

Minister of Finance Charles Sousa fires back at PC leader Patrick Brown on climate change

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Conservative Party leader Patrick Brown has his head in the sand when it comes to carbon pricing, says Mississauga MPP and Minister of Finance Charles Sousa.

Sousa made the comments after Brown

Paul King.
criticized the Ontario Liberals for imposing the 13 per cent harmonized sales tax on the consumer hikes that will result from carbon pricing.

“(Brown) wants to stick his head in the sand, turn his back on the low carbon economy and pretend there’s no problem and, in fact, there is,” said Sousa, referring to green-

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house gases polluting the earth’s atmosphere, which warm the planet and disrupt global weather patterns.

In an attempt to mitigate the impact of major pollutants on the environment, Premier Kathleen Wynne’s government instituted the cap-and-trade program, which places a limit on how many tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution businesses, institutions and households can emit.

If an organization operates a facility that generates more than 25,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year, it is referred to as a capped emitter and will be required to participate in the program.

For consumers, this cap means an additional 4 cents per litre at the gas pump and \$5 more per month to heat their homes.

The HST will apply on top of these additional charges, which the Conservatives call a “cash grab.”

“While we agree that climate change is a threat that needs to be addressed, the Wynne Liberals’ cap-and-trade slush fund is not a credible plan to address climate change. It is nothing more than a multi-billion dollar cash grab to pay for 13 years of scandal, waste and mismanagement,” said Conservative finance critic Vic Fedeli.

But Sousa says the largest cost increases are built into the wholesale prices, minimiz-

ing impacts to the consumer.

“It’s emitters that now have to find a way to offset the initial cost, not the consumers,” he said.

The cap-and-trade program, slated to take effect in 2017, is predicted to generate \$1.9 billion in annual revenue for the province.

A chunk of that money will be re-invested into consumer subsidy programs, to reward those who are doing their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as purchasing an electric vehicle or upgrading their furnaces.

“Our goal is to reinvest dollar for dollar in things that matter, produce greater economic growth and provide opportunities to lower costs to the system,” said Sousa.

Brown’s desire to put a price on carbon, stated during a keynote speech for a conservative convention held in Ottawa this March, received mixed reviews.

Since then, the Ontario PC caucus has come on board with climate change, supporting “a revenue neutral plan that will reduce emissions, grow our economy, keep hydro bills down, and put money back in the pockets of consumers,” Fedeli told The News in a written statement.

The federal government is in the process of developing a national strategy to combat climate change.



Charles Sousa