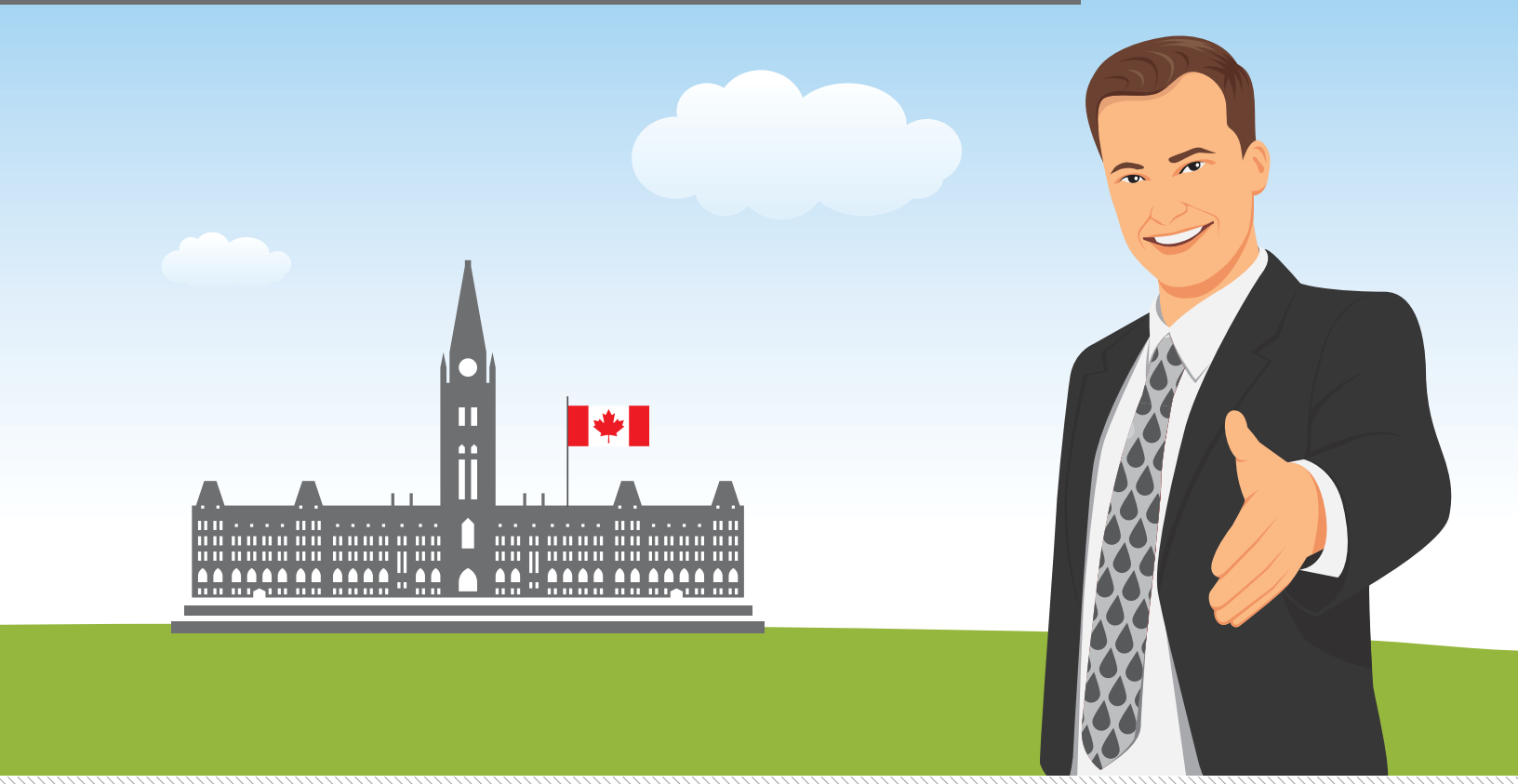
BC SOLUTIONS

News & Commentary from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' BC Office | JANUARY 2020



How influential is Canada's fossil fuel lobby on federal government policy?

BY NICOLAS GRAHAM, WILLIAM K. CARROLL & DAVID CHEN

There's no doubt that climate change and fossil fuel extraction were vote determining for significant sections of the population in the 2019 federal election.

These issues dominated the federal leaders' debates and over the fall we saw hundreds of thousands across the country join student-led climate strikes demanding more robust climate action. Such demands are likely to grow as the effects of climate change become more severe and the window closes to avoid catastrophic climate-related impacts.

While the Justin Trudeau-led Liberals again campaigned on a promise to more aggressively fight climate change, the question of why Canada has been so politically immobilized in pursuing decisive climate action and how to overcome this inertia is urgent.

It's a problem of central concern to us at the Corporate Mapping Project, the research initiative we jointly lead with the University of Victoria to investigate the power and influence of the fossil fuel industry.

