

NOT JUST A CANADIAN PHENOMENON:

Citizen opposition to oil and gas production around the world

JULY 2020

As the global movement to fight climate change has ramped up in recent years, new fossil fuel projects, such as fracking, oil sands mines and pipelines, have been contested by local citizens, Indigenous Peoples, environmental organizations, and even governments. The challenge facing the world – and the fossil fuel sector – is clear. There are enough coal, oil, and natural gas projects in place or being built to take the world past 2 degrees of warming and into an era of catastrophic natural disasters.

Limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees will require retiring half of those projects early. Adding more fossil fuel production takes the world in the opposite direction of a safe and stable climate future. And yet, national and sub-national governments continue to allow oil and gas corporations to plan for increasing production.

In places where governments continue to support the fossil fuel industry, local opposition has formed both against projects that increase the production of fossil fuels, such as fracking, and against infrastructure projects, like pipelines, that enable that expansion. Citizens have come forward to fill the breach left by the turtle-like pace of governments such as Canada's, which still doesn't have a plan that will fully reach greenhouse gas emission targets that are only a decade away. Citizens have taken direct action to both call attention to the huge impacts of fossil fuel production on their communities and local environments – from spills and water pollution to habitat destruction and air pollution – and on our earth's quickly deteriorating climate.

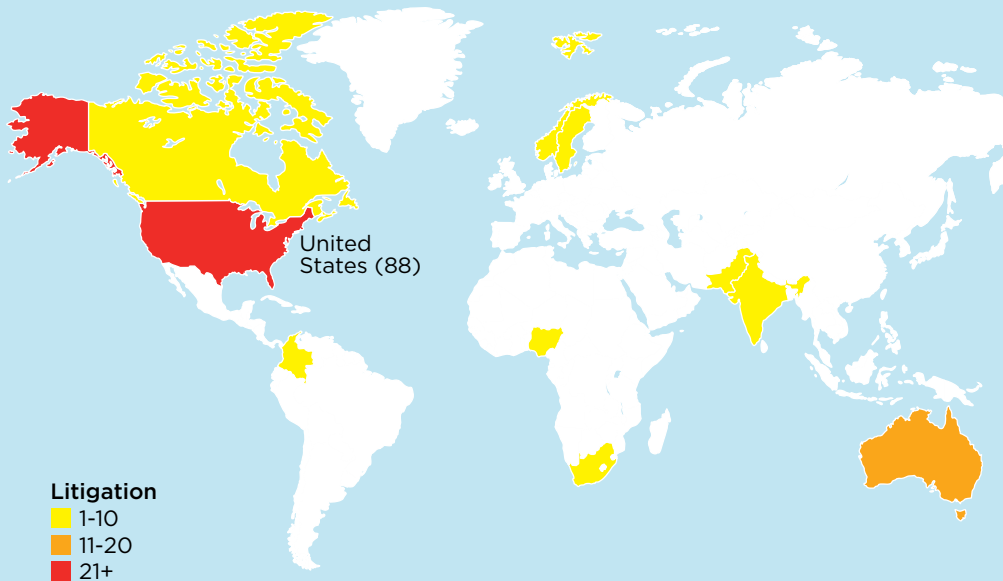
Here in Canada, the opposition to various pipeline projects, including Northern Gateway, Energy East, the TransMountain Expansion project and, most recently, Coastal Gas Link, is well documented. Pipelines were declared the #1 news story of 2018, and little has changed since.



Photo: Viad Tchompalov, Unsplash

TOP TO BOTTOM:
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA; WASHINGTON
D.C., USA; QUITO, ECUADOR

Figure 1. Litigation Against Fossil Fuel Development by Country



Source: Levin, S. (Nov. 3, 2016). "Dakota Access pipeline: the who, what and why of the Standing Rock protests." The Guardian. Accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>

Opposition has led to blockades, protests, litigation and an increasing investment chill in countries around the world, from Australia to Norway to India to Colombia.

But Canadians may not be aware that these types of fossil fuel projects are meeting with resistance around the world. Opposition has led to blockades, protests, litigation and an increasing investment chill in countries around the world, from Australia to Norway to India to Colombia.

In fact, a recent paper in *Climate Policy* authored by professors from the University of British Columbia found there is "growing momentum of supply-side constraint initiatives over the past decade" worldwide.¹ Looking at efforts to constrain fossil fuel supply over the last two decades – everything from road blocks to exploration bans – the research shows that these efforts play a valuable role in addressing the disconnect between safe levels of global carbon pollution and the ever increasing plans to develop more fossil fuel projects and increase production. At current trajectories, there is no realistic plan for meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The paper also points out that constraining a harmful pollutant, whether it be asbestos, chlorofluorocarbons or greenhouse gases, is a well-established practice and one that should be an important part of the solution if we are serious about mitigating climate change.²

Based on the news available in Canada, it may be tempting to believe that opposition to new oil and gas production and infrastructure is solely a Canadian phenomenon. A look at the maps

throughout this report clearly demonstrates that Canada is not alone – or even particularly targeted – in seeing opposition to fossil fuel development.

The *Climate Policy* paper also notes that supply side constraints can be more effective than post-production efforts to curb greenhouse gases. It quotes researchers who found that fossil fuel supply-side policies can bring about "lower administrative and transaction costs, higher certainty of abatement outcomes, and comprehensive within-sector coverage."³ In other words, if reducing climate pollution is our goal, reducing fossil fuel production is a cheaper, more certain, and more even-handed approach than attempting to limit pollution after the fact.

Most supply side initiatives are driven by citizen opposition and intervention, whether it is the hundreds of lawsuits brought against hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) in the United States, the blockading of coal infrastructure in Germany, the protesting of land and water pollution caused by oil spills in Nigeria, or divestment campaigns begun by faith-based organizations around the world that have now spread to many local governments and pension funds. These initiatives are pressuring governments and industry to reduce or cancel new fossil fuel projects.

Efforts to constrain the supply of fossil fuels are growing worldwide – and are not about to go away. There have been more than 1,300 supply side actions worldwide since 1988, the year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established. Until fossil fuel producers develop credible plans to level off, and ultimately phase out, production, there is no reason to believe that these efforts will abate here in Canada, or anywhere else in the world.

