

What would Conservatives say if they had no Liberals to blame?

Lois Nantais - February 2024

“Blaming others is nothing more than excusing yourself.” Robin S. Sharma in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*.

In a January 11 article in *The Independent*, Marilyn Gladu links inflation and interest rates to the Liberals’ “out of control spending.” I often smile to myself, thinking about what Marilyn would do if she didn’t have Justin Trudeau and the Liberals to blame for whatever issues are currently pressing Canadians.

Inflation is the increasing cost of living, and the truth is that Canada is not in isolation in experiencing these higher rates for our goods and services. Since the pandemic, we have heard how global supply chains, labour shortages, and the Ukrainian war have brought increases in living expenses -- particularly with fuel, shelter, and food costs.

Pew Research gathered data from 44 advanced economies and for nearly all, prices have risen substantially. Countries with very large increases in inflation rates include Italy, which has experienced a twenty-fold increase from 2020 to 2022, and Greece, with a rate twenty-one times higher in that same span of time. The US experienced a high of 7 per cent in 2021 and is currently at 4.1 (rates for January 11, 2024), and Canada is comparable at 3.4 per cent in December. According to the *World Economic Outlook*, from the International Monetary Fund, global inflation is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels “before 2025 in most cases.” Inflation often causes higher interest rates, which can lead to more financial strain for Canadians, but this issue – difficult as it is – cannot be isolated from global trends and causations out of a need for blaming the opposition.

We can often easily and habitually blame the “government” for our problems – for costs, for socio-economic lack, with system inefficiencies, and with bureaucratic overreach and control restrictive to us. I recently had the experience of building a house. There are a lot of moving parts involved with house construction and I was frustrated with the bureaucracy involved with getting electrical service in particular. Having a prefab home, the timelines for a build are different from a traditional home construction. I was to be put in the queue only after my foundation was built; those were the rules and my move in date could potentially be delayed as a result. I questioned the application of those rules, and who was responsible for creating those rules. I was told by several contractors that Ontario Hydro is difficult to work with – being the Ontario government and without competition. I appreciated their frustrations, and experienced my own, but I also registered a similar sense of that same frustration and sense of restriction with certain kinds of management more generally. Bureaucratic oversight in our institutions without the tone or considerateness of true customer care service provision.

Pierre Poilievre and many other CPC politicians make a habit of trying to inflame that sense of frustration in us, using words like “authoritarian bureaucrats.” But there is yet to exist an example of sustained Libertarian utopia – where communities function without administrative oversight of some kind, and there is no sign that Conservatives actually want Libertarianism or to loosen the reigns of political governance. Aside from using words to inflame our sense of civic frustration, there is a real lack in just how they will break Canadians free of the bureaucracy they currently vilify.