In November of 2019 we published a study examining federal lobbying by oil, gas and →

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coal companies and their industry associations across a seven-year period from 2011 to 2018. The period allows for a comparison of lobbying under the Stephen Harper Conservatives and the Trudeau Liberals and the findings are troubling. They do, however, help explain the close coupling of federal policy to the needs of the fossil fuel industry.

We examined records at the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada and found that the fossil fuel industry recorded 11,452 lobbying contacts with government officials over this period—which is significantly more than other sectors and amounts to just over six contacts per working day. Presumably due to having far greater resources, the sector lobbied the federal government at rates five times higher than environmental non-governmental organizations.

> Our findings indicate that elite policy networks outlast election cycles and potentially the stated platforms of elected officials.

This is important because lobbying is intended to influence policy and, for this sector specifically, decisions related to major environmental assessment acts, national energy strategy, pipelines and consultation processes with First Nations. The intensity of lobbying increased when salient policy issues—like the Environmental Assessment Act—arose or when there were big stakes for industry such as major pipeline decisions and approvals.

We found that lobbying was highly concentrated among large fossil fuel firms and key industry associations (which control much of this economic sector), and was targeted at a few key offices and individuals within government. There was intense interaction among relatively few lobbyists and key designated public office holders who are in regular contact with each other.

In comparing lobbying across the Harper and Trudeau administrations, we found a pattern of continuity-in-change. Under Trudeau, the bulk of lobbying was carried out by the same large firms as under Harper, while lobbying focused on fewer government agencies, particularly Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada. Under Trudeau, senior government bureaucrats rather than members of parliament were the focal targets of lobbying. Key decision-makers who remained after the 2015 change of government were targeted, which is concerning as it indicates that elite policy networks outlast election cycles and potentially the stated platforms of elected officials.

Our study confirmed that lobbying is dominated by wealthy and corporate interests and is conducted largely away from public view, indicating a clear need to substantially tighten the Federal Lobbying Act to enhance transparency.

Such measures can bring lobbying more fully into public view and in turn help limit the undue influence of private interests over public policy. However, reforms are needed that go beyond increased transparency to equalize opportunities for political influence between industry and civil society groups. Such democratizing measures can challenge and limit corporate power, which is critical to achieving sustained and robust climate action.

Nicolas Graham is a post-doctoral researcher with the Corporate Mapping Project (CMP) and sessional Sociology instructor at the University of Victoria. William K. Carroll, a University of Victoria Professor of Sociology, co-directs the CMP, and David Chen is a CMP student researcher and University of Victoria Masters student. All three are authors of Big Oil's Political Reach: Mapping fossil fuel lobbying from Harper to Trudeau, *available at corporatemapping.ca/lobbying.*

CORPORATE MAPPING PROJECT

This article is part of the Corporate Mapping Project, a research and public engagement project investigating the power of the fossil fuel industry in Western Canada, led by the University of Victoria, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (BC and Saskatchewan Offices) and Parkland Institute. This research is supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Celebrating excellence in research

The co-directors of the Corporate Mapping Project—CCPA–BC Director Shannon Daub and the University of Victoria's William Carroll—were recognized in October with a University of Victoria REACH Award for Excellence in Research. The REACH Awards recognize "research excellence" as demonstrated through scholarly contributions and societal impact.

Since the inception of the Corporate Mapping Project, Shannon and Bill have worked with more than 100 collaborators and 11 partner organizations to investigate how the fossil fuel industry is organized and exerts power in Western Canada. This award recognizes the extraordinary nature of this multi-disciplinary collaboration, and how it "empowers Canadians as well as a democratic society."

While our commitment to excellence and independence in research is at the core of what we do, it's fantastic to see those efforts recognized through such a prestigious award.

The Canada Pension Plan is fueling the climate crisis

BY JAMES ROWE, JESSICA DEMPSEY, ZOË YUNKER & STEPH GLANZMANN

Around the world many pensions designed for retirement security are contributing to the climate emergency with their investments. The Canada Pension Plan (CPP), one of our country's largest pools of investment capital at approximately $400 billion, is no exception.

Last year, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that the world has 11 years to avoid 1.5 degree Celsius warming and its devastating impacts. As one of Canada's largest investors—and a public institution—the CPP's decisions are critical for the urgent and sustained emission reductions that the 1.5-degree limit demands.

In November we released *Fossil Futures: The Canada Pension Plan's failure to respect the 1.5-degree Celsius limit,* which asks: is the CPP invested in ways that align with the Paris Agreement?

The answer is no.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB), which manages the fund on behalf of Canadian beneficiaries, has over $4 billion invested in the top 200 publicly traded fossil fuel companies—firms with the largest reserves of coal, oil and gas.

To stay within 1.5 degrees, these companies can produce only 71.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. However, these companies have 281 billion tonnes in reserve, meaning they have almost four times the carbon reserves that can be sold and burned to stay within 1.5 degrees.