The bottom line is that Canada is not unique – or even stands out – when it comes to opposition to fossil fuel development. Our country lags far behind the United States in citizen’s use of litigation to stop fossil fuel projects, and even in the use of direct action, such as blockades and protests, against such projects. Moratoriums and bans have been more widespread in the U.S. as well, while the United Kingdom is far ahead on divestment. Higher levels of direct action by citizens can be found in many countries, including Nigeria, Algeria, Colombia, the United Kingdom, Ecuador, Venezuela and Germany.

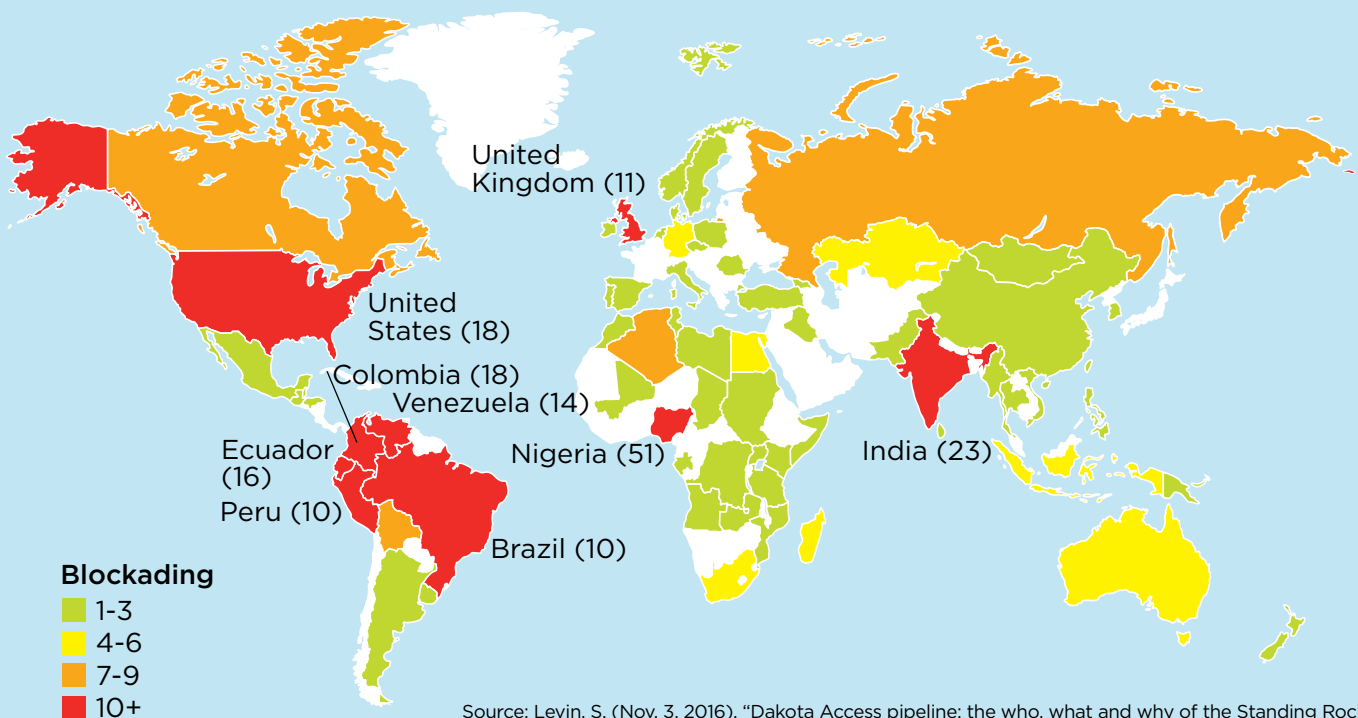
Figure 2 shows that efforts to stop further development of oil and gas reserves are underway in dozens of countries around the world:

Fossil fuel projects contested across Canada

Canadians strongly support climate action, including putting a price on carbon. So it is not surprising that there is growing support for ending fossil fuel development across the country. Though the withdrawal of the proposed Teck Frontier Mine is still fresh in our memory, and much attention has been paid to the oil sands more generally, efforts to stop oil and gas production have not been limited to Alberta. And like the Teck Frontier Mine proposal, it is often First Nations and other Indigenous communities and organizations that lead the opposition effort.

A 2019 Nanos poll found that Canadians outside the Prairies believed the environment should be a higher priority for the federal government than the economy by a wide margin.⁴ As pollster Nick Nanos noted, “Setting aside some of the naysayers, specifically in Alberta and Saskatchewan, who are looking to diminish that particular issue, the fact of the matter is there’s no fatigue right now in engaging on the environment. Canadians want to see action on that.”⁵

Figure 2. Blockades Against Fossil Fuel Development by Country



Source: Levin, S. (Nov. 3, 2016). “Dakota Access pipeline: the who, what and why of the Standing Rock protests.” The Guardian. Accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>



MONTREAL, CANADA

THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Strong public opposition and concerns about groundwater contamination, earthquakes and methane releases have led Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to implement moratoriums on fracking.^{6,7} Actions against fracking in the Maritime provinces have included road blockades and protests in front of the provincial legislature in Halifax.^{8,9}

In 2013, police raided a blockade near the Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick, where in a foreshadowing of the 2020 Wet'suwet'en protests and blockades, Indigenous leaders reminded governments that they had not surrendered their land rights under “peace and friendship” treaties signed in the 1700s. The Elsipogtog First Nation has been supported in its opposition to fracking by local non-Indigenous communities that also fear pollution and its impact on water supplies.¹⁰

In June 2019, the New Brunswick government lifted its moratorium in one region of the province without consulting First Nations, a prerequisite in the original moratorium legislation.¹¹ The government then made a quick about face when

First Nations made it clear that the government’s plan to “regulate first, consult later” was not acceptable, leading to the shelving of a drilling plan for the region.¹²

In Nova Scotia, 60,000 people have signed a petition opposing offshore drilling around the Sable Island National Park Reserve,¹³ while 12 municipalities have called on the provincial government to reconsider offshore drilling everywhere off the province’s coast.¹⁴ In 2019, Nova Scotia extended a moratorium on drilling on the seafood-rich Georges Bank until 2022.¹⁵

QUEBEC

In 2018, Quebec banned fracking for shale gas province-wide and put new restrictions on conventional drilling activities. This would include a ban on drilling in the St. Lawrence River, other provincial waterways, and within one kilometre of municipal boundaries.¹⁶

Quebec has seen opposition to natural gas being exported from the province as well, including the proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal just upstream from the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, an important sanctuary for beluga whales. In addition to strong public opposition to both the terminal and a 750 km gas pipeline to feed it,

