

CLIMATE SCAREMONGERING IN RETREAT,

Scaremongering is in retreat

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As we enter the final months of 2025 surrounded by military risks, trade wars and geopolitical turmoil, there is one area of national and international policy where peace and good government is emerging.

With only weeks to go before the next United Nation's climate conference, COP30, in Brazil, the news is spreading, as signalled by a 4,500-word article in The New York Times Magazine titled: The Old Climate-activist Playbook No Longer Works: What Else Can?

Based on interviews with veteran climate activist Bill Mckibben and others, journalist Christina Cauterucci concludes that the era of Greta Thunberg's teen activism and major protests around Earth Days and UN climate conferences has failed to keep climate change at the top of the global agenda.

Many pin the decline in climate issues on U.S. President Donald Trump, but the problem "wasn't just Trump," writes Cauterucci. "Over the past few years, climate has receded as a priority throughout the political and corporate worlds."

One problem, claims Mckibben, is that "the banks and others who made commitments ... just turned out to be liars." That's a classic piece of Mckibbenish/thunbergian overhype that has ultimately backfired. The "How Dare You!" era is over. The emerging other side of climate politics wants to walk away from extremism and instead favour "political and economic realism and an end to so-called climate scaremongering."

Ironically, that call for "economic realism," and presumably science realism, coincides with the conclusion in last month's draft report from the U.S. Department of Energy's Climate Working Group (CWG). "This report supports

a nuanced and evidence-based approach for informing climate policy that explicitly acknowledges uncertainties.”

As noted in this space last month, the CWG report promises to trigger something that has long been missing from climate science, which is open, pointed and challengeable exploration — from all sides — of scores of conclusions that are routinely taken for granted.

The CWG report’s five authors — all known as “climate skeptics” — are Canadian environmental economist Ross Mckittrick of Guelph University; Alabama University climatologist John Christy; former Georgia Tech earth sciences chair Judith Curry; Hoover Institution scientist Steven Koonin; and Alabama scientist Roy Spencer.

Well, the formal debate between the “skeptics” and the “consensus” is finally formally underway.

More than 2,300 comments have been filed by CWG critics whose conclusion, summarized by “85 climate experts,” is that the CWG report “cherry-picked evidence,” lacks peer review and suffers from a “predetermined outcome.” Interesting charges that could fly in both directions, and it will now be up to the CWG’S original authors to formally respond to these “peer” reviews and produce a final report.

At least two of the CWG authors have informally responded.

Writing in The Wall Street Journal on Monday, Steven Koonin said that most of the challenges filed in response to their original CWG document “have no scientific backing. Though scientists supporting the so-called consensus on climate change have organized several serious critiques, these at most add detail and nuance to our findings, without negating the report’s central points. They still merit response, which will form the next round in an overdue public debate on the effects of greenhouse-gas emissions.”

Another CWG original author, Judith Curry, has also posted her response. Based on an “initial assessment” she found that the 85 critics “didn’t add any strong punches ... and I wouldn’t change any of the conclusions.” In fact, she adds, areas of disagreement among climate scientists illustrates how weighting of different classes of evidence can lead to different conclusions. “The existence of this kind of disagreement is essential information for policy makers, which hitherto has been hidden under the banner of ‘consensus’ enforcement.”

While we await more detail on the CWG issues, indications abound that climate scaremongering and extreme policy action are in retreat.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's suspension last week of Canada's 2026 electric vehicle (EV) mandate — condemned by Greenpeace ("What was the point of electing Mark Carney?") — received tacit support from industry and economists. A report from TD Economics on Monday called on Ottawa to rethink its EV strategies and open the border to EV deals with China.

Declining support for net-zero carbon emissions as a target for 2050 is further evidence of a move to climate realism.

The Financial Times reported that, "Companies that rushed to sign up to net zero initiatives are now stampeding for the exit." Major banks and financial institutions have retreated on net-zero, including the Canada Pension Plan. Members of The Net-zero Banking Alliance (NZBA), an initiative founded by Carney in 2021, has stopped operations after major global banks, along with six Canadian banks, pulled out.

In Canada this week, Millani, a Montreal-based consultancy that advises institutions and corporations on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, drew attention to the new climate policy realities. The Millani report, "A climate of change," surveyed 36 institutional investors in Canada representing \$13 trillion in assets. It found that "while support for the net-zero ambition remains strong, in principle, there is a growing recognition of legal, political, and reputational risks." Of respondents, 55 per cent said investors expect some form of "walk back" from net-zero targets, with another 10 per cent saying it was "uncertain/too early to tell."

Maybe not that early.