> The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board has over $4 billion invested in the top 200 publicly traded fossil fuel companies—firms with the largest reserves of coal, oil, and gas.

This is a moral and ecological failure. It is also a financial risk. In its 2019 *Financial System Review,* the Bank of Canada included climate risk in its analysis for the first time.

Canadian fossil fuel companies and their investors are especially exposed to stranded asset risk—investments that are no longer profitable—since the majority of oil produced in Canada is high-cost, carbon-intensive bitumen from the oil sands. Yet, the CPPIB remains exposed to the biggest oil sands companies.

The CPPIB's duty is to act in the best financial interests of retired or retiring Canadians. By continuing to invest billions in fossil fuel companies it may be breaching its responsibilities.

Why has the CPPIB been slow to act on the financial risks posed by climate change even when its legal mandate dictates that the fund avoid "undue risks"?

PHOTO BY GARTH LENZ

In Canada, the fossil fuel sector has been successful getting a seat at government decision-making tables, both provincially and federally. The same is true for the CPPIB whose board of directors and staff are entangled with the fossil fuel industry.

Formal relationships that CPPIB officials have with fossil fuel companies potentially bring the interests and perspectives of those companies into CPPIB decision-making regarding climate risk. This is dangerous since the self-interest of fossil fuel companies contradicts the changes that governments and investors need to address the climate crisis.

By failing to invest with the 1.5-degree limit in mind, the CPPIB may be vulnerable to a class action lawsuit brought on behalf of young Canadians like the one launched against the federal government. Instead of enhancing retirement security for young Canadians, the CPPIB is eating away at their future.

James Rowe, Jessica Dempsey, Zoë Yunker and Steph Glanzmann are the authors of Fossil Futures: The Canada Pension Plan's failure to respect the 1.5-degree Celsius limit, *available at corporatemapping.ca/fossil-futures. This research is part of the Corporate Mapping Project.*

Let's go big on building affordable non-market rental housing

BY MARC LEE

To fully address Metro Vancouver's housing crisis we need an ambitious build-out of 10,000 new units per year of non-market, rental housing. This includes public housing and co-ops that are truly affordable for ordinary households.

New investments from the BC and federal governments point to a modest revival of public, non-market housing, but these investments must be ramped up.

More importantly, we need to break away from a dominant mindset that sees private sector property developers as the only builders of housing, and shift away from viewing home ownership as the preferred mode of accessing housing.

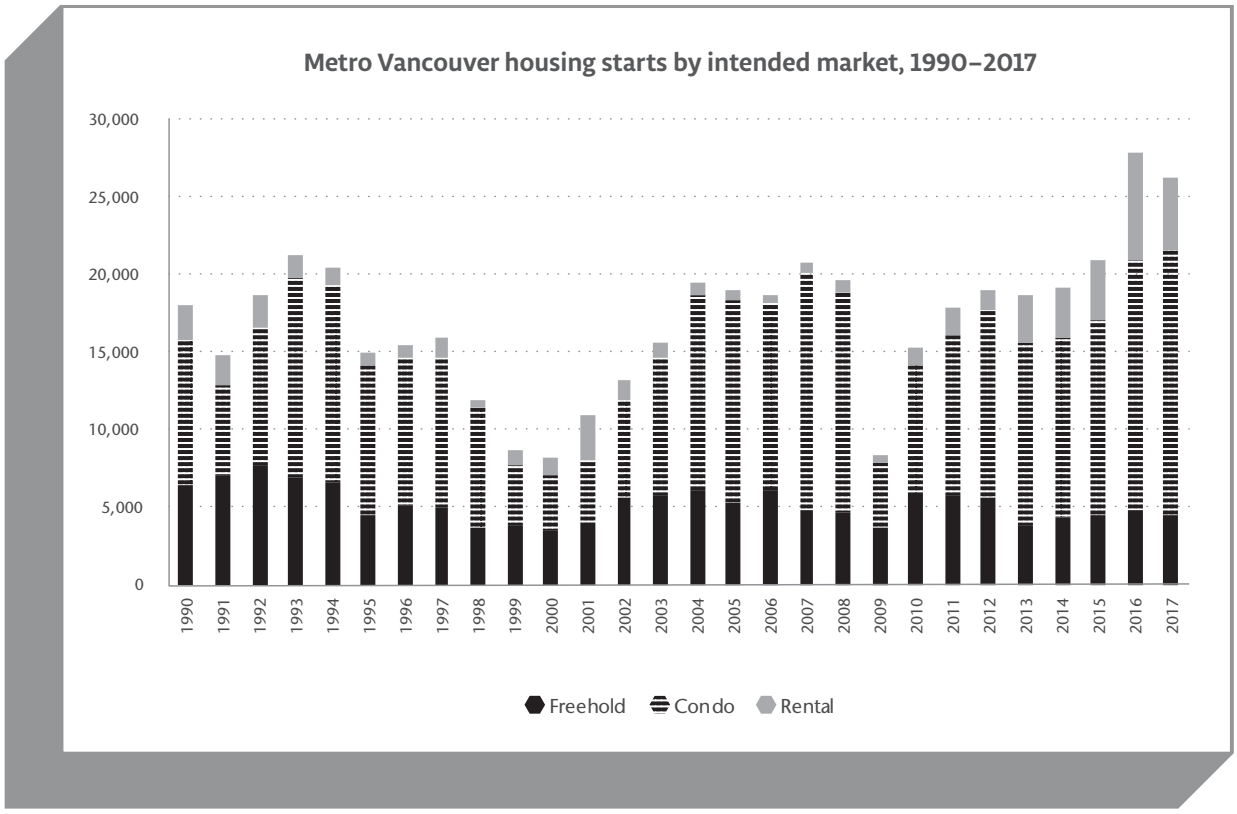
The greatest need is rental housing stock for low- to moderate-income households. This is precisely the group that is unprofitable for private sector developers, who would rather build luxury units for sale to the highest bidders worldwide.