160 Quebec scientists signed a letter opposing construction, noting the project is “incompatible with the idea of energy transition.”¹⁷ They were joined by 40 economists, who openly questioned the project’s employment and economic benefit claims.¹⁸ And once again, Indigenous Peoples are taking the lead in opposing the project, with Innu communities protesting the pipeline and demanding to be fully consulted before plans proceed.¹⁹

In 2017, the Quebec government banned oil and gas drilling on Anticosti Island following years of protest about plans to drill on the island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Island residents were joined by people throughout Quebec in opposing plans for drilling on the island.²⁰ The Quebec government noted that drilling on the island was deeply incompatible with efforts to have it designated as a World Heritage Site based on its “575 kilometres of coastline, deep canyons, impressive waterfalls, caves and 27 rivers and streams that are home to a bounty of salmon and trout.”²¹



TORONTO, ON, CANADA

THE ARCTIC

Recognizing the significant risk of a spill and the noise impacts of drilling activities in one of the most pristine marine environments on Earth, the Canadian government put in place a moratorium on drilling and exploration activities in the Arctic Ocean until 2022.²² The moratorium will be reviewed every five years. The government also returned \$430 million in security deposits from oil and gas companies that had plans to drill in the Arctic.²³

Industry interest in proceeding with Arctic drilling had already been dampened by the low price of oil, the high cost of drilling, and additional safety regulations, but the federal moratorium made it clear that the risks of drilling in this fragile environment needed much greater scrutiny. Polling has found strong public support for the government’s actions, with 56 per cent of provincial residents and 65 per cent of territorial residents supporting extending the ban until 2026 and more than half of all Canadians supporting a permanent ban on drilling in the Arctic.²⁴

The federal action follows on the heels of local opposition to drilling, driven by concerns about its impact on critical marine mammal populations. Exploration activities, including air gun blasts every 13 to 15 seconds, 24 hours a day, for five years were clearly an enormous threat to seals and other traditional foods that were vital to Inuit communities’ culture and diet. The people of Clyde River appealed a National Energy Board (NEB) approval for such exploration – with the assistance of Greenpeace – and won a Supreme Court decision in 2017 that reversed the NEB approval and stated that the Inuit had not been properly consulted.²⁵ “Our way of life is more important than money,” former Clyde River Mayor Jerry Natanine told the Toronto Star.²⁶

BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia has seen its share of protests as the province has continued to ramp up natural gas exploration and production in a quest to cash in on an LNG “boom” that so far has failed to materialize. In 2015, members of the Lax Kw’alaams First Nation camped on the site of a proposed liquefied natural gas terminal on Lelu Island for more than two months. They were deeply concerned about development work being undertaken by Malaysian



VICTORIA, BC, CANADA



gas company Petronas in sensitive salmon-bearing part of Lelu Island and Flora Bank, which are located at the mouth of the Skeena River.

Lax Kw'alaams Hereditary Chief Donald Wesley pointed out that “They couldn't have put [this project] in a worse possible place. It's right at the mouth of the second biggest salmon-bearing river in British Columbia. Do we really want to give that up?”²⁷ The Northwest LNG project was officially cancelled in 2017 and the Prince Rupert Port Authority subsequently announced it was placing a developmental moratorium on Flora, Agnew and Horsey Banks around the island to ensure the protection of marine habitat.²⁸

BC First Nations also led opposition to drilling in the Sacred Headwaters, an area containing the headwaters of three important salmon rivers – the Stikine, Skeena and Nass Rivers. A Tahltan elders group known as the Klabona Keepers has directly opposed a series of mineral exploration activities in the region, including coal exploration. In 2012, the BC government permanently banned Shell's plans for coal-bed methane development in a

4,000-square-kilometre section of the Sacred Headwaters after years of Tahltan protests and even arrests that started in 2005.^{29,30} The B.C. government also put a temporary hold on coal exploration permits in the area in 2014.³¹

In response to the decision to permanently end coal-bed methane development, Annita McPhee, president of the Tahltan Central Council told the *Globe and Mail*, her members were “[o]verjoyed and deeply moved” by the decision, adding “In 2005, we were so afraid of what was going to happen to this area,” noting Tahltan members were more than willing to risk arrest to protect the area.³²

The recent Coastal Gas Link protests have their roots in fossil fuel development in BC, not Alberta, and led to economic impacts countrywide. Again, many fossil fuel supporters tried to portray the blockades erected by and in support of the Wet'suwet'en traditional leaders as being driven by “outsiders.”³³ But what was really the outside influence that triggered these actions was a colonially imposed decision-making system that failed to properly understand or recognize the traditional Wet'suwet'en leadership and its control over unceded territories.



The American experience: Blockades, lawsuits and more lawsuits

Opposition to fossil fuel projects is arguably highest in the U.S. and uses many different strategies directed at fossil fuel companies and at federal, state, and local governments. No type of fossil fuel development – coal, oil, or natural gas – is exempt from attention and resistance.

BLOCKADES

One of the highest profile anti-fossil fuel protests took place on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation south of Bismarck, North Dakota. Thousands of people gathered to protest plans to build a pipeline nearly 2,000 km in length from the Baaken oil fields in North Dakota to an oil terminal in Illinois. The pipeline would run under both the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, which raised deep concerns about the potential for polluting major river systems and drinking water supplies.³⁴

Over the course of resistance that ran from early 2016 through 2017, hundreds of people were arrested as police used pepper spray, tear gas, rubber bullets, dogs and Tasers to clear protest camps set up to block the pipeline route.³⁵ Arrests and detentions related to the opposition included the issuing of an arrest warrant for Green Party Presidential Candidate Jill Stein (for spray painting a message supporting land defenders on a bulldozer)³⁶ and the detention of a CBC journalist

travelling to the blockade at the U.S. border while his phone was searched.³⁷

Protests against the Keystone XL pipeline began in 2012 with particular concern focused on both the pipeline's climate impact and the potential for spills in Nebraska's environmentally sensitive Sandhills region and where it would cross the Northern Ogallala aquifer. Trans Canada (now TC Energy) was originally denied permission to construct the northern section of the pipeline by the Obama administration based on potential environmental impacts, but this decision was later reversed by the Trump administration. As a result, more than 750 people were arrested for protesting the pipeline in North Dakota in 2016.³⁸

