

Suncor's CEO Rich Kruger to Testify Before Parliament

**MEDIA
BACKGROUNDER**

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environmental
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Context

On October 16th and 17th, Suncor's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rich Kruger will testify in front of the Natural Resources and Environment Parliamentary committees respectively, to answer for his recent comments in a shareholder meeting, where he called for Suncor's operations to be less focused on reducing their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and more focused on maximizing profits.¹ The comments from Rich Kruger came in the midst of the worst wildfire season that Canada has experienced in recorded history and disregarded the catastrophic impacts that many people in Canada faced as their communities were engulfed in flames.²

Suncor, and other Canadian oil and gas companies, have made vague net-zero commitments and set some weak targets to reduce GHG emissions. Meanwhile, these companies' activities continue to be inconsistent with Canada's climate targets. In that context, Kruger's comments are both not surprising and consistent with Suncor's lack of climate action. However, Kruger's admission that Suncor would no longer prioritize emissions reductions, especially in the face of catastrophic wildfires and floods in Canada, must be questioned by the parliamentary committees, and he must be made to answer for putting profits over people.

Oil and gas companies in Canada continue to act as the largest barrier to climate action.³ They use their lobbying power to weaken and delay climate policy.⁴ They run massive ad campaigns to mislead Canadians about climate change and climate solutions.⁵ Canada's Parliament must hold Suncor accountable on behalf of Canadians.

¹ Global News (2023). Suncor CEO says company has been too focused on energy transition, must get back to fundamentals. Available: <https://globalnews.ca/news/9898052/suncor-ceo-energy-transition-oil/>

² Government of Canada (2023). Canada's record-breaking wildfires in 2023: A fiery wake-up call. Available: <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-environment/canadas-record-breaking-wildfires-2023-fiery-wake-call/25303>

³ Environmental Defence Canada (2019) The Single Biggest Barrier to Climate Action in Canada: the Oil and Gas Lobby. Available: https://environmentaldefence.ca/report/oil_barrier_climate_action_canada/

⁴ InfluenceMap (2023). The Canadian Oil and Gas Industry and Climate Policy. Available: <https://influencemap.org/briefing/The-Canadian-Oil-and-Gas-Industry-and-Climate-Policy-14696>

⁵ Greenpeace Canada (2023) Greenpeace Canada complaint spurs formal inquiry into Pathways Alliance ad campaign. Available:

<https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/press-release/58645/greenpeace-canada-complaint-spurs-formal-inquiry-into-pathways-alliance-ad-campaign/>

Suncor's Track Record

- Suncor is the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter in Canada.⁶ Every year their projects emit 28 million tonnes of GHG, the equivalent of nearly 8 coal plants or over 6 million vehicles. When the emissions from burning the fossil fuels they produce is included, that number jumps to 128 million tonnes.⁷
- Despite clear scientific consensus that countries must stop expanding oil and gas production, Suncor continues to invest in more fossil fuel expansion.
- Suncor has lobbied the Government of Canada 57 times between January and August. This figure does not include meetings held by the Pathways Alliance. In June, just before making the public statements that garnered backlash, Suncor met twice with Minister Wilkinson, once with Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety, and with 15 Members of Parliament.⁸
- Suncor sold off their wind and solar energy assets.⁹
- Rich Kruger laid off the company's Chief Sustainability Officer.¹⁰
- Suncor has been under scrutiny following a series of six worker fatalities since 2020. It racked up 32 safety violations between November 2022 and January 2023, and was recently charged by Alberta Occupational Health and Safety for five safety violations after the death of a worker at Suncor Energy Inc.'s majority-owned unit Syncrude Canada Ltd. site.¹¹
- Suncor's US-based refinery in Colorado has been repeatedly charged by the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to meet environmental standards and exceeding pollution levels, as well as accident prevention and reporting violations.¹² Pollutants from the refinery, including benzene and hydrogen cyanide, are known carcinogens and the community near the facility experience higher than average cancer and negative health outcomes.

⁶ Canada's National Observer (2021) Canada's 100 dirtiest emitters.