Local governments have attempted to spur rental housing by providing financial incentives for developers to build rental over condos and to include a modest amount of market rental as part of a bigger condo development. As we have seen, this approach is ultimately inadequate. Developers are not going to build new housing stock that is truly affordable to low- to middle-income households—at least not anywhere near the scale needed.

Inspiration for large-scale investments in public housing can be found in cities like Vienna and Singapore. In Vienna, almost half of the total housing stock is public housing, a legacy of aggressive municipal-led development in the 20th century.

We can also look to our own past legacy of partnerships in the 1960s to 1980s among federal and provincial governments and the non-profit sector to build dedicated public housing, including social housing and co-ops.

A building program should give first priority to households in extreme housing need, starting with people who are homeless, low-income households and seniors. We need a spectrum of housing options that work for people with different incomes, at



SOURCE: MARC LEE'S CALCULATIONS BASED ON DATA FROM KENT GROUP LTD.

different stages in their lives, and for family size, including larger units.

The City of Vancouver's current targets to better match new housing supply to the incomes and family composition of the local population point the way to a more planned approach for new housing. However, after two years, housing targets have been exceeded for higher-income households ($80K and up), while the targets for low-to-middle income groups have not been met.

> We need to break away from a dominant mindset that sees private sector property developers as the only builders of housing, and shift away from viewing home ownership as the preferred mode of accessing housing.

There is a lot of catching up to do, region-wide.

A high-ambition plan of 10,000 new units per year would cost about $2.5 billion annually. An investment of this magnitude would represent less than one penny per dollar of income or GDP that we generate as a province.

This upfront capital cost would be paid back through the flow of rental income over the lifespan of the buildings. Revenues from property tax reforms—such as the progressive tiers on property and property transfer taxes, and speculation and vacancy taxes—are an ideal source to cover these upfront costs.

A central challenge is acquiring land for new housing. The current push to "upzone" or increase density across the board in single-family neighbourhoods is problematic if it simply leads to higher land values and more windfall gains for existing landowners.

To this end, some form of public land assembly should be part of the building program. This would pay market values to existing owners prior to seeking rezoning, then would capture the increased land value for public benefit as part of the creation of new rental housing stock.

A more overtly public planning model would also include project financing and construction to cut out the middle-man and achieve economies of scale for the large build-out we need.

Given these numbers, there is every reason for our governments to move forward with an ambitious build-out program that would see the construction of 10,000 new units of non-market rental public and co-op housing per year. In the aftermath of October's federal election, it is time for the federal and BC governments to step up their housing game.

Marc Lee is a Senior Economist with the BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and the author of Planning for a Big Build-Out of Affordable Rental Housing: How many units and how much would it cost?, *available at policyalternatives.ca/affordable-rental-housing*

PHOTO: SSWJ / FLICKR

Rental housing: Expanding the affordability conversation

In July of 2019 the CCPA National office released a report on the state of rental housing in Canada. *Unaccommodating: Rental Housing Wage in Canada* looked at how many hours an individual would need to work at a minimum wage job to afford rent across Canadian cities. The results of the research were not surprising to anyone already in the rental market, but that doesn't make the numbers any less shocking. While the costs are troubling across the country, here in British Columbia we found that there are in fact *no neighbourhoods* in Vancouver, Victoria or Kelowna where a full-time minimum wage worker can afford a modest one-bedroom apartment.

The volume of interest from both the media and the general public was massive. On the release day alone, the report had over 1,000 media hits across the country. This report helped shift affordability conversations and the media continue to frequently cite its findings.