South Dakota is now preparing for continued protests against the pipeline by passing draconian legislation that would give the state the power to seek large financial penalties against any person or organization seen as supporting protests. South Dakota governor Kristi Noem contends that outside interests are behind campaigns to disrupt pipeline construction in her state, despite evidence that the pipeline is not being welcomed by many within her own state, including First Nations.³⁹ (The law was suspended pending lawsuits brought by environmental and civil right organizations in September 2019).⁴⁰

Standing Rock gained international attention, but there have also been a number of lower-profile pipeline blockades across the United States. For example:

- In West Virginia, protests have erupted around plans to build an 885 km fracked-gas pipeline through the Shenandoah Valley. In February 2015, more than 50 people blockaded the entrance to the headquarters of energy company Dominion Power in Richmond, Virginia. Ten people were arrested.⁴¹
- In 2011 the Florida Power and Light Company commissioned NextEra Energy, Spectra Energy and Duke Energy to construct an 830 km natural gas pipeline originating in Alabama and traversing Georgia before terminating in Florida. In Florida local civilians gathered at the Sacred Waters and Crystal Waters camps in efforts to stop construction, while the Seminole Tribe of North Florida opened protest camps along the pipeline's route. Completion of the pipeline has now been delayed until 2021.⁴²

- In Massachusetts, protests against a new Kinder Morgan natural gas pipeline have focused on a section intended to run through the Otis State Forest, a 900-acre old growth forest. The forest was purchased by Massachusetts taxpayers for \$5.2 Million in 2007 in order to place it into perpetual protection. At least 70 arrests of protesters have been made thus far.⁴³

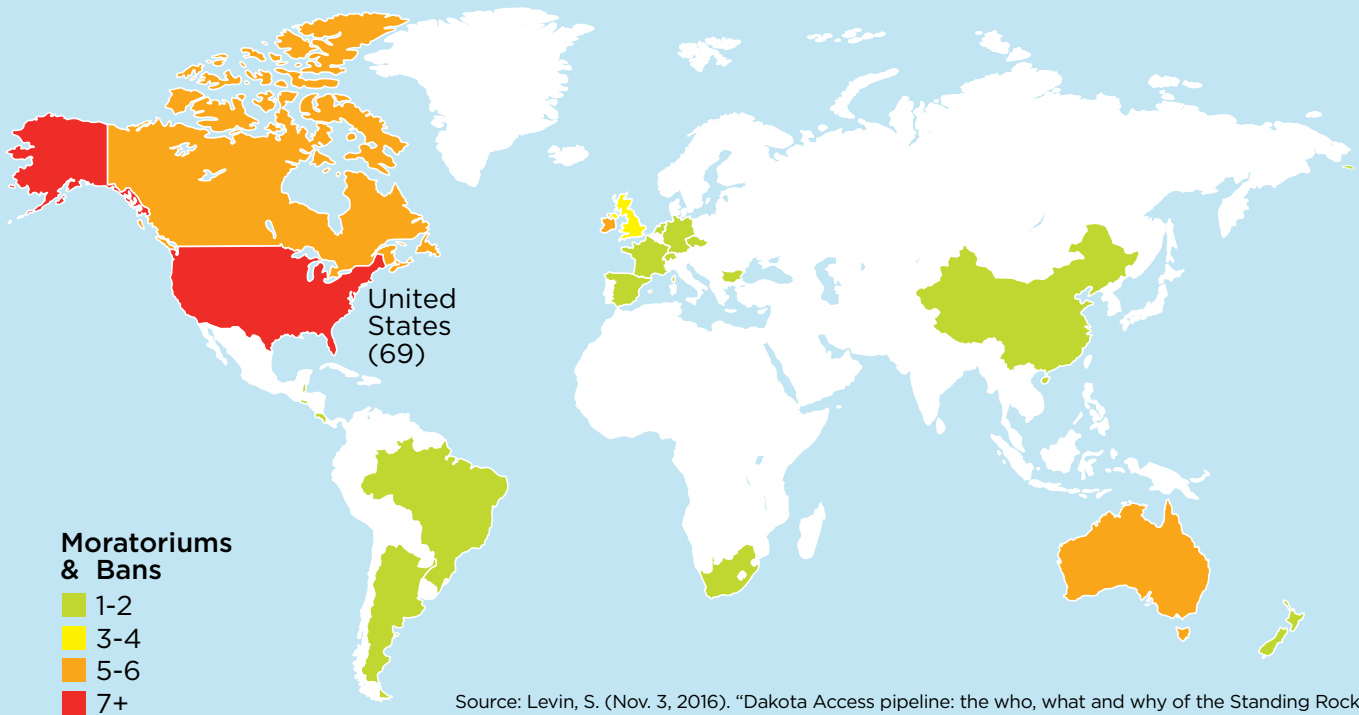
As in Canada, rail line blockades have been used across the U.S. as a way of protesting continued fossil fuel development. In January 2019, protestors blocked tracks in a Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail yard in Everett, Washington to protest steadily increasing oil train traffic.⁴⁴ Protestors also blocked tracks in and around Vancouver, Washington in 2017 in an attempt to protest the development of a new oil terminal.⁴⁵ In addition, citizens have blocked rail shipments of specialized materials used in fracking from the Port of Olympia.⁴⁶ Activists blockaded tracks, marched and protested from a flotilla of small boats at two Washington oil refineries in Anacortes in 2016. Fifty-two people were arrested. One local activist pointed out how government was putting its energies into arresting protestors rather than taking action on climate. “We really need to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable,” she said.⁴⁷

OPPOSITION BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Meanwhile, U.S. states and local governments are acting on behalf of their citizens to oppose a variety of fossil fuel developments. For example, New York, California, Delaware, Florida, Maryland and New Jersey are fighting Trump administration efforts to open previously closed areas in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans for drilling and have outright banned nearshore drilling (within 4.8 km), over which they have jurisdiction.^{48,49} U.S. states including New York, Vermont, Maryland and Washington have banned hydraulic fracking for oil and gas.⁵⁰

Attempts to increase coal exports out of the U.S. Pacific Northwest have also drawn strong public opposition and state government action. In 2018, Washington State rejected a major coal terminal on the Columbia River citing threats to water quality.⁵¹ This is at least the fifth coal export project to be blocked in the U.S. Northwest since 2014,⁵² including the massive proposed Pacific Gateway Terminal.⁵³ All of the proposals have attracted sustained public opposition.

