

BIG OIL PLAYBOOK

FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY EXPOSED

10 TACTICS





EXPOSING THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY'S PLAYBOOK

We've uncovered the strategies Big Oil relies on to protect its profits and delay climate action. The fossil fuel industry's tactics have influenced governments, misled the public, and stalled real solutions to address the climate crisis.

The goal of this report is to paint a clear picture of how oil and gas companies operate, how they generate support for the industry, and leverage it against effective climate solutions. Some of their tactics, like greenwashing and lobbying, have been well-publicized. Yet others have been largely hidden from the public, like funding astroturf groups, supporting anti-renewable energy campaigns, and infiltrating educational institutions.

Many of the tactics are designed to create “social license” for the industry. This means convincing the public to accept harmful corporate activities by framing them as reasonable and necessary despite their environmental and social costs. In order to gain or maintain this social license, corporate actors will get communities to depend on them for programs and services, shape public perception and influence media narratives, or try to compensate with other good corporate behaviour.

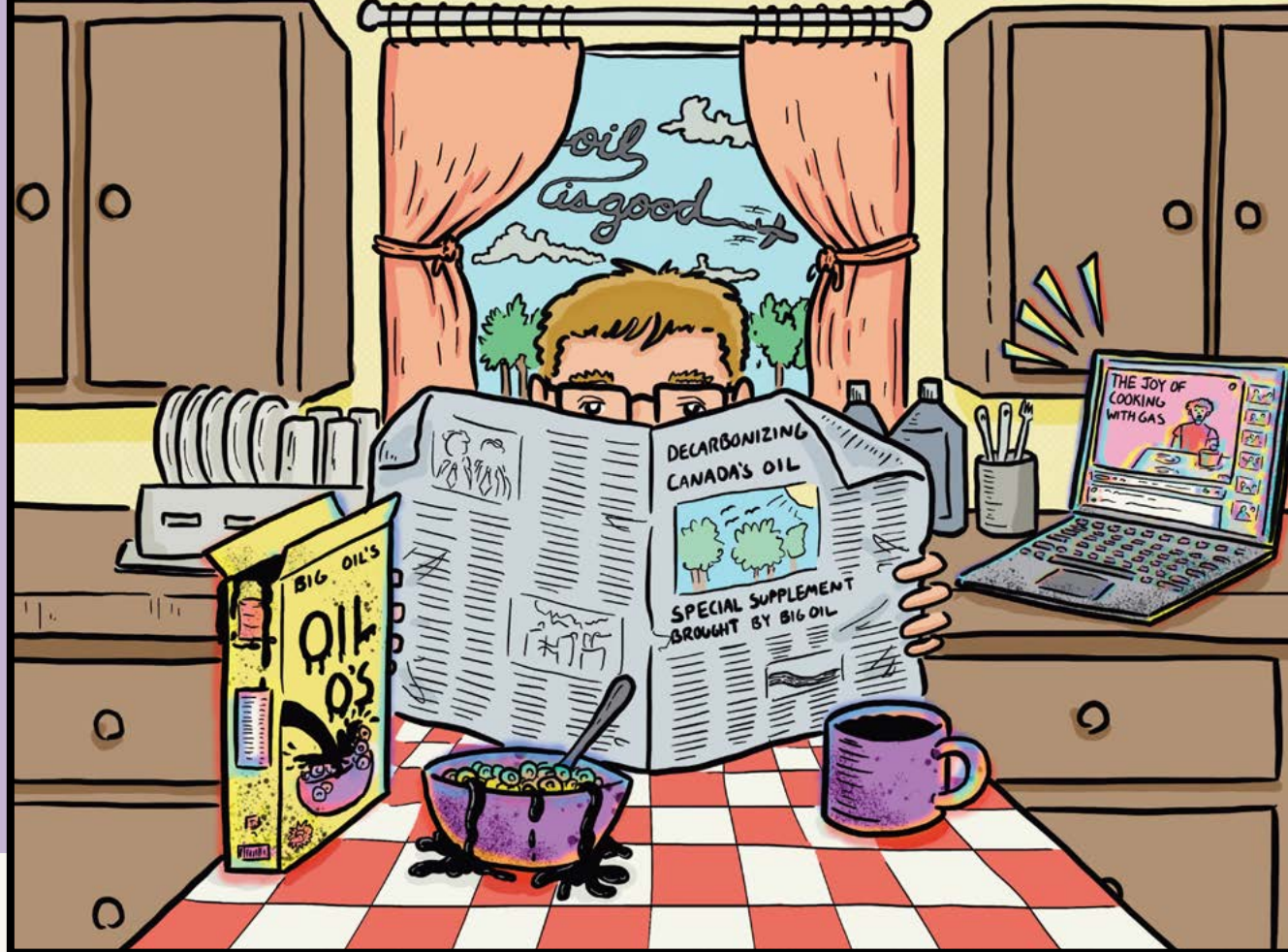
For example, during the peak of the youth-led climate strikes, the climate movement was politically powerful, concern about climate change was high and it was ranked a top priority for voters. It was strategically imperative at this time that the fossil fuel industry maintain social license by appealing to those climate concerns. So Big Oil did a strategic rebrand.