The BC office's Marc Lee had contributed an analysis of the reports' numbers in the BC context, and both Marc and Alex Hemingway from our office helped field the hundreds of media requests during the release, with Alex speaking to Robyn Bresnahan on CBC's *As It Happens*.

When it comes to climate action, the public is ahead of our politics

In the fall of last year we saw a surge in public support for bold action on climate change. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians took to the streets following the leadership of student climate organizers making it clear that collective inaction is no longer an option. At the CCPA–BC, we've been working on policy and education to support climate justice for many years, and through the Corporate Mapping Project we are shining a light on how the Canadian fossil fuel industry is obstructing progress towards a climate safe future. We know that future requires keeping the majority of remaining oil, gas and coal reserves in the ground—both here in Canada and globally. And while the scale of transformation required to shift away from our dependence on fossil fuels can be hard to imagine, it is clear that bold action is required from government leaders at all levels.

Leading up to the federal election, former CCPA–BC Director and Corporate Mapping Project researcher Seth Klein commissioned a poll to get a sense of the public's appetite for the bold and transformational policies that we know are needed. While over 60 per cent of voters in October backed parties with significant climate commitments in their platforms, we think these results show that there is room for our leaders to be even more ambitious, across the country. And while the appetite does vary from province to province, the results suggest that even in Alberta there is more appetite for change than the current state of political discourse would suggest.

Poll results & analysis

BY SETH KLEIN

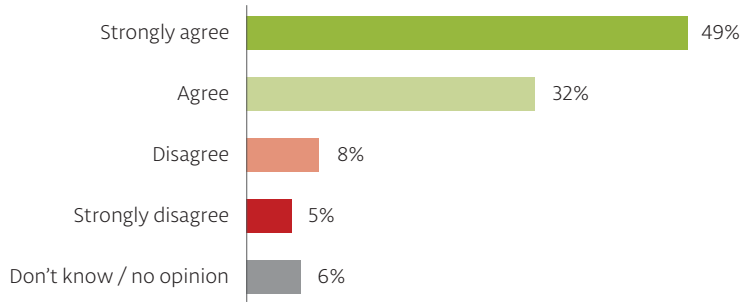
The main takeaway from this national opinion survey of 2,000 people conducted by Abacus Data is that *the public is ahead of our politics.*

The Canadian public is increasingly worried about climate change: 42 per cent believe climate change is now "an emergency," while a further 20 per cent believe it will likely be an emergency within the next few years, for a combined total of 62 per cent. Even in Alberta, which registered the lowest level of support for this view, a combined total of 47 per cent of people believe climate change is either an emergency or will likely be one in the next few years.

People are deeply anxious about what climate change means for the fate of future generations. When asked if climate change represents a "major threat to the future of our children and grandchildren," 81 per cent responded that it does (49 per cent strongly agree and a further 32 per cent agree). Even 67 per cent of Albertans agree with this statement.

For a majority of Canadians, climate change is no longer an abstract threat impacting people somewhere else or at some time in the future. They see it happening here and now. When asked: "To what extent have you or someone close to you experienced the effects of climate change (such as living with the consequences of changing weather patterns or severe weather events such as flooding, wild fires, droughts or intense heat waves)?" three-quarters of respondents said they or someone close to them had experienced the effects of climate change (13 per cent of respondents said "in a major way," while 37 per cent said "to some extent," and a further 23 per cent said "in a minor way.") Only 21 per cent said they had not experienced climate change at all, while 6 per cent reported being unsure.

Figure 1: Respondents who agree that climate change represents a major threat to the future of our children and grandchildren



People are ready for a major transition. 44 per cent of respondents said "In the future, we should produce energy and electricity using 100 per cent clean and renewable sources, such as hydro, solar, wind, tidal and geothermal," while a further 37 per cent support shifting in that direction but don't believe getting to 100 per cent is possible. Even in Alberta these numbers clock in at 28 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively.

People are ready for bold policies to move us off fossil fuels. The poll listed a series of six major policy moves and asked people if they supported these actions:

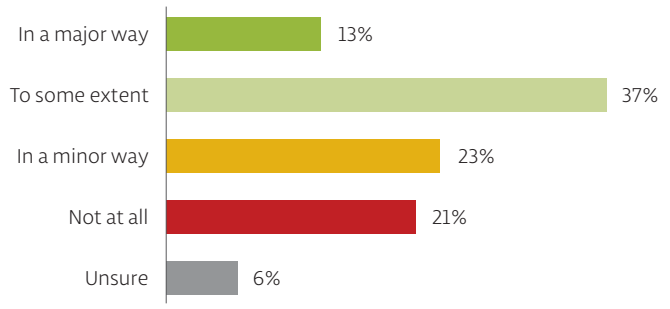
- Transition all government vehicles in its fleet to electric vehicles (like Canada Post trucks/vans) over the next five years. 28 per cent supported, 34 percent strongly supported.
- Require all new buildings and homes in Canada to heat space and water using electricity and not gas, propane or oil by 2022. 25 per cent supported, 30 per cent strongly.
- Phase out the extraction and export of fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) over the next 20 to 30 years. 24 per cent supported, 26 per cent strongly.
- End the use of all coal, gas and oil-generated electricity by 2030. 23 per cent supported, 26 per cent strongly.
- Require all existing buildings and homes to switch their fuel source for heating off of oil, gas, or propane by 2040. 25 per cent supported, 25 per cent strongly.
- Ban the sale of all new gas-powered vehicles (cars, vans and trucks) by 2030. 19 per cent supported, 23 per cent strongly.