Figure 3. Moratoriums and Bans Against Fossil Fuel Development by Country





Efforts to export Liquefied Natural Gas are also experiencing serious opposition. In Oregon, a proposal to build a 370 km pipeline from Colorado to a proposed export terminal in Coos Bay is being opposed by the state government after landowners and residents protested the project. The state says it will not issue permits for the project, leaving it to the federal government to decide if it will override the state decision and face more public opposition.⁵⁴

The decision follows a year in which opponents of the project were subject to surveillance by the South Western Oregon Joint Task Force, a law enforcement group that included the FBI, but that also circulated information to a Republican-aligned PR operative.⁵⁵ Twenty-one protesters were arrested after staging a sit-in at the newly elected Democratic State Governor's office.⁵⁶ In 2017, activists put a proposed "Community Bill of Rights" on the ballot in Coos County, which would have "outlawed industrial fossil fuel projects and established legally enforceable rights for local ecosystems." Fossil interests spent more than \$500,000 to successfully defeat the proposal.⁵⁷

Hundreds of municipal bans and moratoriums on fossil fuel development have also been enacted

across the country, with the fossil fuel industry now pushing hard for oil-and-gas states to outlaw such local ordinances.^{58,59} The industry was particularly taken aback by a vote in favour of a ban in Denton, Texas, the first attempt to stop fracking in the oil-friendly state.

LEGAL AVENUES

In the U.S., lawsuits have often been used to try to stop fracking activities, pipeline construction, and coal mining and exporting. One legal summary lists 140 lawsuits around fracking filed between 2011 and 2017.⁶⁰ In February 2020, Duke Energy and its partners walked away from the \$1-billion Constitution Pipeline designed to take fracked gas from Pennsylvania to New York City and New England after delays caused by legal challenges and protests made the project uneconomic.⁶¹

"At this critical moment for our climate, we cannot afford unnecessary fossil fuel projects that will lead to more fracking and exacerbate our climate crisis," Earthjustice lawyer Moneen Nasmith said in a written statement in response to the cancellation.⁶²

Lawsuits in the U.S. have not only been used to try to stop specific projects, they are increasingly focused on holding fossil fuel companies responsible for the damage they have done to

our climate. According to Inside Climate News, “Nine cities and counties, from New York to San Francisco, have sued major fossil fuel companies, seeking compensation for climate change damages....Rhode Island became the first state to join them [with] its own lawsuit seeking to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the impacts of climate change.”⁶³ Cities have been joined by youth-led lawsuits along similar lines. Nine children’s lawsuits supported by Our Children’s Trust have been filed in state courts from Alaska to Florida.⁶⁴

OIL INDUSTRY VS FREE SPEECH

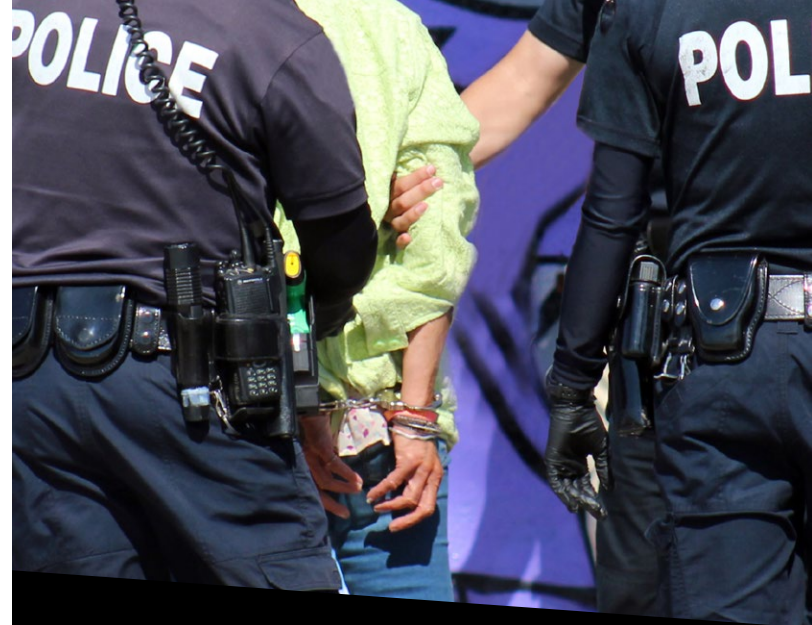
Protests over oil and gas have erupted even in the heart of American oil country – Texas. In September 2019, Greenpeace activists hung off a bridge over the Houston Ship Channel and unfurled banners that blocked passage for oil tankers. The protestors launched their action despite Texas’ new law criminalizing interference with oil and gas infrastructure coming into effect just weeks earlier.⁶⁵

The Texas law was passed partly in response to continuing protests against Kinder Morgan’s Permian Highway pipeline, which would take gas from the Permian basin to the Gulf Coast. The pipeline plan is strongly opposed by landowners, who face having their properties essentially seized by the pipeline company, and by Texans concerned about groundwater contamination, including pollution of the Hill Country aquifers that are the source of 80 per cent of San Antonio’s drinking water.⁶⁶

“It’s a pity that policymakers are continuing to protect the dirty fossil fuel industry and there are higher fines for chaining yourself to a fence than a company gets for poisoning the water with benzene,” Jennifer Falcon, campaign manager for the Society of Native Nations told Mother Jones.⁶⁷

In response to escalating opposition to fossil fuel projects, more than a dozen U.S. States have adopted draconian anti-protest laws that impose harsh punishments (including jail time) for “interfering” with oil and gas infrastructure or pipelines. This interference often includes simply being in the path of a proposed pipeline, even if on private land with permission from the landowner, an offence that in some cases could result in a year of prison time.⁶⁸

States have received help in crafting these laws from the American Fuel and Petrochemical



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JENNIFER FALCON
Society of Native Nations

Manufacturers (AFPM), a powerful industry lobby group, which has circulated model legislation to state leaders through the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council, and lobbied members to pass laws that can include requiring protestors to pay for the costs of policing demonstrations and fining anyone seen as supporting participation in a protest.⁶⁹ The AFPM has also been involved in funding pro-pipeline groups masquerading as community-based organizations to counter backlash from local residents against pipelines.⁷⁰

The AFPM’s actions make it very clear that opposition to oil and gas development is not strictly an Alberta or Canada phenomenon. The Alberta government seems to now be taking strategies from American jurisdictions in trying to suppress and criminalize dissent that has been growing steadily for more than a decade.⁷¹