Available: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2021/10/21/news/canadas-100-dirtiest-emitters>

⁷ Suncor (2023) Climate Report 2022. Available

<https://www.suncor.com/-/media/147BC3DF3E98469895D6C6D3081E13C6.pdf>

⁸ Environmental Defence Canada (2023) In June, while Canada was Burning, the Oil & Gas Industry Lobbied the Government 131 Times (and not for climate action). Available:

<https://environmentaldefence.ca/2023/09/20/in-june-while-canada-was-burning-the-oil-and-gas-industry-lobbied-131-times/>

⁹ Reuters (2022) Suncor to sell wind and solar assets to Canadian Utilities for \$536 mln.

Available: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/canadian-utilities-buy-suncors-wind-solar-assets-536-mln-2022-10-05/>

¹⁰ The Globe and Mail (2023) Suncor should return to its oil production roots, focus on 'fundamentals' over energy transition, says CEO. Available:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-suncor-should-return-to-its-oil-production-roots-focus-on-fundamentals/>

¹¹ Bloomberg BNN (2023) Suncor Unit Charged in Oil-Worker Death Amid Activist Scrutiny

Available: <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/suncor-unit-charged-in-oil-worker-death-amid-activist-scrutiny-1.1904416>

¹² Rocky Mountain PBS (2023) EPA Settlements with Suncor She Light on Decades of Environmental Injustice in North Denver Available: <https://www.rmpbs.org/blogs/news/suncor-commerce-city-violations/>

- Suncor is contaminating the Peace-Athabasca delta through to the ongoing seepage of its oil sands tailings ponds¹³ and the disposal of wastewater exceeding legal limits for substances of concern¹⁴. Suncor’s tailings ponds are the largest, holding 70 per cent of the over 1.4 billion litres of current oil sands fluid tailings.¹⁵
- To expand its Fort Hills operations, Suncor plans on mining half of the ecologically-significant McClelland Lake Wetland Complex which stores millions of tons of CO₂, filters water for the region and hosts rich biodiversity. The expansion alone would create 600 million cubic metres of toxic tailings waste.

Rich Kruger’s Climate Track Record

Prior to joining Suncor earlier this year, Rich Kruger has accrued nearly forty years of oilpatch experience, all with ExxonMobil and Imperial Oil (which is majority-owned by Exxon). Exxon has known about the impacts of burning fossil fuels for over four decades, yet has done everything in its power to discredit climate science in order to protect its core business.¹⁶ For more information on Rich Kruger’s career history, please see the attached appendix (page 5).

Profit over people

- Last year, Suncor reported a profit of over \$9 billion.¹⁷ However, Suncor is still lobbying the federal government for billions of dollars in handouts to support their carbon capture project – rather than spending any of their own earnings.¹⁸
- Like other oil and gas companies, Suncor is not paying the full carbon price. In fact, Suncor only pays roughly \$2 per tonne.¹⁹
- Suncor is laying off more than 1,500 workers to increase profits.²⁰

¹³Commission for Environmental Cooperation (2020) Alberta Tailings Ponds II. Factual Record regarding Submission SEM-17-001. Available at: http://www.cec.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/17-1-ffr_en.pdf

¹⁴CBC 2023 Nearly 6 million litres of water from oilsands sediment pond released into Athabasca River. Available: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/nearly-6-million-litres-of-water-from-oilsands-sediment-pond-released-into-athabasca-river-1.6814338>

¹⁵ Alberta Energy Regulator (2022)

¹⁶ The Guardian (2023) Revealed: Exxon made ‘breathtakingly’ accurate climate predictions in 1970s and 80s. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jan/12/exxon-climate-change-global-warming-research>

¹⁷ Environmental Defence (2023). Canada’s five biggest oil & gas companies had \$38.3 billion in combined profits in 2022. Available: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2023/02/03/big-oil-is-posting-colossal-2022-profits/>

¹⁸Pembina (2023) Waiting to Launch: The gap between Canadian oilsands companies’ climate pledges and actions. Available: <https://www.pembina.org/pub/oilsands-waiting-launch>

¹⁹ Corporate Knights (2022) Canada’s biggest emitters are paying the lowest carbon tax rate. Available: <https://www.corporateknights.com/climate-and-carbon/canadas-biggest-emitters-are-paying-the-lowest-carbon-tax-rate/>

²⁰ CBC (2023). Suncor to slash 1,500 jobs amid cost-cutting plan. Available: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bakx-suncor-jobs-layoffs-1.6862758>

Holding Oil and Gas Companies Accountable

Oil and gas companies are responsible for fueling the climate crisis. Yet for far too long, they have evaded any form of accountability. The Parliamentary committees' decision to call Rich Kruger to testify is an important first step. Members of Parliament have a chance to bring scrutiny to the activities of Canada's largest oil and gas company.