The main takeaway from this national opinion survey of 2,000 people conducted by Abacus Data is that the public is ahead of our politics.

The more a transformative climate plan is seen as linked to an ambitious plan to tackle inequality, economic insecurity, poverty and job creation, the more likely people are to support it. In addition to people's concerns about climate change, they are also very worried about inequality and affordability. When these social equity issues are tackled as part of a climate plan, support for bold action to reduce GHG emissions rises dramatically. The poll listed five policy actions that could help with the transition and asked people if such policies would make them more or less supportive of bold climate actions:

- 79 per cent were more or somewhat more supportive of climate policies if governments could provide financial support to low- and modest-income households to help them transition away from fossil fuels.
- 78 per cent were more or somewhat more supportive if their own income taxes didn't increase as a result of the plan.
- 78 per cent were more or somewhat more supportive if the wealthy and large corporations were required to contribute more in taxes to help pay for this plan.
- 77 per cent were more or somewhat more supportive if the government committed to pay a sizeable "climate action dividend" (similar to the GST credit) to all low- and modest-income households to help offset rising energy costs.
- 73 per cent were more or somewhat more supportive if the federal government committed to a "good jobs guarantee" for all people currently employed in the oil, gas and coal industry.

Figure 2: Respondents who reported that they or someone close to them have experienced the effects of climate change



My overall conclusion is this: our politicians have been underestimating the public. They have failed to take adequate action in the face of the climate emergency, insisting the public is "not there yet." But increasingly, the public is ahead of our elected leaders. A solid majority of Canadians are ready to move beyond incremental policies and to entertain truly transformative climate action. In fact, when the Green New Deal was explained to poll respondents, 72 per cent supported implementing such a plan.

Overall, we saw that even many of those "in the middle" who are still wrestling with these ideas are nevertheless open to bold leadership. And that is precisely what we need.

Seth Klein is a CCPA–BC research associate and the former CCPA–BC Director. This article is part of the Corporate Mapping Project. To read more analysis and find the full survey results visit policynote.ca/climate-poll-2019.

Inquiry into gig work needed in BC

BY MARK THOMPSON & DAVID FAIREY

The BC government recently decided to permit the operation of ride-hailing services, which are scheduled to begin before the end of 2019. Other services, like the delivery of restaurant meals, use similar systems to dispatch workers. But the provincial government has yet to address a crucial element of this system—the rights and protections of workers in the "gig" or on-demand economy.

PHOTO: TADA IMAGES / SHUTTERSTOCK

Companies using the "gig" system usually maintain that their workers are independent contractors, not employees. Contractors are not covered by employment legislation, health and safety regulations, or employment insurance. Nor do they have legal protections should they choose to form unions. Evidence from other jurisdictions suggests that this classification of workers gives these companies substantial advantages over firms with employees.

In a landmark case now before the Supreme Court of Canada, Uber is challenging a 2018 decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal that would allow a class action suit to proceed on behalf of more than 20,000 Uber drivers. The drivers claim they are employees, not independent contractors, and therefore entitled to the rights and protections of the provincial *Employment Standards Act.* The Ontario court decision found that Uber's contract clause requiring all drivers' dispute arbitrations to take place in the Netherlands may have amounted to illegally outsourcing an employment standard.

A recent survey of Metro Vancouver residents by Research Co. revealed that 75 per cent of respondents think BC should require ride-hailing and taxi drivers to be paid a minimum wage as well as employment benefits such as overtime and vacation pay.

There are concerns in other jurisdictions as well. The California State Legislature has classified gig economy workers as employees meaning they are improperly classified as independent contractors. The State estimated it was losing $8 billion from payroll taxes annually because of the misclassification. Ride-hailing companies have mounted a major campaign to roll back the legislation.

In 2018, the government of the Australian state of Victoria established an inquiry to draft or consider new government labour regulations into the on-demand workforce. The inquiry has not yet produced a final report.

Although much has been written about the characteristics of modern technology/digital platform-based work, gig work in Canada has not been studied from the workers' perspective. The Bank of Canada has estimated that over 700,000 Canadians work in the informal economy, including gig arrangements, and these numbers are growing.

> Contractors are not covered by employment legislation, health and safety regulations, or employment insurance. Nor do they have legal protections should they choose to form unions.