The worldwide movement rises up

Opposition to fossil fuel development is not limited to North America either. Actual bans on oil and gas activity are spreading worldwide due to the pressure that public protests are exerting on governments. For example, there are now bans or moratoriums on fracking in Germany,⁷² France,⁷³ Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales,⁷⁴ and Uruguay.⁷⁵ Oil and gas exploration bans have been enacted in New Zealand (offshore), France (onshore and offshore), Costa Rica (onshore and offshore), Ireland (offshore), Belize (offshore), Denmark (inland waters only) and in the Lofoten Islands in Norway (offshore).^{76,77}

In Germany, protestors have blockaded coal plants and hundreds have been arrested.⁷⁸ India has seen multiple protests (and arrests) against coal mining projects.⁷⁹ In Poland, climate activists successfully stopped the construction of a huge new coal plant through legal action that helped deter investors.⁸⁰ In the Philippines, protestors blockaded a Shell Oil refinery.⁸¹

Major oil and gas producing countries have not been immune from citizen actions to stop fossil fuel production or to address its polluting impacts. Everywhere from Ecuador to Iraq, protestors have made investment in fossil fuel extraction less tenable. Anti-fracking protests in Ecuador resulted in companies expressing little interest in a licensing auction in the Amazon region,⁸² while Kurds in Iraq have protested drilling in Iraqi Kurdistan.⁸³



Here are some additional examples of actions being taken against fossil fuel development around the world:

Figure 4a. Examples of Major Actions Against Fossil Fuel Development by Country with Timeline



> For full details, see **Figure 4b** on page 13.

Figure 4b. Examples of Major Actions Against Fossil Fuel Development by Country (List)

#	COUNTRY	ACTIONS
1	Nigeria	Protests against the environmental and health harms caused by often poorly regulated oil and gas development has a long history, dating back to the anti-Shell campaigns led by Ken Saro Wiwa in the 1990s, before he was sentenced to death by a special tribunal in what was widely seen as a show trial. ⁸⁴ Today, protests continue to regularly disrupt oil production in the Niger Delta. ⁸⁵
2	Kenya	Oil and gas drilling was suspended in the Lake Turkana region in 2013 after locals protested that they were seeing few benefits and much potential harm to pasture lands and national parks from exploration activities. ⁸⁶
3	Argentina	Mapuche communities protested the development of a potentially huge fracked gas field in the country's Neuquén basin. In 2013, 5,000 people came out to protest shale gas exploration in the region and met a violent police response, with four houses burnt to the ground. ⁸⁷
4	Bolivia	In 2015, the Guarani Indians of Takovo Mora blockaded a road to stop oil exploration in their territory. There were 26 arrests. ⁸⁸
5	Brazil	As awareness and concern about the dangers of fracking increased, the state oil company Petrobras rushed to declare that it was more interested in conventional oil and gas development. Nevertheless opposition to oil and gas activities remains strong in many areas. In fact, the State of Acre helped to block a planned drilling rights auction in 2015. ⁸⁹
6	Romania	Villagers occupied fields for two months, blocking roads leading to an area Chevron had leased for shale gas production. Police blocked roads to the area to prevent other protestors from joining the fight while riot police eventually moved in to remove the occupiers. In 2015, Chevron abandoned its exploration activities citing poor results and sustained opposition. ⁹⁰
7	Algeria	Huge protests erupted after the country legalized fracking. Some protests continued for more than five months, despite facing a harsh response from the Algerian government. In January 2016, the government announced it would halt fracking activity due to low oil prices. ⁹¹
8	Australia	Protestors temporarily shut down operations in the port of Newcastle, the world's largest coal export port. In May 2016, anti-coal activists gathered at the port and on the Sandgate Bridge railway line as part of the global "Break Free from Fossil Fuels" action. Fifteen-hundred activists gathered in Newcastle and hundreds kayaked into the shipping channel to block coal ships from entering and leaving the harbor, while around 70 protesters at Sandgate Bridge blocked a coal train. In addition to the blockade, protesters climbed vessels and infrastructure and hung banners calling for politicians to "Make Coal History." ⁹²
9	Philippines	Anti-coal activist Gloria Capitan was killed on July 1, 2016, due to her work organizing and leading activists who stood up against plans for coal stockpiles and a coal-fired power plant in Mariveles, near Manila. ⁹³
10, 13	Mexico	In 2017, the indigenous Yaqui tribe opposed what they viewed as unauthorized trespassing on their land, used a backhoe to puncture and extract a 25-ft segment from a \$400 million gas pipeline. ⁹⁴ Meanwhile, protests in Chiapas state led the Mexican energy ministry to scrap an auction of two onshore blocks for oil exploration. ⁹⁵ In 2019, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador was elected as President with a widely supported promise to ban fracking. ⁹⁶
11	South Africa	A national anti-fracking alliance has been formed to oppose plans for fracking in the arid Karoo region. In 2017, the Government of South Africa's plans for shale gas development were upended when a court ruled that environmental approvals were invalid in a case brought by a farmers group. ⁹⁷
12	Britain	Also a leader in divestment, moving investments away from fossil fuel companies. British institutions with divestment policies include the British Medical Association, 78 universities, and a dozen city councils. ⁹⁸ Meanwhile, 300 British MPs have called for their own pension fund to divest from fossils. ⁹⁹
14	Peru and Ecuador	Indigenous organizations have come together in a powerful cross-border alliance to protest plans for expanded oil and gas exploration in the headwaters of the Amazon River, and in 2019 put forward their own vision for protection of the Sacred Headwaters region. ¹⁰⁰
15	Norway	In May 2019, 40,000 children and youth from all over the country took part in country-wide rallies calling for action on climate change. ¹⁰¹ Norway's decision to not allow drilling in the Lofoten Islands has been cited as an example of how climate-concerned youth are changing the country's culture. For example, the youth wings of seven out of the nine parliamentary parties in Norway are now calling for the country to either restrict or to completely phase out petroleum activities. The number of applications for petroleum geosciences and engineering program at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, the country's leading program, fell to 33 in 2018 from 420 in 2013. ¹⁰²

Source: Levin, S. (Nov. 3, 2016). "Dakota Access pipeline: the who, what and why of the Standing Rock protests." The Guardian. Accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>

As the Norwegian example demonstrates, the social licence for oil and gas extraction is rapidly evaporating around the world, even in places that have been heavily dependent on revenues from fossil fuel extraction. This situation is only likely to grow more intense as the impacts of climate change become increasingly apparent.