However, real accountability will come from strong and ambitious climate policies that force these companies to be accountable for the mess that they have created. In 2021, the Government of Canada announced its commitment to capping and cutting emissions from the oil and gas industry. Despite being first promised two years ago, the government has yet to publish the draft regulations for an emissions cap on the fossil fuel industry, and has consistently missed its own deadlines to release the draft regulations.

Canada cannot meet its climate commitments without forcing the oil and gas industry to reduce their emissions at par with the rest of the economy. Strong climate policies are the only way to ensure that these large companies don't sacrifice the health and future of the people in Canada for their profits.

Appendix: Rich Kruger Profile - Career History

Exxon Mobile: 1981-2013

- Rich Kruger began working at Exxon Mobile in a technical role in 1981. Moving up the company he joined regional leadership in 1999, became executive VP Production in 2006, and President of Exxon Mobile Production and VP Exxon Mobile Corp in 2008²¹
- During the 1990s Exxon Mobil promoted disinformation about the certainty of climate science to sow doubt, despite findings by Exxon and Imperial Oil (a subsidiary of Exxon) confirming climate science in the 1970s-1980s²². It wasn't until 2007 that Exxon Mobil publicly acknowledged that climate change was occurring and largely driven by burning of fossil fuels. Despite this, throughout the 2000s and 2010s it continued to publicly cast doubt about climate science, fund climate denial groups and think tanks, and promote fossil fuel expansion and use.
- During Rich Kruger's tenure in various leadership roles Exxon continued to promote narratives of uncertainty around climate science, minimize climate impacts, lobby against urgent climate action, and fund climate-denying groups and think tanks.²³ While former CEO Rex Tillerson has been the focus of most media stories relating to Exxon's attempts to downplay the link between fossil fuels and climate change,^{24,25} Rich Kruger was also part of the company's executive leadership at this time.

Imperial Oil: 2013–2019

- Rich Kruger was Chairman/President/CEO between 2013 and 2019
- During his tenure at Imperial, Rich Kruger was **critical** of government environmental policy such as the clean fuel standard and he had little **interest** in branching out into renewable energy
 - Rich Kruger said it wasn't about opposing Former Alberta Premier Rachel Notley's climate plan, but [rather his objection to putting any sort of production limit on the industry.](#)
- The following is a list of leaks and spills that occurred at Imperial facilities during this time:
 - 2014 — Sarnia, ON
 - [3.5 hour leak of hydrogen sulphide gas](#)
 - 2016 — Sarnia, ON

²¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/profile/person/4249016>

²² <https://climateinvestigations.org/imperial-oil-document-trove/>

²³ <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/fighting-climate-chaos/exxon-and-the-oil-industry-knew-about-climate-crisis/exxons-climate-denial-history-a-timeline/>

²⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/business/energy-oil/exxon-climate-change-documents-e2e9e6af>

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/sep/14/exxonmobil-documents-wall-street-journal-climate-science>

- [21 to 43 barrels of broiler cleaning acid solution](#)
- 2017 — Cold Lake, AB
 - [1.2 M litres of heavy oil and contaminated produced water leaked](#)
- 2017 — Sarnia, ON
 - [10-day uncontrolled flaring incident.](#) Imperial was [investigated but did not face charges.](#)
- 2019 — Nanticoke, ON
 - [95 litres of diesel was lost from a leaking valve](#)

