

Canadians are part of the problem

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Mon., July 15, 2019 *timer* 3 min. read If nothing else, you'd think climate change would have forced us to put a few things in perspective. But no, in Canada and countries around the world, things grow worse by the day. Governments in countries such as the United States, Brazil and Australia have opted for outright denial. They carry on regardless, even when that means wreaking havoc on themselves as well as the planet.

Meanwhile, talk of meeting our legal obligations under the [Paris Agreement](#) has become meaningless. And already we have conveniently forgotten the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warning that either we clean up our act by 2030 or hit the point of no return.

Yet according to the David Suzuki Foundation, "Canada is warming at twice the global average rate — higher in the north." Premier Doug Ford has responded by devoting much of his first few months in office undoing years of environmental legislation, killing everything from the province's carbon cap-and-trade program to a long list of green energy projects.

Though there has been the predictable backlash and Ford's approval ratings have tanked, Ontarians haven't lost much sleep over the issue. The crisis has been met with the usual mix of hand-wringing and yawning indifference. We've seen no mass movement like [Extinction Rebellion](#), which regularly shuts down cities in the U.K., and no [Greta Thunberg](#) to remind us of truths we'd rather ignore. Perhaps we're just too busy looking for a place to gas up the family SUV.

Like other Canadians, Ontarians have adapted to a political system so confused and conflicted it declares a national climate emergency one day and approves a pipeline to transport the dirtiest oil in the world the next. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau justifies such wildly contradictory behaviour by explaining that revenues will go toward the great cleanup, date to be announced.

Here in Toronto, we're still living off measures taken a decade ago by then-mayor David Miller. Since then, the city has done little to reduce its carbon footprint. It has been agonizingly difficult for us to install even a few bike lanes on the streets of Toronto. They were handed over to drivers eons ago. In any case, there's little the city can do — around here it's always the province's fault.

No one has put the issue more succinctly than Roy Scranton. "The greatest challenge we face is a philosophical one," he wrote in an essay entitled "[Learning to Die in the Anthropocene](#)," "understanding that this civilization is already dead. The sooner we confront our situation and realize that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, the sooner we can get down to the difficult task of adapting, with mortal humility, to our new reality."