Where dissent is simply not tolerated

The few places in the world where there are little or no public protests or other actions aimed at ending fossil fuel production share one common characteristic: they are authoritarian regimes. In places like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Russia, public opposition to fossil fuel development is simply not tolerated.

There is a record of a protest against offshore oil development in the Black Sea in Russia in 2017.¹⁰³ However the Putin regime has been the trend setter in passing laws that suppress protest and public dissent.¹⁰⁴ The fact that American states are following Putin's lead is another sign of eroding commitments to democracy.

In Saudi Arabia, there is ample evidence that dissent is sometimes met with the deployment of armoured vehicles.¹⁰⁵ However, the world's largest oil state had a rough few months in 2017 with missile attacks on its oil infrastructure by hostile forces as tensions in the always volatile oil-rich region continue to rise.¹⁰⁶ Some Saudis, particularly the minority Shia Muslim population in the oil-rich coastal region of Qatif have been taking huge risks to protest the lack of opportunities in the region.¹⁰⁷ As one local activist told a BBC reporter, "You are now standing on top of oilfields that feed the whole world. But we see nothing of it. Poverty, hunger, no honour, no political freedom, we have nothing. What is left? And after all this, they attack us and try to kill us."¹⁰⁸

In China, the public has actually been quite vocal in its calls for actions to address abysmal air quality, including holding large street protests that have "surprised" the government with their level of participation.¹⁰⁹ Coal burning is obviously a major contributor to China's air quality problems and the government has been forced to take steps to try

to ratchet down coal use, especially near major cities.¹¹⁰ However, Chinese authorities are a long way from allowing protestors free reign: The city of Chengdu was locked down after protestors put face masks on statues in the polluted city to draw attention to health-threatening air quality, and lawyers who challenge a lack of enforcement of environmental laws in China are routinely jailed.¹¹¹



Follow the money

Some in Canada would like people to believe that a vast conspiracy of foreign money has flowed toward stopping oil and gas production in Alberta. But the facts don't bear this out. According to analysis undertaken by the National Observer:

"...since 2009 over 100,000 charitable foundations and non-governmental funders have granted some \$700 billion to recipient organizations worldwide.

Of that number, roughly 1,800 private foundations committed more than \$4.9 billion specifically to climate initiatives. Just five foundations granted half of that figure.

Of that nearly \$5 billion, American-based recipients received an overwhelming \$2.9 billion — or 59 per cent — of all climate grants. Almost \$2 billion was divided between the European Union, China and India.

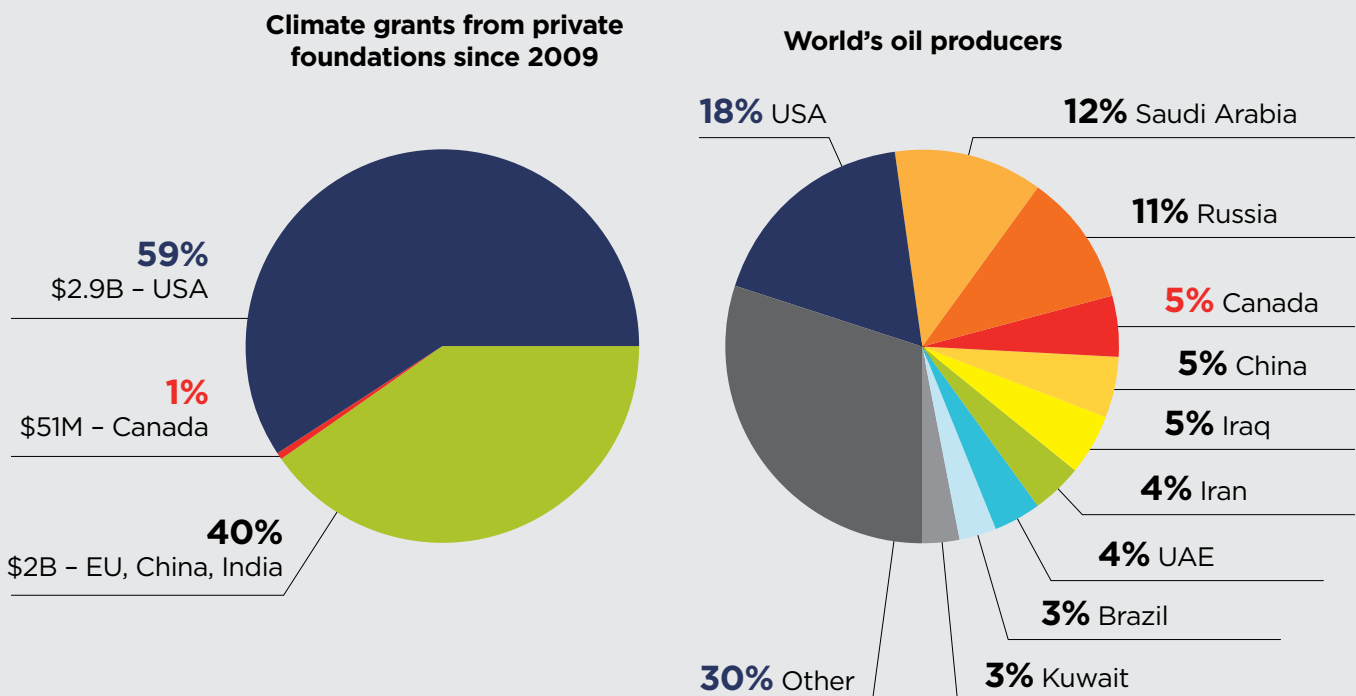
\$51 million went to Canadian climate projects, of which roughly \$40 million was granted to dozens of small organizations organized as the Tar Sands Campaign, and most of the balance went to the Montreal-based Global Campaign for Climate Action."¹¹²

In other words, of the money provided by private foundations for action on climate change since 2009, just 1 per cent flowed to Canada. (It is worth noting that Canada produces about 5 per cent of the world's oil¹¹³ and 5 per cent of the world's natural gas.¹¹⁴) If this is a foreign conspiracy to stop fossil fuel development in Canada, it is very poorly funded one.

