

Why are Canadian LCSs charging so much for Pokemon Cards? Let me explain

I've seen a lot of people get (justifiably) upset at the prices local card stores (LCSs) are selling their products for (particularly Shining Fates). It seems the prevailing idea is that LCSs are taking a page out of the scalper playbook by jacking up prices to maximize their own profits, thus leaving their loyal customers to suffer. But while there has been some legitimately nefarious behaviour among some LCSs, I would mostly like to pour cold water on this idea by explaining why prices are so high right now, and why it's not totally under their control.

What I have heard from several LCS managers is that their prices are high because their distributors are charging more. In fact, despite the LCS prices being double (or more) MSRP, their margins have not changed. In some extreme examples, I've heard LCS managers say that they are being charged more by their distributors than box stores are charging their customers (i.e. distributors are charging > MSRP). So the question then becomes, why are the distributors charging more? This I am not 100% sure of, but I think I have a couple good ideas. Due to COVID-19, importing products to Canada has become much more difficult. Surface shipping (i.e. land and sea) is often not possible, so products are having to be sent by air. This results in much fewer products being shipped (explaining the product shortages) and higher prices per item. The scarcity of the products and the high demand might also result in the distributors charging more and gouging the LCSs.

Does this mean that LCSs are totally innocent? No. I have seen a number of LCSs blatantly price gouging their customers as well. Perhaps the best example of this is 401 Games. The upcoming Charmander and Arrokuda Battle Styles Checklane Blisters are effectively the exact same product and should normally cost exactly the same. However, 401 Games is charging \$4.95 (MSRP) for the Arrokuda blister and \$9.95 (and rising) for the Charmander. There is ABSOLUTELY no excuse for this. It is simply 401 Games trying to get the most money out of your pocket because they know Charmander is more popular than Arrokuda. You'll also notice a pattern that stores that do this also tend to have relatively higher prices for other popular items, such as Shining Fates.

What is my recommendation? Buy from box retailers and LCSs that are charging fair prices, and punish stores like 401 Games by never buying from them again. As u/notTacoioi put it, those LCSs are "Just a store front for scalpers", and thus should be treated as such.

TL;DR: Not all LCSs are to blame, COVID-19 is. Don't buy from scalper stores like 401 Games, do support stores that aren't price gouging