Canada’s economy is cracking at the seams. Food bank visits have surged to record highs, unemployment has reached its worst point since 2017 (excluding pandemic anomalies), and a generation of young Canadians is locked out of the housing market. Yet, according to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, everything is fine—the economy is stable, and the woes of struggling Canadians are merely a “vibecession.”

Yes, you read that right: a “vibecession.” This curious term suggests that our economic despair is just a vibe, not rooted in tangible hardships. But for millions of Canadians, the rising cost of living, stagnant wages, and shrinking opportunities are as real as it gets. The Trudeau government’s insistence on downplaying these issues amounts to nothing less than gaslighting, creating a dangerous disconnect between Ottawa’s rhetoric and Canadians’ realities.

Source: CBC News, YouTube

The Bleak Numbers Behind the “Vibe”

In March 2024, food banks across the nation recorded more than two million visits—the highest number in history and a staggering 90% increase since 2019. This isn’t a problem of perception; it’s a problem of survival. For many families, the grocery bill has become an unmanageable burden. Soaring inflation, which saw food prices rise more than 8% year-over-year at its peak, has forced ordinary Canadians to make heartbreaking choices: food or rent, medication or heating.

At the same time, the labor market is faltering. Canada’s unemployment rate has climbed to 6.8% as of November 2024, marking its highest level in seven years outside of the pandemic. While the government touts job creation numbers, these gains often represent precarious, low-paying roles that fail to meet the demands of modern life. For young Canadians especially, the dream of homeownership—a cornerstone of middle-class stability—is slipping

further out of reach. Soaring real estate prices, compounded by high-interest rates, have left many millennials and Gen Zers stuck in rental purgatory or living with their parents well into their 30s.

Ottawa’s Rose-Colored Glasses

Despite these grim indicators, Finance Minister Freeland continues to project unwarranted optimism. By rebranding what many economists describe as a recessionary climate as a “vibecession,” the government is effectively telling Canadians that the problem isn’t economic failure—it’s their inability to stay positive. But catchy slogans and rosy rhetoric won’t pay the rent or put food on the table. If anything, this spin-doctoring only deepens public discontent, as it dismisses the lived experiences of millions.

The Trudeau government’s framing isn’t just tone-deaf; it’s a strategic distraction. Acknowledging the severity of Canada’s economic challenges would mean admitting policy failures and addressing systemic issues, from housing affordability to wage stagnation. Instead, officials lean on upbeat messaging, hoping Canadians will ignore the storm clouds gathering overhead.

The Human Cost of Political Spin

This disconnect between Ottawa’s narrative and the reality on the ground risks alienating the very people the government claims to champion. For the single mother working two jobs to keep her family fed, the “vibecession” rhetoric is an insult. For the young professional drowning in student debt while watching home prices soar, it’s infuriating. And for the retiree who’s returned to work because their savings have been eroded by inflation, it’s a betrayal.

These struggles are not abstract. They are the lived experiences of everyday Canadians, from bustling urban centers like Toronto and Vancouver to rural communities in Atlantic Canada.

By framing these hardships as mere perception issues, the Trudeau government diminishes the dignity of those fighting to stay afloat. Worse, this approach delays the kind of robust policy response that could alleviate the suffering.

A Call for Leadership

What Canada needs now is not platitudes but action. First, the government must address the housing crisis head-on, expanding affordable housing initiatives and reining in speculative investments that drive up prices. Second, Ottawa should implement targeted relief measures to help lower-income families cope with inflation, such as enhanced tax credits or direct cash transfers. Finally, the labor market needs meaningful reforms to promote stable, well-paying jobs—not just more gig work.

There is also a pressing need for transparency and accountability. The government must stop hiding behind nebulous buzzwords and acknowledge the depth of Canada’s economic challenges. Only by leveling with Canadians can policymakers begin to rebuild the trust that has been eroded by years of political spin.

The Stakes Are High

The consequences of ignoring these issues extend far beyond individual households. An economy where millions rely on food banks and homeownership is a pipe dream for young families is not a healthy economy. It’s a fragile one, teetering on the brink of deeper instability. If the Trudeau government continues to gaslight Canadians about the state of the economy, it risks losing not just public trust but the ability to govern effectively.

In a “vibecession,” as Finance Minister Freeland might argue, perception is everything. But perception doesn’t fill empty fridges, create jobs, or build homes. Canadians deserve better than a government that prioritizes spin over solutions. It’s time for Ottawa to trade vibes for

vision—and start addressing the real crises that define the Canadian economy today.