Major tar sands companies created a new front group called the Pathways Alliance, pitched a carbon capture and storage project (a noted false-solution for industry’s climate pollution),

and ran huge advertising campaigns on “working towards net-zero” (which were stopped once the federal government’s anti-greenwashing rules came into effect). All the while the fossil fuel industry continued fighting the government’s climate plans and emissions reduction policies. Big Oil was convincing the public and governments that they too were “climate-concerned” at a time when public pressure for government climate action was mounting, in order to fend off the pressure for more ambitious regulations on their pollution. These efforts to maintain the social license of fossil fuel production in Canada also created a misleading myth that fossil fuel extraction could continue, and even increase, without perilous long-term consequences for the climate, society and economy.

But the climate science is clear. Fossil fuels are driving the climate crisis and triggering biodiversity and ecosystem collapse. To prevent extreme and life-threatening global heating, production and use of coal, oil, and gas must decline as rapidly as possible; and to do so fairly, requires governments to plan for and actively manage that decline.

Demand for coal, oil, and gas is projected to peak within five years, and the transition to renewable energy has been accelerating. We have the tools to move forward and away from fossil fuels, but Big Oil is deploying all its strategies to fight against that change and keep profiting from fossil fuels.



TACTIC 1: THE EVERYWHERE ADVERTISEMENTS & GREENWASHING

THE TACTIC

Fossil fuel companies run advertising campaigns that include traditional media advertising (online news, television, radio, print and public ad space), social media (professionally produced ad paid placements, influencers, and astroturf pages), and also sponsorships of events, athletes, and other high-profile figures. Advertising campaigns range from disinformation and climate denial to greenwashing, to vague pro-fossil fuel ads that manipulate emotions in favour of fossil fuels or tie identity markers to a pro-fossil fuel lifestyle. Fossil fuel industry advertisements rarely show their products directly, but more often promote the images and values they hope to associate with their brand, or other implicit pro-fossil fuel narratives. For example, they may show a car with a family getting groceries, life-stage milestones, or nature to evoke a sense of pride and relatability. Another trend in fossil fuel advertising that researchers have identified is efforts to tie oil and gas, and pro-fossil fuel attitudes, to masculinity.

THE STRATEGY

Advertising campaigns and repeated messaging are effective at subconsciously and consciously shaping perspectives. Advertising creates pro-fossil fuel narratives and a positive general impression that helps maintain social license.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

Advertising is everywhere. While it's difficult to say exactly how much Big Oil spends on advertising, one investigation found that the five biggest oil companies in the world (ExxonMobil, BP-Amoco, Chevron-Exaco, Royal Dutch Shell and ConocoPhillips) collectively spent an average of US\$217 million on advertising annually between 2008-2016, a sixfold increase from two decades earlier, according to a 2019 paper in the journal Climatic Change.

PATHWAYS ALLIANCE GREENWASHING

Notable misleading advertisements include the Pathways Alliance "Let's Clear The Air" ad series, which was called out as greenwashing by journalists and academic researchers. This ad campaign blanketed radio waves and Spotify, covered public transit, played on commercial flights, and ran during the FIFA World Cup, Australian Open, and 2023 Super Bowl. There were full-page print newspaper ads, digital news media rollout and over a million dollars spent on Facebook and Instagram promotion. Then, when the federal government's anti-greenwashing rules came into effect, Pathways Alliance took it all down. A greenwashing complaint was filed with the Competition Bureau against Pathways, but the company was never required to correct the record. So, we at Environmental Defence did it for them – check out our video spoofing their ad and setting the record straight on carbon capture

Clean Pathway to Future.

