

Carbon Tax

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Reading - Fiction

In December 2019, conservative Canadian Parliament member John Barlow recited a rewritten version of “Twas The Night Before Christmas”. His version sought to show the problems with Liberal policy plans, including the carbon tax, and it heralded a conservative victory in the upcoming federal election. Barlow characterized the carbon tax as malicious in a few important ways. Firstly, he described families and industries as “[crying] out in fear [of the carbon tax]” (Barlow, 2019). As members of government should be servants of the people, characterizing this plan as bringing fear to the citizens of Canada is very effective. Secondly, by describing the carbon tax as “looming” (Barlow, 2019), he not only characterizes the tax as evil, but also malicious. By looming, it insinuates that the tax intends to tax the victim, not just that it is evil by accident. This poem is very effective at characterizing Liberals and their policies as evil and incompetent and, while this can be seen through the work itself, its effectiveness is demonstrated in the results of the 2019 federal election. While it's illogical to say that the huge liberal loss in that election was completely because of this poem, we can say that conservative politicians and their speeches like this one ultimately were effective because they did end up winning the election.

Reading - Nonfiction

The Carbon Tax Center's article "What's a carbon tax?" wears its purpose on its sleeve. The Carbon Tax Center is focused entirely around promoting carbon tax legislation and thus celebrates carbon taxes and their merits in this article. They describe a carbon tax as "a fee imposed on the burning of carbon-based fuels" and "the core policy for reducing and eventually eliminating the use of fossil fuels... destroying our climate". It is explained by making it the economic incentive to transition towards clean energy. Furthermore, it is easy to measure and document due to the widely known precise carbon levels in various fuels. Carbon taxes are also based on when fuels enter the US, rather than when they are burned to avoid miscalculations during the manufacturing process. All in all, the CTC's article presents the carbon tax in a very positive light as to promote legislation around it and does this successfully through sound economic and scientific arguments.

In Forbes' article "The Case Against Carbon Tax", Marie Sapirie interviews David Kreutzer, an economist at the Institute for Energy Research about his negative perspective on carbon taxes. Kreutzer cites carbon taxes, in concept, coming from the economic theories of Pigou. He stated that any market imperfection could be offset by a corresponding tax. In this case, an unsustainable demand of carbon would be offset with a tax on carbon, bringing the market to perfection. However, Kreutzer believes that these don't offset the imperfections; they only avoid the problem. Kreutzer goes on to say that any legislation that ends up increasing energy prices has a disproportionate negative impact on the impoverished of the US. All in all, Kreutzer takes a position against carbon taxes because of its economic impacts.

Entertainment

I watched two videos. The first was “How Carbon Pricing Can Save the World” through TEDx Talks and the second was “How We Fix the Climate” by Hank Green of vlogbrothers. The TED Talk was interesting because, while I had already seen an economist’s perspective, this was the first time I saw an economist with a positive view on carbon taxes. A part I thought was interesting was when he analyzed common arguments against carbon pricing and expanded on why he thought they were wrong. This video specifically goes into detail about the revenue raised from a carbon tax. Eyckmans argued that it could be used to offset the negative impacts the tax would have on the consumer, specifically on the impoverished. When proposed with the idea that businesses wouldn’t actually pay the price of carbon, but instead would raise their prices, Eyckmans said that that was the point. He believes that it would push the consumer to think about whether their flight is worth the cost of hurting the climate. Ultimately, Eyckman convinced the listeners at that talk of the merits of carbon pricing and his confidence in this concept is clear to see.

Hank Green’s video was ultimately on a much larger scale. While carbon taxes were a part of it, the video was ultimately about legislation proposed to fight climate change. It serves an interesting role in this research because it goes to show the merits of various other proposed tactics against climate change. One of the most interesting was the idea of carbon compensation. Legislation has been proposed to, instead of taxing companies who hurt the environment, pay companies who show that they are helping the environment by keeping carbon emissions low. The disadvantage of this in opposition to a carbon tax is that it costs the government which will eventually cost the citizens. He also went into detail about the Green New Deal and other plans

that attempt to save the environment. Ultimately, I found this video helpful by giving a fresh perspective on much of what I had already heard through juxtaposition.

References

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