The Rockefeller Brothers and the Hewlett Foundation have come under fire from Canadian oil and gas boosters, named as examples of U.S. funders trying to block Alberta oil in particular, possibly for pro-U.S. reasons. Once again, the evidence belies this argument: "Since 2009 . . . the Hewlett and Oak foundations and [Rockefeller Brothers Fund] granted fully \$7 billion worldwide in all categories. They granted more than \$750 million to American climate projects and just \$22 million to Canadian anti-pipeline groups."¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, 70 per cent of production from the oil sands is owned by foreign companies and shareholders.¹¹⁶ And it has continued to amass huge profits from fossil fuel development. For example, Imperial Oil, the Canadian arm of Exxon, paid the mother company \$16 billion in dividends over the last decade.¹¹⁷

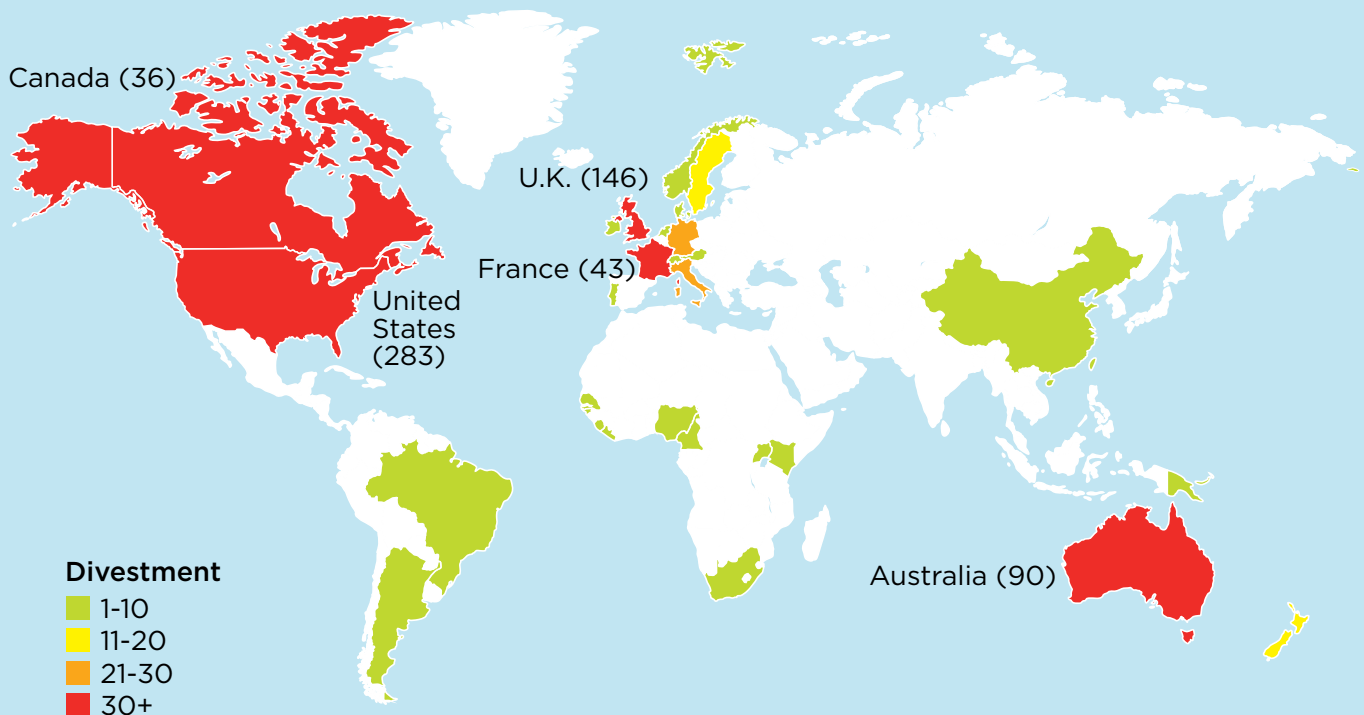
Figure 5. Foundation Grants for Climate Change Work by Country compared with Oil Production by Country





Britain is a leader in divestment, moving investments away from fossil fuel companies. British institutions with divestment policies include the British Medical Association, 78 universities, and a dozen city councils.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, 300 British MPs have called for their own pension fund to divest from fossils.¹¹⁹

Figure 6. Campaigns for Divestment from Fossil Fuel Production and Infrastructure by Country



Source: Levin, S. (Nov. 3, 2016). "Dakota Access pipeline: the who, what and why of the Standing Rock protests." The Guardian. Accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>

Conclusion

It's not surprising that fossil fuel companies want to continue drilling, fracking, mining and exporting their polluting products worldwide. Oil and gas production remains a profitable business for the big oil companies in particular. The industry has gone to great lengths to keep their projects moving forward - from drafting draconian anti-protest laws to trying to paint protestors as "radicals"¹²⁰ to spending in the hundreds of millions every year to lobby against sensible climate policies.¹²¹

Meanwhile, governments - including those in Alberta and Canada - have acknowledged that the world must move away from fossil fuels to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. But so far neither government has taken more than modest steps to actually start a transition to cleaner energy sources.

Citizens are seeing through claims about "cleaner" oil, and industry insistence that there are few or no alternatives. As Norwegian climate campaigner Frode Pleym told CNBC: "It is typical of Norwegian oil and gas companies to claim [they use] cleaner energy than other countries . . . while the process of Equinor's oil extraction may be slightly cleaner than rival energy firms, when crude is burned, it doesn't matter to the climate crisis whether the oil came from Saudi Arabia, the U.S., or Norway."¹²² Or Canada, for that matter, despite claims made by the Alberta government-funded Canadian Energy Centre.

The resistance and opposition to fossil fuel development around the world is not going away, certainly not until credible plans have been implemented everywhere that meaningfully tackle climate change and limit global warming to safe levels. Governments on every continent are starting to react to that pressure as well, and are implementing supply side policies such as bans, moratoriums, and project restrictions that curtail new fossil fuel production.

Not surprisingly, similar citizen opposition to oil and gas projects exists all across Canada. Resistance and action is more likely to ramp up rather than go away, especially with provincial and federal governments continuing a mostly business-as-usual approach to oil and gas development in the face of a climate emergency. The Canadian public increasingly understands that expanded oil production is incompatible with climate action, and with that understanding has come support for resistance movements and increased pressure on governments to stop pretending that we can have both.



BALCOMBE, UNITED KINGDOM

"When crude is burned, it doesn't matter to the climate crisis whether the oil came from Saudi Arabia, the U.S., or Norway."

FRODE PLEYM
Norwegian Climate Campaigner

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A REPORT BY:



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