



## Separating The Good from the Bad

I get letters from all sorts of people after I write an op ed – some complimentary, others less so. In the case of the latter, what often strikes me is the letter writers' anger and need to blame someone. None more so, than the letters I've received via my website about my last two publications: *The New Trudeau Mania* and *Don't Axe the Facts*.

What some of those letters indicate to me is just how worried Canadians are right now – anxious about making ends meet in a price gouging economy, terrified about climate change and what the future holds for their kids and grandkids.

Unless the letter is abusive, I write back to everyone, and I try to be as sympathetic as I can because I learned early on that lashing out helps no one. Sometimes that approach works, and I receive a second letter, much less angry and much more vulnerable.

One letter writer even walked back some of things they'd originally said and revealed how anxious and confused they were given the current political climate: "What I'm really trying to say," they wrote, "is that with so much corruption, greed and misinformation, it gets real tiring after a while, and it's hard to separate the good from the bad."

It's an observation that resonates with a lot of us, I suspect, because these days, sorting out the good from the bad or what's real from what's fake is becoming increasingly tough, bombarded as we are by information and images from countless sources.

So how do we know for sure who's telling the truth and who's lying or distorting the facts in order to manipulate us into adopting their beliefs or point of view? Especially in an age of AI generated deepfakes, foreign sponsored disinformation campaigns and politicians who have no compunction about lying to manipulate the electorate.

Well, one thing we can do is stop consuming news and information only from those networks, newspapers and online sources that affirm, rather than challenge our point of view. Listening to how the other side reports the news and presents the facts is a healthy way to challenge our own assumptions and opinions.

And if something supposedly “newsworthy” shows up on Facebook or Tik Tok that engages your emotions – specifically your rage – instead of engaging your brain, you might want to check it out for accuracy, and there's an easy way to do that. In fact, there are entire websites like Snopes.com that are dedicated to fact checking for you.

So what exactly does disinformation look like?

Well, let's take a look at a recent Progressive Conservative attack ad targeting NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh. Right off the hop, against visuals of a fake magazine spread, the ad claims that Singh went to High School at a high priced Beverley Hills private school. Which for many of us instantly prompts visions of millionaires and movie stars.

As it turns out, Singh's school was actually in Beverley Hills, *Michigan*, not California.

The ad then goes on to claim that Singh wanted to delay the election so he could add another year of service and get his \$2 million parliamentary pension.

That claim is - drum roll here – also false. After six years of service to our country, Jagmeet Singh qualifies for a pension of \$54,000 a year at age 60. By age 90, his total pension over 30 years will add up to \$1.62 million.

And if Poilievre hangs in for 6 years, he too will qualify for the same parliamentary pension.

Jagmeet Singh  
is used to getting  
what he wants.



What's the takeaway? Well, while the conservative ad didn't tell outright lies, it completely distorted the truth, presumably because Poilievre and the conservatives want to manipulate us into seeing Jagmeet Singh as a rich kid. A big spender who wears Rolex watches and is totally out of touch with "ordinary" hard-working Canadians.

Which is tough to figure since it was Singh and the NDP that negotiated with the Liberals to launch pharmacare, dental care and childcare for the benefit of us lower income Canadians. Three social assistance programs Poilievre and his party voted against.

So who's really out of touch here? Could it be the PC party whose biggest campaign donors are the billion dollar oil industry and big real estate? This, when Poilievre is blaming the Liberals for the high cost of housing.

Honestly, given the hypocrisy and number of untruths in just one election ad, is it any wonder Canadians get confused and exhausted trying to sort things out.

But here's the thing – if we don't take the time to sort the good from the bad, then we'll be letting *someone else* decide what's best for us. And in a democracy, which relies on a free, well-informed electorate, that can only be a very bad thing.