

To: Lisa Raitt, MP

From: Ross McKittrick, Ph.D.
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Dear Lisa

That was quite a run-in you had with the climate mob. There's a lesson to be learned, but I don't think you have yet realized exactly what it is.

Before I explain, I understand you were [told by a reporter](#) that I "do not believe in climate change." This is untrue, and evidently came from a journalist who did not have the courtesy to ask me or check my writings. I have been studying and writing on the subject since the early 1990s. I have published dozens of peer-reviewed articles in both economics and physical science journals on all aspects of the issue. What I believe or don't believe is easily found out either by asking me or looking at my website (rossmckittrick.com) where my writings are sorted by topic.

Now to the topic at hand. As you know I published an [op-ed](#) last week in the Financial Post telling the story of a US climate scientist, Roger Pielke Jr, whose research on climate change and extreme weather didn't support many of the alarmist slogans on the subject. Despite his findings being squarely in the mainstream of his academic speciality, for stating them publicly Pielke Jr. was vilified, bullied and eventually harassed into quitting the field.

How did the climate mob respond when you tweeted my article? As if to prove the point of the story, you were vilified, bullied and harassed into deleting your tweet. I'm sorry that happened to you, but do you now see the pattern?

This business of Twitter mobs and so-called fact-checking only goes one way. They love to claim that policy discussions should be based on science, but they don't really mean it. They will overlook any utterance, no matter how inane or extreme, if it promotes the cause of climate alarm.

How many of the people who were pummeling you over the weekend spoke even a word of protest when Elizabeth May [stood up in Parliament](#) last fall and blamed the Ottawa tornado on climate change, or claimed that there were no forest fires prior to 1988? How many protested when Catherine McKenna, in that same debate, cited increased forest fires, floods and droughts as proof of the harmful effects of greenhouse gases on Canadians?

Since none of the self-appointed fact-check crowd could be bothered to explain why these statements and countless others like them are unsupported by the expert evidence, I'll do it.

Are tornadoes getting more common? Here is what the [IPCC said](#) about tornado trends in its 2012 Special Report on Extreme Weather:

“There is *low confidence* in observed trends in small-scale phenomena such as tornadoes and hail because of data inhomogeneities and inadequacies in monitoring systems.”

They point out that the apparent increasing trend in US tornados mainly reflects the increased population available to observe and report such events (p. 123). They said nothing about whether tornadoes have become more common in Canada over time. And as for a connection to greenhouse gases, they said they don’t know (p. 151):

“An increase in atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations may cause some of the atmospheric conditions conducive to tornadoes such as atmospheric instability to increase due to increasing temperature and humidity, while others such as vertical shear to decrease due to a reduced pole-to-equator temperature gradient.”

Have you ever heard anything like this from Minister McKenna?

When Ms May said, referring to 1988, “I have had a ringside seat for the decades during which we could have arrested climate change before our glaciers were melting, before we were losing the Arctic, before our forests were on fire...” we might charitably suppose that she doesn’t really believe forest fires never occurred before 1988, but that she meant to say the number of fires and area burned has been going up since then. But it isn’t so. [Here’s the record since 1990](#) at the National Forestry Database. Don’t look away—follow the link, and then ask yourself how many of your critics ever challenged Ms. May, or how many times the Prime Minister has made speeches declaring the opposite of what that chart shows confident that no one will call him out.

In the same Parliamentary debate, Minister McKenna said of climate change, “We have seen forest fires that are burning longer and brighter than ever. We have seen floods. We have seen droughts.” Etc. I could cite countless similar utterances on her part.

Did anyone in the climate twitter mob challenge her science? Regarding drought trends, the [last IPCC Assessment Report](#) said (p. 215):

“In summary, the current assessment concludes that there is not enough evidence at present to suggest more than *low confidence* in a global-scale observed trend in drought or dryness (lack of rainfall) since the middle of the 20th century, owing to lack of direct observations, geographical inconsistencies in the trends, and dependencies of inferred trends on the index choice. However, it is *likely* that the frequency and intensity of drought has increased in the Mediterranean and West Africa and decreased in central North America and north-west Australia since 1950.”

Did you catch that: “the frequency and intensity of droughts has... *decreased* in central North American since 1950” – compare it to what Minister McKenna claims.

And compare her frequent comments about increasing floods to what [her own scientists](#) say: while extreme rainfall may go up in the future, “the observational record has not yet shown evidence of consistent changes in short-duration precipitation extremes across the country.” Or what [the IPCC said](#) (p. 176):

“In the United States and Canada during the 20th century and in the early 21st century, there is no compelling evidence for climate-driven changes in the magnitude or frequency of floods.”

Did you know any of this? Have you ever heard Minister McKenna say anything remotely close to these things? Her listeners would instead come to believe the opposite based on the plain meaning of her speeches. And if you stood up in Parliament and recited these quotes without giving away the source, how would the opposite benches react? What word would they call you?

The increasingly alarmist claims of Ms. May and Minister McKenna and countless others not only go unchallenged by the self-appointed guardians of scientific probity but are even celebrated and amplified by them. Meanwhile, my article accurately summarized Pielke Jr's presentation, which in turn accurately summarized the expert literature; yet it was immediately set upon by [nit-pickers](#) determined to denounce it and me. Though even the nit-pickers admitted my summary of Pielke Jr's talk was "probably accurate" – they mainly disputed the title of the article, which I didn't write.

I also understand that Katherine Hayhoe, a [professor of political science](#) at Texas Tech reached out to you, made nice and sent you some You Tube videos to watch. Clever move. While the bad cop is taking a break, the good cop comes in, makes friendly, and extracts a confession from the exhausted suspect. Works every time. But if you want to talk to the expert whose work is at issue, you'd find Roger Pielke Jr. is also very congenial and is happy to explain the science.

I will conclude with an anecdote that takes us out of the realm of climate change and firmly into your bailiwick of politics. A friend of mine grew up in Eastern Europe during the Soviet era. He was talking to me recently about this issue and the controversy around my column. He told me about the bad days of political correctness in his home country, where there were a lot of topics you just learned not to talk about, and you kept quiet. The climate change topic has begun to feel very much the same way to him. And then he told me something you need to ponder carefully. "You know," he said, "everybody thinks the whole political correctness problem was imposed on us from the outside. But it wasn't. It came from within. We imposed it on ourselves. At a certain point people were no longer willing to talk about things or challenge what we were being told. But that was something we did to ourselves."

You have now seen how that happens. You have seen up close the cost people face when they try to rebut the climate emergency rhetoric that is driving ever more costly and extreme policy demands, and you now know why so few try. And you know from history what happens when everyone is bullied into silence. I hope your political career will be an example of how that relentless dynamic can occasionally be resisted.

Yours truly,

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