FOSSIL GAS GETS A GLOW-UP: NOW BRANDED AS "NATURAL"

In the digital age, fossil fuel companies have embraced using influencers to try reaching younger audiences. Gas associations in particular have run extensive influencer campaigns to promote cooking with gas stoves. A greenwashing complaint was filed against the Canadian Gas Association for its promotion of "natural" gas, which gave misleading information about the costs and environmental impact. The complaint, submitted by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, points out that gas stoves have been shown to increase the risk of asthma in children, and that the production of natural gas, a fossil fuel, in fact causes air and water pollution.

Companies spend millions on advertising because they know it can work. Misleading or concerning fossil fuel advertisements can be reported to Ad Standards Canada and greenwashing complaints can be filed with the Competition Bureau. But beyond the most egregious examples of greenwashing, general advertising that promotes fossil fuels is still a powerful tactic used by fossil fuel companies to influence the public in support of their industry.





TACTIC 2: THE "GOOD" NEIGHBOUR - BUYING COMMUNITY CONSENT

THE TACTIC

Oil and gas companies use their resources to sponsor community events, programs, and infrastructure in order to build social license. They may fund community projects, municipal work, raise money for charities or good causes, and generally participate in community activities. These activities do not need to be tied to energy, resource extraction, or the environment. This is essentially buying their way into communities' good graces, not unlike bribery.

THE STRATEGY

Creating the impression that an oil company is a positive contributor to the community can stifle community opposition to the company or the industry writ large. It makes people more willing to defend the company or rationalize and ignore the harms of its other activities. This is an integral part of building social license, in particular among communities that are also facing or at risk of direct negative impacts. It's also common in communities where many people are economically connected to the industry, as it reinforces other tactics like encouraging workers to advocate for Big Oil. Companies use mostly implicit, but sometimes explicit, threats that if the industry is not supported the community's access to things like community centres, educational enrichment, etc. will decline and the community will suffer. This is not without irony or hypocrisy when, for example, a company funds a health centre where community members seek treatment for ailments brought on by the company's pollution.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

In Canada, FortisBC pays for climate leadership programs and has positioned itself to deliver the government's energy efficiency programs. This creates the impression that the company is delivering climate action, even though the programs are government funded. Meanwhile, FortisBC is also delaying and fighting the transition off of gas, and also greenwashing.

When Enbridge gave \$5000 to the South Bruce Fire Rescue Service, it was profiled in the local newspaper. When TC Energy made donations to Prince Township Volunteer Fire Department for a new truck to fight wildfires, it was a story in The Sault Star. LNG Canada, a consortium of international fossil gas companies, received similar publicity for donating to the Mount Elizabeth Theatre in Kitimat, BC.

Fossil fuel companies pay to have the naming rights to community amenities like the Emera Oval in Halifax, Suncor Community Leisure Centre in Fort McMurray, and the University of Calgary's Canadian Natural Resources Limited Engineering Complex. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, FortisBC, Enbridge all sponsored the BC Union of Municipalities annual convention.

THIS ISN'T JUST GENEROSITY.

It's an intentional public relations and branding strategy that these companies know will keep them in the public's good books. And they use that good will as leverage with governments. A U.S. Congressional investigation exposed an email from the American Petroleum Institute where it described their work with "nontraditional local allies", including the Girl Guides of America, as the "best and most influential voices with targeted policymakers on industry issues."

Oil giants BP, Shell, and Chevron were also found to have used sponsorships to assuage public concerns over fossil fuel companies' role in the climate crisis. Meanwhile, these companies were simultaneously lobbying against climate policies.

AN INVESTIGATION BY JOURNALISTS AT DESMOG REVEALED THAT:

"Chevron leveraged its sponsorship programs to 'advance business objectives' with investors, government and customers, and Shell used philanthropy to tackle the problem of 'low credibility and trust' amid 'rising societal expectations on climate action' while ensuring that oil and gas remained 'a profitable cash engine.'"

This type of reliance on corporate generosity can sometimes backfire. This year, a national climate-resilience charity based in Alberta was left in the lurch when Suncor Energy Foundation suddenly cancelled their three-year funding pledge. The charity was still waiting to receive more than half of the promised \$900,000. When an employee of the charity posted on LinkedIn explaining that their organization's activities would be impacted by an abrupt loss of funding, the organization was quickly contacted by Suncor's lawyers who gave a stern warning that the charity was "on our radar and they're flying too close to the sun." Suncor has reportedly fired all the foundation's former staff except for one administrator, and similarly abruptly ended support for multiple charities.