To address the erosion of coverage of gig and other on-demand workers by employment standards, workplace safety and compensation, employment insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and other labour and social legislation that benefit employees, the BC government should establish a public inquiry to recommend public policies and regulations that reflect the realities of emerging work forms and provide adequate protections for these workers.

Mark Thompson is a professor emeritus in the University of BC's Sauder School of Business and a research associate with the CCPA; David Fairey is a labour economist, research associate with the CCPA and co-chair of the BC Employment Standards Coalition.

2019 Rosenbluth lecture recap: David Green on basic income

BY MARC LEE

David Green, Professor at the Vancouver School of Economics at the University of British Columbia and Research Associate with the CCPA–BC, gave the eighth annual Rosenbluth lecture on October 3, 2019. David is heading up the BC government's panel on basic income. His lecture was followed by three discussants who offered perspectives on David's talk: Trish Garner from the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, Chuka Ejeckam from the BC Federation of Labour and Margot Young from UBC's Faculty of Law and co-author of a 2009 CCPA research paper on guaranteed income.

The concept of basic income represents a fundamental rethink of our relationship to the labour market and to government. At its most utopian, basic income promises to put a floor on poverty and to give people freedom from the drudgery of crappy work.

David argued that basic income should be evaluated in terms of whether it advances us towards a more just society.

Three defining features of a basic income are that it is universal, provided unconditionally and is paid to individuals. A key argument in its favour is that it can provide support with dignity.

While some view basic income as a poverty-fighting tool, other versions of basic income are more preoccupied with notions of liberty: the ability of people to have income so as to make their own decisions about what is best for them. This vision of basic income is about reducing the size of government and the corresponding loss of public services is problematic.

> Three defining features of a basic income are that it is universal, provided unconditionally and is paid to individuals.

David illustrated two types of basic income: a demogrant, or equal basic income per person; and a negative income tax, which sets a minimum floor income then taxes back additional income earned up to a threshold. Both approaches are fiscally challenging in the context of the current BC Budget.

For example, a demogrant of $18,000 would cost $52 billion per year, of similar magnitude to the $58 billion BC Budget. A negative income starting at that same $18,000, with a 30 per cent taxback rate on additional income, would cost less than half as much, but at $23 billion it would still be substantial relative to the BC Budget.

Our three discussants added their perspectives on David's lecture. Trish Garner, flagged the current sociopolitical context of poverty with some 487,000 people in BC below the poverty line.Trish notes it would cost just over $1 billion to lift people on

income and disability assistance to the poverty line. If we truly care about reducing poverty, we should improve the existing welfare system in BC.

Chuka Ejeckam, noted there are other ways of redistributing income. Union density has not increased, so perhaps we should instead aim for better "pre-distribution" by improving collective bargaining rights and having a more balanced labour market.

Margot Young, offered a feminist analysis of a basic income program. She explained there is something compelling about basic income in terms of greater autonomy from patriarchal systems—the economic means to leave abusive relationships, in particular. That said, the reality is more complex and women need the *freedom* to participate in the paid labour market, not necessarily greater freedom from it. Basic income could reinforce traditional unpaid caregiving roles, where public services like child care are likely to be more liberating for women.

By the end of the night, the discussants' and audience comments and questions provided valuable input into the basic income panel's work. The panel will be presenting its findings to the BC government in August 2020.

Thank you to David for being our 2019 Rosenbluth lecturer and to Trish, Chuka and Margot for their contributions.

BC government fossil fuel subsidy data finally made public

BY BEN PARFITT

For more than two years, the British Columbia government vigorously fought efforts to compel the release of information on the hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies it doles out to fossil fuel companies each year.

Until now it has either refused outright to release documents or has handed over pages of essentially worthless information with the dollar figures and company names blanked out.

Now, thanks to successive appeals to the Office of Freedom of information and Privacy by our office, the public finally has details on just how extensive those subsidies are.

The list gives, for the first time, the public a look at the astonishing scale of the so-called "deep well credit" program and provides insight into how much companies that drill and frack for natural gas in northeast BC continue to be bankrolled by the provincial government.

Established in 2003, the deep well credit program was intended to underwrite some of the costs that fossil fuel companies incurred for drilling deep and later horizontal wells. Back then, such wells were far less common than today and companies that drilled them gained credits for doing so. The credits were then used to lower royalty payments companies paid to the Province once the gas flowed. Companies only pay royalties at the end of the exploitation and production process.

The new information that the government was compelled to release shows that in fiscal year 2018, a total of 26 fossil fuel companies earned a combined $703 million in credits.

Unlike Norway, which invests its royalty proceeds for the future, BC's royalties go into general revenue. But the royalties flowing into the provincial treasury are rapidly shrinking. In 2018/2019, the value of all natural gas royalties was $102 million compared to a decade earlier when it reached $1.3 billion.