Suncor: 2023-Present

- Rich Kruger has made clear that Suncor’s interests are growing profit for their shareholders through the continued expansion, extraction, and production of fossil fuels.
 - A recent [academic study](#) demonstrated how ownership of Canada’s largest oil sands companies, including Suncor, is highly concentrated among just 14 prominent shareholders who collectively controlling significant share value. Over 70 per cent of these major shareholders are foreign entities.²⁶

Lobbying

Entity	Number of lobby meetings between Jan-August 2023
Suncor	57
Pathways Alliance	65
CAPP	65

- The same month that Rich Kruger explicitly said [Suncor had been too focused on the energy transition and under his leadership would prioritize short term profits for shareholders through oil and gas](#) he was one of the top lobbyists for oil and gas on parliament hill.
 - Suncor had 13 lobby meetings with the federal government in [June](#), and an additional 13 as part of the Pathways Alliance, and 8 as a member of CAPP. This included meeting with 15 Liberal MPs
- In 2023 since Rick Kruger became CEO, Suncor has had three meetings with Minister Wilkinson, one with Minister Freeland, one with Minister Blair, and one with Minister Anand.

²⁶<https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/august-2023/foreign-oil-companies/#:~:text=Environment,-Foreign%2Downed%20oil%20companies%20in%20Canada%20hold%20key%20to%20climate.to%20protect%20the%20bottom%20line.&text=Canada's%20oil%20and%20gas%20industry%20is%20at%20a%20crossroads.>

Pivot away from Climate Action

- Suncor [sold off its wind and solar assets in 2022](#)
- Rich Kruger [ended the role](#) of Chief Sustainability Officer
- In 2022 Suncor wrote a letter to provincial regulators arguing it wouldn't be "useful" to publicly reveal climate scenario planning as part of transparency in Climate-related Financial Disclosure.²⁷
- In 2023 Suncor weakened its climate reporting by ending the inclusion of scope 3 emissions. Their climate report does not include a 1.5 degree C scenario.²⁸

Greenwashing

- Suncor is part of the Pathways Alliance²⁹, which is currently under investigation by the Canadian Competition Bureau for false or misleading claims made in its 'Clear the Air' public advertising campaign, following a request from Greenpeace and the [Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment](#).

Labour & Environmental Performance

- Suncor is laying off more than 1,500 workers to increase profits.³⁰
 - Rich Kruger was [quoted](#) saying "I think we can eliminate work. I think we can do away with work that doesn't add value," adding that all employees need to consider how their role helps to generate revenue for Suncor. .. "I very much believe in making money. We are in the business to make money and as much of it as possible, and everybody starting with me needs to see how they do that,"
- Suncor has been under scrutiny following a successive series of six worker fatalities since 2020. This prompted the resignation of former CEO Mark Little and appointment of Rich Kruger. Twelve workers have been killed in workplace accidents since 2014, more than all of its industry peers combined.³¹
- It racked up 32 safety violations between November 2022 and January 2023, and was recently charged by Alberta Occupational Health and Safety for five safety

²⁷<https://thenarwhal.ca/climate-transparency-suncor-capp/>

²⁸<https://sustainability-prd-cdn.suncor.com/-/media/32291E4F89C847D19256B03D109CF981>

²⁹<https://environmentaldefence.ca/2023/10/04/pathways-alliance-is-the-most-active-oil-and-gas-lobbyist-in-july/>

³⁰<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bakx-suncor-jobs-layoffs-1.6862758>

³¹<https://globalnews.ca/news/9105970/suncor-workplace-fatalities-survivors/>

violations after the death of a worker at Suncor Energy Inc.'s majority-owned unit Syncrude Canada Ltd. site.³²

- Suncor's US-based refinery in Colorado has been repeatedly charged by the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to meet environmental standards and exceeding pollution levels, as well as accident prevention and reporting violations.³³
 - Pollutants from the refinery, including benzene and hydrogen cyanide, are known carcinogens and the community near the facility experience higher than average cancer and negative health outcomes.
- Allegations of potential labour violations at the Colorado refinery have also recently been [circulated online](#), though we have not found a formal investigation or claims to have yet been filed.

³² <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/suncor-unit-charged-in-oil-worker-death-amid-activist-scrutiny-1.1904416>

³³ <https://www.rmpbs.org/blogs/news/suncor-commerce-city-violations/>