TACTIC 3: THE CURRICULUM CURATOR INFILTRATING EDUCATION

THE TACTIC

Big Oil intervenes in public education in order to seed support for fossil fuels at an early age. Fossil fuel industry players have developed curricula for teachers, books and other resources that are supplied to kids' classrooms. Oil and gas companies also sponsor activities and facilitate school trips that promote the fossil fuel extraction industry. Fossil fuel companies can also influence education through government partnerships or funding third-party non-profits that supply materials or program support for schools. Big Oil also has a long history of paying for or sponsoring grants, awards, post-secondary programs or buildings, and community school initiatives that don't directly promote oil and gas, but aim to embed the company in the community, similar to the tactic of "buying community consent".

THE STRATEGY

The industry's influence on education content aims to "obscure the industry's role in driving climate change while also limiting public understanding of the urgent need to transition away from fossil fuels", according to a report by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) and climate advocacy organization For Our Kids. If people can't connect the dots between fossil fuels and climate change, then Big Oil is less likely to be held accountable for the climate damages that their polluting products are causing. Industry's efforts to undermine the alternatives to fossil fuels prolongs public support for Big Oil's production, keeping the profits flowing to extraction companies.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

According to CAPE and For Our Kids' 2025 report on fossil fuel companies' influence on education in Canada, at least 39 oil and gas companies and 12 industry-tied organizations are involved in climate education. These companies supply education materials either directly to schools, or through government partnerships or third-party non-profits they fund. These materials and programs extend to reach every province in Canada, and include companies such as Shell, TC Energy and Pathways Alliance.

For example, in April 2024 the Alberta government quietly published a curriculum framework that calls on teachers to promote Alberta's oil and gas industry to schoolchildren. The curriculum framework was developed without consultation from teachers. That same year, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe announced new oil and gas courses would be offered to grade 11 and 12 students in the province. Research into Saskatchewan's education system also showed that third-party, industry-funded groups have an outsized influence on how climate change is taught in Saskatchewan schools.

TARGETING CHILDREN

Exxon worked on a series of kids' videos promoting CCS. Exxon executives asked the creative team working on the kids' series to steer away from the idea that carbon is bad or that carbon capture is difficult. An email accessed by subpoena during a legal investigation into Exxon included feedback to the creative team asking them to "De-emphasize the concept that catching carbon is difficult or hard."

INFLUENCING INSTITUTIONS

The fossil fuel industry materials and resources pouring in schools doesn't just affect what's being taught, it can also affect other administrative decisions. For example, when Dalhousie University was considering divesting the school's endowment from fossil fuels, the financial gifts and work-study program that Shell contributed to the school were used as leverage to convince the university decision-makers to shoot down divestment.



TACTIC 4: THE PETRO-PUPPETEER INFLUENCING THE PUBLIC

THE TACTIC

Big Oil works hard to make people feel proud of and connected to the fossil fuel industry. It runs marketing and branding campaigns that encourage people to weave support for oil and gas into their personal identity and sense of national or regional pride. These campaigns prompt people to publicly voice their support for fossil fuels and defend extraction companies, effectively turning them into advocates for the industry using tactics borrowed from social movements.

There's a catch, though! Some of these people aren't out cheering for oil and gas out of the kindness of their hearts. The oil industry funds astroturf groups and campaigns to facilitate pro-oil public activism. And they support grassroots NIMBY anti-renewable groups and far-right conspiratorial groups with resources, platforms, anti-climate messaging, and other forms of legitimization.

THE STRATEGY

Pro-oil advocacy by everyday people, and fossil fuel workers in particular, is valuable to Big Oil because it provides another avenue to reach and influence political decision-makers, reinforces the perceived popularity of support for fossil fuels, and generally helps maintain their social license. When the pro-oil advocates can be mobilized in a targeted way against specific policies, it can weaken or roll back climate action.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

The Canadian Gas Association, one of the fossil fuel industry's lobby groups, began secretly funding a campaign called "[Voice for Energy](#)" in 2023. The Voice for Energy campaign runs high-production-value videos and digital ads across social media platforms. Their ads range from feel-good videos featuring diverse actors who talk about how they use and love "natural" gas so much that they're compelled to speak up to protect the industry, to videos that use scare tactics and misinformation about renewables to undermine trust in the energy transition. The Voice for Energy website directs users to email elected officials using a pre-drafted letter. Previously, this form letter urged local governments to "protect" fossil fuels by opposing laws that would restrict new gas hookups in buildings. The letter now urges the government to "ensure Canada continues to invest in natural gas."