> In 2018, a total of 26 fossil fuel companies earned a combined $703 million in credits.

Making matters worse, the amount of gas produced in BC has risen more than 70 per cent over the same time period, meaning the public received far less money as far more gas was produced.

Part of the reason for the precipitous decline in royalties is that they are tied to the market price for gas, and that has fallen sharply. However, the credits are also contributing to anemic royalty revenues. With a combined $2.62 billion in credits sitting in the credit account, due to the credit program's 17-year duration, these low revenues will be a fixture for years to come.

This is clearly not information the government wants made public and may explain why in 2017 it suggested it could not be released because it constituted sensitive "tax" information. When that argument was successfully challenged under appeal by the CCPA, the government argued in 2018 that publicizing such figures would harm the interests of undisclosed "third parties." We challenged that argument too and—after much delay—the credit amounts were released.

> By withholding such information, the public is quite naturally left with the impression that its resources are practically being given away to private business interests with the government's active and very generous support.

There is longstanding precedent for releasing such information with another publicly owned resource in BC—our forests. For decades now, members of the public can access a database that spells out in great detail what logging companies pay the provincial government for trees cut on public lands.

If the dollars paid by Canfor for the trees it logs are part of the public record, then the dollars that Encana pays for the natural gas it extracts from the ground should be part of the public record too. By withholding such information, the public is quite naturally left with the impression that its resources are practically being given away to private business interests with the government's active and very generous support.

Ben Parfitt is a resource policy analyst with the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. This article is part of the Corporate Mapping Project.

The CCPA–BC's annual gala in pictures

Our 2019 annual fundraising gala took place on November 21 with keynote speaker Nancy MacLean. We had a fantastic turn-out with over 700 supporters, volunteers and staff. As always we appreciate everyone's support in making the event such a successful evening.

PHOTOS BY JOSHUA BERSON

DR. NANCY MACLEAN DELIVERING HER KEYNOTE SPEECH.

CECILIA POINT, MUSQUEAM NATION, OPENING THE EVENT.

DIRECTOR SHANNON DAUB SHARING UPDATES ABOUT OUR WORK.

VOLUNTEERS MARGARET COUTTS, LAURA YATES & PABLO ZACARIAS.

LILY GREWAL, IRENE LANZINGER & JENNIFER WHITESIDE.

TESSICA TRUONG, NANCY MACLEAN, SHANNON DAUB, CHARLIE DEMERS & THE SUSTAINABILITEENS: SAMANTHA LIN, NAIA LEE, REBECCA HAMILTON & HARRISON JOHNSTON.

DENISE MOFFAT, TIFFANY OTTAHAL & CHUKA EJECKAM.

Donating stocks, securities and mutual funds

BY RAV KAMBO

We so appreciate the support of all of our donors. Without the 5,000 or so wonderfully generous people like you, we wouldn't be able to do the work we do.

Some donors give stocks, securities or mutual fund shares, which are eligible for a tax receipt just like any other donation.

If you are interested in donating securities to our office, you can begin the conversation with your broker. You are welcome to contact me, or your broker can do so directly, and I can provide them with the necessary paperwork to make the transfer a smooth process. The best time to arrange these transfers is in the fall, before the end of the year gets busy. If you would like to learn more or have us remind you next year, reach out to me directly at: rav@policyalternatives.ca or 604-801-5121 ext 225.

Donor spotlight: Bob & Sue Evans

Bob and Sue Evans have been long-time CCPA–BC Supporters and they recently started giving to us through stock transfers. We asked them why they choose to support us:

"We've watched as inequality has grown in our society over the past several decades, aided in large part by public policies that encourage the concentration of wealth in the hands of a select group of people. We support the CCPA–BC because you help point out the injustices in existing and proposed public policy, while also mapping out solutions that support a just society.

People who disagree with these kinds of policies and are fortunate enough to own stocks can turn a tax loophole on its head by donating the full value of a stock (not the just the profit) to the CCPA–BC. By donating in this way, we're able to increase what we can give to charities fighting for social justice, including a more fair tax system and less inequality."

Corporate Mapping Project Conference 2020

Regime of Obstruction: Exposing and confronting the power of the fossil fuel industry

May 21-23, 2020 • University of Victoria

Hosted by the Corporate Mapping Project, the Regime of Obstruction conference is a gathering of researchers, activists and community leaders that examines fossil fuel influence and power and how we can challenge it. The conference will include high profile speakers including Winona LaDuke, Pamela Palmater, Paul Engler and Avi Lewis.

Find out more at corporatemapping.ca/conference

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tel: 604-801-5121
520–700 West Pender St.
Vancouver BC V6C 1G8

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Editorial team
Shannon Daub, Jean Kavanagh, Emira Mears & Terra Poirier
Design: Paula Grasdal & Terra Poirier
Layout & production: Terra Poirier

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