



**SENIORS
for
CLIMATE
ACTION!
NOW**

ONTARIO ELECTION 2022

CLIMATE CRIME #11

Ford's gas pump stickers fall off, his attack on Ottawa falls short

Carbon pricing means charging a minimum for fossil fuels like gasoline, diesel, and coal – together with the goods made from them. The goal? The prices will come closer to the real environmental costs of fossil fuel use.

Since the 2018 election of the Ford government, Ontario people have felt confused about its plans for the provincial pricing of carbon. The Ford government had declared that it would be “tough” on climate change.

So, what happened?

Shortly after their election victory in 2018, the Tories pulled the province out of the cap-and-trade alliance with Quebec and California; their “non-plan” resulted in Ontario being subject to the federal backstop carbon-pollution pricing system, known to its opponents as a carbon “tax.” The original cap-and-trade plan had brought in revenue of \$1.9 billion annually to the province, the money going to help with environmental initiatives. The federal carbon pricing system puts the rebates from the back to people. **Result:** Large amounts of capital no longer flowing into provincial coffers, the 2022 estimate being \$3.4 billion.

Ford's effort to push back against public criticism was a gimmicky publicity campaign against Ottawa's “tax.” The Ford government spent some \$30 million to print stickers opposing the program, requiring gas station operators to put them on their pumps. It also publicized the scheme with roadside billboards.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association took the government to court, winning a judgement that deemed the stickers a partisan argument not meant to convey important information about gas prices and carbon reduction. **Result:** A costly legal judgment as well as embarrassment for the government when the stickers fell off the pumps.

Their next move was to go to court to the Ontario Court of Appeal, maintaining that the federal carbon-tax law is unconstitutional because it would be too costly for Ontarians. When the Ford government lost, they appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. The SCC determined that climate change is a threat to humanity, and carbon pricing is effective in





**SENIORS
for
CLIMATE
ACTION!
NOW**

addressing it. Therefore, the federal law is constitutional and applicable in Ontario. **Result:** A waste of money and time for a costly and unnecessary legal challenge.

Counter claim:

Many in Ontario would have liked less posturing and more action directed at a carbon plan during the months that the Ford government spent in court. An opposing politician was heard to say: “Will the premier stop wasting our hard-earned tax dollars sabotaging climate solutions and actually start investing in urgent climate action?”

What are “climate first” alternatives?

- !** Re-introduce government spending that will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- !** Develop a carbon-reduction incentive program with realistic goals and methods of monitoring.
- !** Acknowledge the emergency nature of an Ontario carbon plan, with the first critical time frame for carbon reduction being set for 2030.
- !** Invest the revenue from carbon pricing in green energy and low-carbon projects across the province, particularly in indigenous communities.

Sources:

Three Provinces appeal to Supreme Court: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-the-court-deals-a-blow-to-the-already-weakening-political-opposition/>

The Energy Mix: <https://www.theenergymix.com/2019/07/02/ontario-court-of-appeal-upholds-federal-carbon-tax/>

All the legal battles, but one, that Ford gov’t has lost since 2018. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-government-court-cases-lost-doug-ford-1.6168318?cmp=rss>

¹ Gas pump stickers and legal challenge: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-doug-fords-anti-carbon-tax-gas-station-stickers-are-unconstitutional/>

² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/supreme-court-federal-carbon-tax-constitutional-case-1.5962687>