That's right, fossil fuel companies are paying for campaigns that convince regular people to tell the government to put taxpayer money back into these for-profit companies.

Political advocacy is common for non-profit organizations that focus on social issues, like human rights, environmental protection, and other campaigns for public goods. When private interests set up these advocacy campaigns that appear people-driven but actually further corporate interests, they're called 'astro-turf' groups. That's because they are modelled on, or appear to be, "grassroots" advocacy but lack the authenticity of social movements. The Voice for Energy website doesn't disclose who is behind the campaign or what Voice for Energy is, but an [investigation by DeSmog](#) journalists revealed funding from the [Canadian Gas Association](#). Environmental Defence has identified at least 28 astroturf groups or campaigns in Canada.

"CANADIAN" ASTROTURF

Another example is [Energy United](#), a Canadian [advocacy group that makes inflammatory anti-environmentalist and pro-oil social media content](#). The CBC estimates that over a one-year period, [Energy United spent between \\$135,200 and \\$174,435 on 65 Facebook and Instagram ads, reaching up to 16.5 million Canadians](#). Their website also hosts a 'Take Action' page to email elected officials. Energy United calls itself 'grassroots', but unlike a registered charity, its website does not list its funding sources. So who is paying for its well-funded ad campaigns? Energy United's online Meta ad registrations list it under the Maple Leaf Institute. The secretive Maple Leaf Institute has no website, no academic affiliation, and is listed as a soliciting corporation – meaning it received more than \$10,000 in income from public sources. The only publicly traceable information about it is the names of its four directors, all of whom were previously employed at the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Three of them are also partners in Garrison Strategy, a public and government relations firm based in Calgary.

From the group [Canada Action Network](#) and their "I ❤️🍁 Oil" merchandise, which received \$100,000 from ARC Resources, to the 'True North' anti-climate "news" website that has received at least [\\$530,000 from fracking pioneer and climate villain Gwyn Morgan](#), the fossil fuel industry has built up a network of organizations that try to mobilize the public in support of fossil fuels.



TACTIC 5: THE FRONT GROUPS

THE TACTIC

Oil, gas and coal companies create front groups to lobby on behalf of the fossil fuel industry's collective interests, rebrand in politically opportunistic ways, and engage in public advocacy that's not visibly tied to multi-billion dollar companies.

Front groups include professional industry associations like the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Canadian Gas Association, and the Pathways Alliance, which have publicly listed member companies. They also include 'astroturf' groups (groups that try to look grassroots and driven by public interest, despite corporate backing), think tanks and organizations that work with the fossil fuel industry to legitimize it and promote Big Oil's agenda.

THE STRATEGY

These front groups play different yet complementary roles in influencing the government and the public. Front groups can help companies gain access to government officials directly or mobilize the public to target the government. Having different types of front groups helps normalize the fossil fuel industry's interests by making it seem as though the same pro-oil ideas come from a range of legitimate actors. They also allow Big Oil to communicate more influentially with different segments of the public. For example, audiences who are more sceptical of corporate claims may be more accepting of pro-oil messaging that comes from an astroturf group designed to look like it's from a relatable community member rather than a rich and powerful company.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

