

# CBC Radio - The 180

with Jim Brown

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## Actually, you're not entitled to your opinion

"I'm entitled to my opinion" is a phrase you often hear about a favourite Christmas movie, the best pizza place in the city, whether climate change is real, or if vaccines are safe. But philosopher Patrick Stokes says opinion is NOT an entitlement.

*The 180 spoke to Patrick Stokes. Below is a lightly edited and condensed version of his conversation with Jim Brown.*

### What's wrong with having an opinion?

There is nothing wrong with having an opinion. In fact, there are some things I think we all have to have opinions on as ethical agents and human citizens. The problem is having an opinion and thinking that's the end of it, that you don't have to justify it, or argue for it, or be open to the possibility of revising it. **There are some kinds of opinions where there is no possibility of argument.** If I think that chocolate is better than vanilla, that's my opinion. Sure, I'm entitled to that opinion, but what does that really mean?

But if we are talking about climate change or vaccinations, it's not a simple matter of brute belief. **Those are topics where we have to rely on scientific evidence not opinion.**

If you want to say that one movie is better than another movie, that's fine; you can claim that as your opinion. But if you want to deny that climate change is happening, then you can't duck under the cover of that being your opinion (much less that you are entitled to that opinion). To make that case, you are going to have to evaluate all of the scientific evidence, rather than just saying I have formed this view based on what I think or have heard.

the first category of opinions that Professor Stokes discusses in his own article (e.g., "tastes or preferences")

the second category of opinions that Professor Stokes outlines in his own article (e.g., those that depend on scientific evidence)