Trust in Real Estate Services Act (TRESA). By creating a new, more consumer-focused regulatory framework, we can ensure that Ontario REALTORS® are North American leaders in consumer protection, professionalism, and education.

But there is more work to be done. In order to build back businesses and livelihoods, OREA is calling on RECO and the Government of Ontario to fully compensate real estate professionals who were adversely impacted by the iPro Realty matter.

OREA remains committed to advocating for reforms that strengthen transparency, accountability, and public confidence in Ontario real estate.” - **Cathy Polan, OREA President**

Dear Editor:

Scugog Council recently deferred decisions to designate the Fairgrounds park a heritage site for its historic value, to fulfill a councillor’s request to plant trees on the site, and to renew the 10-year lease to the Port Perry Agricultural Society (PPAS). Instead, Council proceeded to hold a closed meeting. When news broke about the release of an RFP, without public input, to hire a consultant for a visioning exercise for possible future uses of the Fairgrounds park, residents were rightly concerned that Council may try to sell the Fairgrounds or part of it, and two petitions to Keep the Fairgrounds Public were launched. Soon after, the Mayor spoke to Durham Radio News. When asked about the petitions, the Mayor said, “...they’re just saying ‘save the Fairgrounds,’... they’re not giving us any ideas of what they envision for the Fairgrounds.” In fact, younger Fair Board members were instrumental in the conceptual Agri Park design unique to Port Perry, which was professionally presented and distributed to Council and the community. Council offered no public recognition of their efforts, and their vision for the Fairgrounds was dismissed. It should be noted, the recent Mayor’s gala theme was about “Empowering the Next Generation: Dream Big, Start Young, Lead Boldly.” Unfortunately, these soundbites do not align with the Mayor’s reality. The Mayor claimed the Fairgrounds is only used three days a year and is “underutilized.” A recent letter published in this newspaper disputed the Mayor’s claim, and listed other events that occur throughout the year, as well as community stakeholders who use their Fairgrounds park everyday. There is no official benchmark to measure parkland utilization that I have found. The provincial government promotes large parks and open green space, easily accessible within the urban setting, to support the health and wellbeing of the community, especially in the Golden Horseshoe where population growth is expected. Reports also suggest that large open spaces in the urban setting help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Why did the Mayor choose to speak to radio media about the Fairgrounds park instead of engaging with her constituents through an in house open public meeting? Was it to demonstrate her authority over her constituents? Was it to prime the Durham-wide audience that the fairgrounds or part of it could be sold? The Mayor’s less-than-candid statements through radio and social media do not fit well with her claim that other parties are circulating misinformation on social media.

At the special council meeting held last September, delegates who presented before council, and constituents’ letters included in the meeting agenda, were all in favour of keeping the Fairgrounds park in public hands. The opportunity was open to all residents’ to express their opinions. Later, the Mayor invited the CAO to speak to his report, “The Fairground Visioning Exercise RFP - Award and Budget Approval” and he stated clearly, “...the property [Fairgrounds park] is not for sale.” Neither the Mayor nor any Council member challenged the CAO’s statement, which is on the public record.

In a recent email exchange, the Mayor suggested the Fairgrounds could be sold or developed and a long term care home could be put on it, depending on what they hear from the community. The Mayor was clearly at odds with the CAO’s report, yet he subsequently claimed, “the Mayor’s reply was clearly a hypothetical possibility.” An extraordinary response concerning a highly contentious issue. Why muddy the waters? Hypothetical statements create confusion and division. The Mayor has spoken openly about the need for more housing even though several local housing projects remain pending. The desolate Kings Landing site, approved for mixed use housing and retail development, and land specifically zoned for a long term care home on Simcoe Street, have sat stalled and empty for many years. The Mayor endorsed these projects when she was a ward councillor. Surprisingly, when asked, the Mayor claimed not to know the status of either of these developments. Surely, it would be prudent to have staff proactively engage with the owners of these lands to move these projects forward, rather than upset the community with a threat to sell off public parkland for more housing. Why does the mayor lean towards housing on the Fairgrounds park? Does the Housing committee have her ear? Is a favour owed? Is it for short term monetary gain, or other reasons? A Blackstock resident recently wrote about their desire for more housing to grow their community, as well.

The Mayor and the majority of her Council quashed all ideas from the community to enhance the Fairgrounds park, shut the public out from discussions about the RFP, dismissed the petitions and ignored overwhelming public objection to hiring a costly outside consultant. The underhanded way in which Council forced their position without public engagement, under the guise of ‘capturing all voices,’ was not an act of bold leadership but of autocratic control, in Machiavellian style. The suggestion from staff that the township lacks the resources and expertise to do a visioning exercise sounded like a convenient excuse. Interestingly, staff were very much engaged with the recent Palmer Park revitalization project. What changed in the meantime? Community stakeholders familiar with the Fairgrounds have the expertise, and have already shown what can be done to improve the Fairgrounds park without the need for outside consultants.

To be clear, the Fairgrounds park belongs to the people of the Township of Scugog. Neither the township administrators nor the council of the day have exclusive ownership of the Fairgrounds. Before the end of February, when a decision must be made whether or not to continue with the consultant-led visioning exercise, I challenge the Mayor to hold an in house open public meeting. The Mayor must acknowledge the Fairgrounds as a public park, clear the contradiction between herself and the CAO, get back on track with his report and make an attempt to repair the distrust between council and the community. **Sincerely, Sharon Dodgson-Smith**