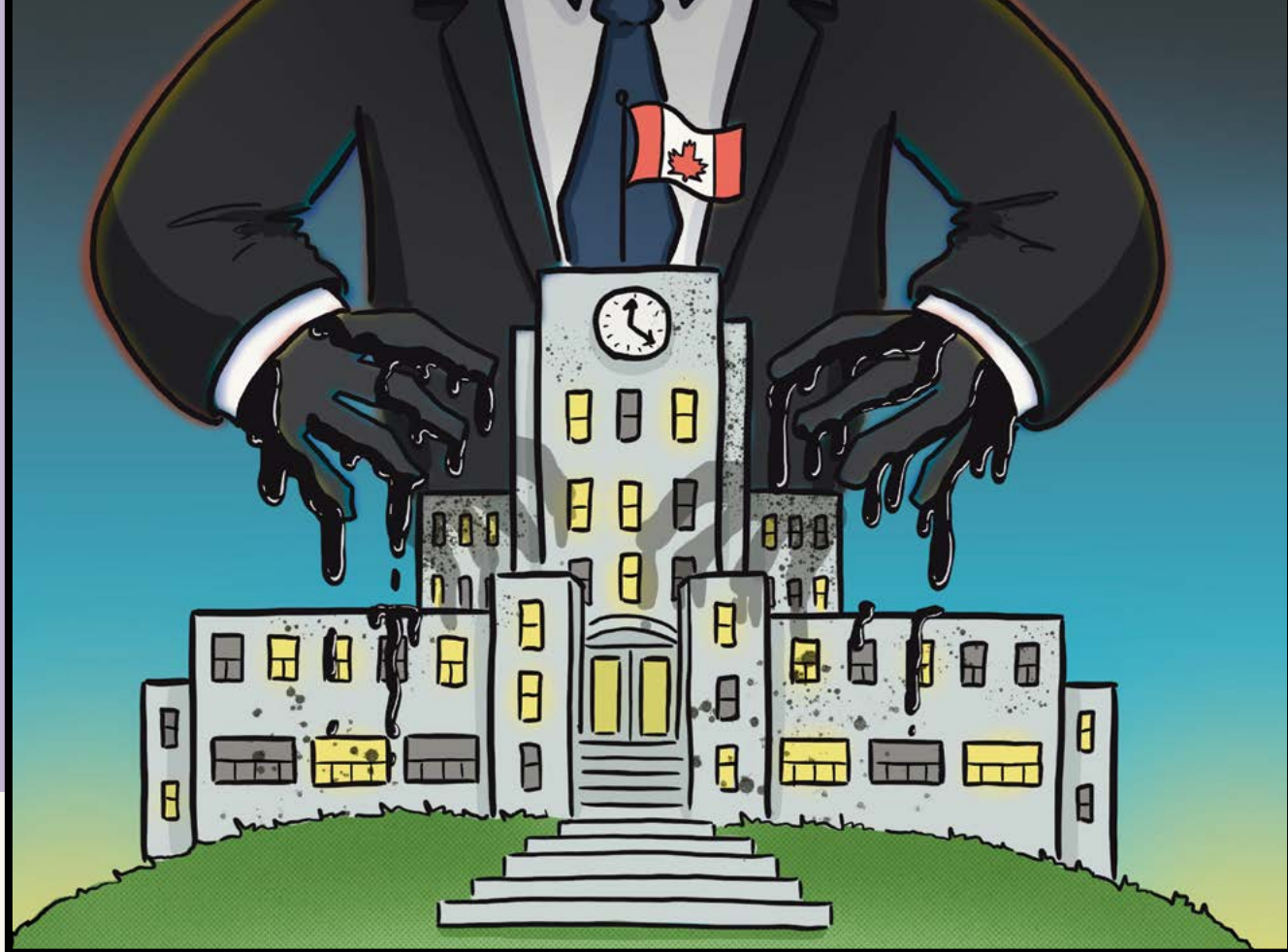
One of the largest and oldest fossil fuel front groups is the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), which has operated under various names since 1927. CAPP consistently advocates in favour of expanding and subsidizing the oil and gas industry, while attempting to block ambitious climate policy and repeal environmental protections in Canada and beyond. For example, in 2020, a leaked memo revealed that CAPP was using the pandemic as an excuse to demand the federal government end or delay nearly all proposed climate policies, reduce environmental reporting, and allow them to hide their lobbying by suspending transparency laws. More recently, CAPP used disinformation and fearmongering to fight the proposed regulations to limit pollution from fossil fuel companies. It has been the most active fossil fuel industry lobbyist so far this year, having met with the federal government at least 104 times between January and October 2025. CAPP's current CEO, Lisa Baiton, was profiled by Environmental Defence as one of Canada's top ten Climate Villains in 2023.

CAPP also created its own astroturf group called "Canada's Energy Citizens", whose social media campaigns and on-the-ground rallies drum up support for the industry. While no longer active, this group did not publicize its funding and relationship with CAPP, and instead presented itself as a citizens' initiative. This approach allows the group to overcome perceptions of elitism while delivering pro-corporate messages to the public.

