



NEWS RELEASE

Canada's air cleanest it's been in 40 years, stricter environmental regulation may unnecessarily harm economy

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VANCOUVER—Canada's air quality has dramatically improved over the past four decades despite significant population and economic growth and increased energy usage, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Imposing additional regulations might only harm economic growth with little or no measurable public benefit given Canada's air quality standards are already among the strictest in the world,” said Ross McKitrick, professor of economics at the University of Guelph, Fraser Institute senior fellow and co-author of *Canada's Air Quality Since 1970: An Environmental Success Story*.

The study finds that levels of four major air pollutants—ground-level ozone, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide—have all fallen substantially.

In fact, from 1975 to 2015, concentrations of sulfur dioxide fell 92.3 per cent, nitrogen dioxide levels dropped 74.4 per cent, and carbon monoxide levels fell 90.4 per cent.

And ground-level ozone, a key contributor to smog, fell 27 per cent between 1979 and 2015.

Moreover, in 1975, 54 per cent of monitoring stations across Canada recorded nitrogen dioxide readings above acceptable levels. In 2015, there were zero such readings. And since 1999, only one reading for carbon monoxide—in New Brunswick in 2011—has been above acceptable levels. Levels of other pollutants including fine particulates are consistently below the most stringent target levels.

During the same 40 years, the size of Canada's economy—as measured by real GDP—grew by a staggering 242 per cent and the population increased 68 per cent.

Energy use has jumped 21 per cent since 1995, and even motor fuel consumption has risen 26 per cent since the 1980s—all the while air quality has continued to improve.

“Canadians should be proud of their environmental record, as air pollution that accompanied more than 100 years of industrialization has been reduced to extremely low levels and Canada has now achieved some of the strictest air quality targets in the world,” McKitrick said.

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