

Polluted politicians ignore the evidence

By Skid Crease

It was no great surprise to read that "Our Government" recently rejected an economic analysis from the Stockholm Environmental Institute in Seattle, Washington. The study showed that



the Keystone XL project could produce four times the amount of greenhouse gases previously calculated by the U.S. State Department.

Naturally, anything that contradicts the federal Conservatives' position on tar sands extraction, production, and transportation must be based on "false assumptions," as a Natural Resources Canada spokesperson stated. The U.S. State Department at least had the good grace not to respond to a valid study.

First, to be absolutely clear, as politicians like to state, there is a profound difference between the science of climate change and the social science of economics. One is the systematic and testable study of the long-term weather patterns of our world; the other is the study of humanity and its management of resources within that world.

For our current government, the social science of economics trumps all other forms of information gathering. In fact, if scientific climate studies disagree with the government's sociological economic position, the reports are edited, buried, or discredited.

One of my most respected sources for science information was a senior climatologist at Environment Canada. Whenever I had a question from students or teachers, and I couldn't find legitimate data, I went to him. He published his last report for climate change for the government in 2005, and then quit because they were editing out any scientific data that conflicted with the government's ideological economic position.

He and the One Tonne Challenge were among the first casualties of a new government that regarded Climate Change as a socialist plot. The United Nations CoP11 and Kyoto agreements fell shortly after. Carbon taxes! Carbon credits! Conservation! Heresy! The economy will collapse bringing down our hard working, taxpaying, and law-abiding Canadian way of life!

The clarion call went out to censure those foreign funded eco-terrorists, those grant-seeking scientists, and those threats to the global economy. With our taxpayer money, television ads were purchased for the Economic Action Plan, the promotion of Keystone and Northern Gateway, and the joys of drilling and fracking to get more oil and natural gas out of that pesky bitumen and shale.

And the contaminants, the greenhouse gases, the true cost of very dirty energy? All necessary to sustain our way of life and our corporate profits. After all, most of the collateral damage lives downstream and downwind.

Not a single ad was purchased with our taxpayer money to do a public service commercial on a scientific analysis of the real cost of extracting oil from the tar sands or fracking for shale gas. Not a single ad was purchased with our taxpayer money to do a public service announcement from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report on science, impacts, and mitigation.

I would expect the petrochemical industry to lobby government for the approval of its projects, to seduce politicians to their point of view, and to attempt to subvert scientific reports contrary to its interests. I do not expect my government to do that lobbying for them. When our politicians become polluted, it is time for environmentally literate citizens to find a cleaner source of democracy.

Before that next election, whether it be municipal or federal, here are some positive actions for citizens to take. First, clean up our own backyards. In our house, we enrolled with Bullfrog Power. Yes, there is a premium for green energy support, so we conserve more at home. If it is not in use, the power is OFF.

Secondly, my car purchase was a hybrid. I drive a lot and 60 mpg makes good sense and economics.

Thirdly, you are what you buy. If you give your money to a business that is abusing you and your environment, you are saying it is O.K., that you accept and endorse what the bully is doing. So, my family tries its best to purchase from ethical companies and purchase long-life products.

Finally, you become politically literate. You call, write, talk to your municipal representative, MPP and MP about their responsibilities to protect you and your children with their decisions. No postage required for a federal letter, which is a nice break for hard-working, tax-paying, law-abiding Canadians.

We get the governance we deserve, and the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

Skid Crease is an award-winning outdoor and environmental educator, a keynote speaker, a storyteller, an author, and a community volunteer. He taught with the North York and Toronto District School boards for 35 years, and officially ?retired? from the Faculty of Education, York University, where he was a Course Director and Environmental Science Advisor. Skid has worked with scientists from Environment Canada (pre-2005), NASA, and the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research in a quest to put an understandable story behind the wealth of their scientific data.