The Pathways Alliance was created to play a different role. Pathways Alliance claimed it supported climate action and were taking

responsibility for the industry's role in climate change in order to have a 'friendlier' relationship with the government. This opened the door for more access to elected officials, collaboration on fossil fuel industry projects, and generally giving the fossil fuel industry more political and public credibility. In the years since Pathways was created, the mask has started to slip, and they now lobby more publicly in line with positions from CAPP, like advocating for the rollback of the anti-greenwashing rules, for industry subsidies, and to include fossil fuel infrastructure in the federal government's list of "Projects of National Interest". Five of the six Pathways member companies are also members of CAPP.

In addition to these publicly visible front groups, there are also more secretive organizations like the Atlas Network and the Energy Roundtable that bring together fossil fuel industry elites and develop strategies for influencing governments, policy, thought leadership, and public discourse. These organizations know their demands are publicly unpopular because they throw communities and the climate under the bus for corporate profit, but work in the shadows to help legitimize the front groups. Don't just take it from us, industry insiders are honest when speaking to their own audience, EnergyNow reports: "Industry leaders frequently advocate for their interests in closed meetings, formal consultations, and through industry associations. This approach allows for candid discussion without the risks associated with public confrontation"



TACTIC 6: THE MUNICIPAL MANIPULATOR FIGHTING CLIMATE ACTION BY TOWN AND CITY COUNCILS

THE TACTIC

The fossil fuel industry is slowing down the energy transition by fighting municipal climate action. This includes fighting municipal laws that limit fossil gas in buildings, implement climate-aligned building codes, or restrict misleading fossil fuel advertisements on city property. They also support proposals to develop or expand fossil fuel infrastructure. To influence municipalities, companies and front groups are meeting directly with policymakers, participating in community consultations, and even using legal interventions. Big Oil also recruits other industries to be allies in their pro-fossil fuel municipal advocacy, like convincing restaurateurs, developers and builder associations that they should advocate in favour of fossil gas.

Companies and industry groups are sowing mistrust in local climate solutions through sustained advocacy in news media, paid influencers and traditional advertising. To gain influence, they also use the ‘good neighbour’ tactic – sponsoring events and infrastructure in municipalities – and use that as leverage to influence municipal decisions.

THE STRATEGY

The fossil fuel industry recognizes that municipalities oversee the rules and strategies for implementing a wide range of climate solutions. To keep society hooked on fossil fuels, Big Oil needs oil and gas to be embedded in our infrastructure and everyday lives. This is not only so that they continue making money from customers, but also because it helps them maintain the perception that oil and gas are necessary for our quality of life. That’s why, despite the fact that heat pumps are the most affordable option for home heating and cooling, gas stoves leak toxic chemicals and cause higher rates of asthma in kids, the gas industry fights to keep gas in residential buildings. The industry wants people to feel connected to their fossil fuel product, so that they are more likely to support the industry as a whole.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

In 2022, the Vancouver City Council voted to require zero-emission equipment for space and hot water heating in new low-rise residential buildings. This decision was in line with the city's existing climate plan and the goal of achieving zero emissions in new buildings by 2030. Home heating with "natural" gas, a fossil fuel composed mainly of methane, is the single largest source of climate pollution for the city of Vancouver, according to [city staff reports](#). This bylaw is an important step toward reducing the use of fossil gas.

In 2024, under a new city council, a motion was put forward to repeal this policy. The climate policy was rebranded as an outright ban on natural gas, and the discussion of the repeal was full of misleading narratives. For example, the city councillor's rationale included statements like "[people want to have the choice on how to cook their food](#)", despite the fact that the bylaw didn't prohibit people from choosing to install gas for cooking at their own expense. So what prompted this rollback of climate action?

Enter: Big Oil's playbook. Prior to introducing the motion, FortisBC spent time lobbying city councillors, including the councillor who proposed repealing the climate action bylaw. Who else participated in the behind-the-scenes discussions about repealing the gas ban? A Senior advisor to the Mayor, who is [a director at not one, but two privately owned gas companies](#). According to investigative journalists at the [Narwhal](#), "he is listed as the [co-founder of one](#), and the primary contact for the other." Multiple city councillors who were in favour of keeping gas heating also reported [financial interests](#) in gas companies like FortisBC and TC Energy.

Then, in the lead-up to the vote, an industry front group called Resource Works used the 'Petro-Puppeteer' strategy: [emailing its list of supporters, asking them to send their template letters to city councillors](#). Their letter template included sample identities like "restaurant owner", "hospitality worker" and "small business owner" with tailored messaging for each. [Resource Works has ties to some of Canada's biggest gas producers, and was given seed funding in 2014 by the Business Council of British Columbia, a provincial trade association whose membership has included Shell Canada, Imperial Oil, Chevron and Conoco Phillips](#). Climate supporters also mobilized to defend the gas ban, and the City Council upheld the initial climate plan after a heated public debate at the end of 2024. This isn't the only time the front groups for the gas industry have tried to fight policies to reduce climate pollution from buildings. After the neighbouring city of Burnaby had already passed similar rules for gas, the

front group campaign "[Voice for Energy](#)", which has been funded by the Canadian Gas Association, "[flooded](#)" news apps like the CBC and New York Times with ads against the [municipal decision](#).

In Ontario, the gas company Enbridge has a near-monopoly and has used similar municipal interventions to stymie the energy transition. [In December 2023, Ontario's independent regulator for electricity and natural gas, the Ontario Energy Board \(OEB\), rejected Enbridge's request that the government continue to subsidize the cost of hooking up new housing developments to gas lines](#). The requested subsidies would give Enbridge \$250 million a year from the provincial government from at least 2024 to 2028. In response, Enbridge coordinated closely with the Ontario government in a push to overrule the fact-based analysis of the independent regulator, which it did through [Bill 165](#), despite the fact that the OEB decision would have lowered people's gas bills.

Around the same time, Enbridge also jumped into action, targeting municipalities, publishing [opinion pieces in local newspapers](#) and [sending letters to municipal councils across Ontario](#) asking them to support Enbridge's gas expansion plans for the rest of this decade, in a tone that at least one councillor [described](#) as "having a tone of aggression" and "inappropriate". [Investigative journalists at the Narwhal have conducted detailed research and analysis on the extent to which Enbridge has gone to maintain its role supplying fossil gas despite municipal climate efforts](#). They write:

"The company has financially supported municipalities in developing energy plans and sponsored events such as town halls and council meetings to discuss them with the public. It has given municipalities money to help research new energy solutions, and paid for studies and marketing material that stress the importance of natural gas. And, according to sources, the company has directly intervened in apparent attempts to silence and stymie opposition from municipal staff and environmental experts across Ontario."

A report by researchers at InfluenceMap revealed how the oil, gas, and utilities industries are collaborating on a [Global Campaign Against Building Electrification](#). They state that Big Oil's work to delay building electrification is coordinated, "[relying on a common fossil fuel playbook to prolong the use of fossil gas in buildings globally... before nuancing their approach to achieve their objectives in each region](#)."



TACTIC 7: RELENTLESS LOBBYISTS

THE TACTIC

The fossil fuel industry influences policy outcomes and decisions favourable to them by relentlessly lobbying the government.

Lobbying encompasses meetings and communication between industry and government officials, during which they advocate pro-fossil fuel ideologies. There are also reports of industry lobbying in more ‘creative’ ways – such as using proxies like ambassadors to pass along ideas to government officials, or casual community encounters to catch government officials out of formal settings.

THE STRATEGY

Positive relationships with government officials through friendly face time, even in its most mild form, build trust and goodwill toward industry. That positive rapport makes it more likely for governments to, for example, believe their BS on CCS and invest in industry-led initiatives. In its most insidious forms, lobbying exploits moments of political weakness to exert pressure towards improving conditions for the industry, such as when CAPP pushed for the federal government to drop environmental monitoring under the guise of the COVID-19 pandemic, or what we’re seeing from industry in response to President Trump’s tariffs.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

Fossil fuel companies and their primary industry associations had at least 1,135 meetings with the federal government in 2024. That means Big Oil lobbied Parliament more than four times per working day. Environmental Defence tracks the lobbying activity of 35 oil and gas companies and industry associations with our Lobby Bot. In the six months following the 2025 election, fossil fuel industry representatives have lobbied the federal government at least 527 times.

The intensity of Big Oil's lobbying activities isn't new. Research that reviewed lobbying across industries between 2011 and 2018 (an equal period of PM Harper and PM Trudeau's governments) found that the "fossil fuel industry was one of the most active industry groups lobbying the federal government, with over six contacts per working day made with government officials". Canadian Senator Rosa Galvez pointed out in an interview with the National Observer that "fossil fuel companies have an 'army of lawyers' to support their lobbying efforts".

Despite the fossil fuel lobby's egregious influence, most lobbying doesn't make the news. That is, until something flashy happens like a leaked recording of a TC Energy's lobbyist claiming to have influenced the B.C. government's climate policy.

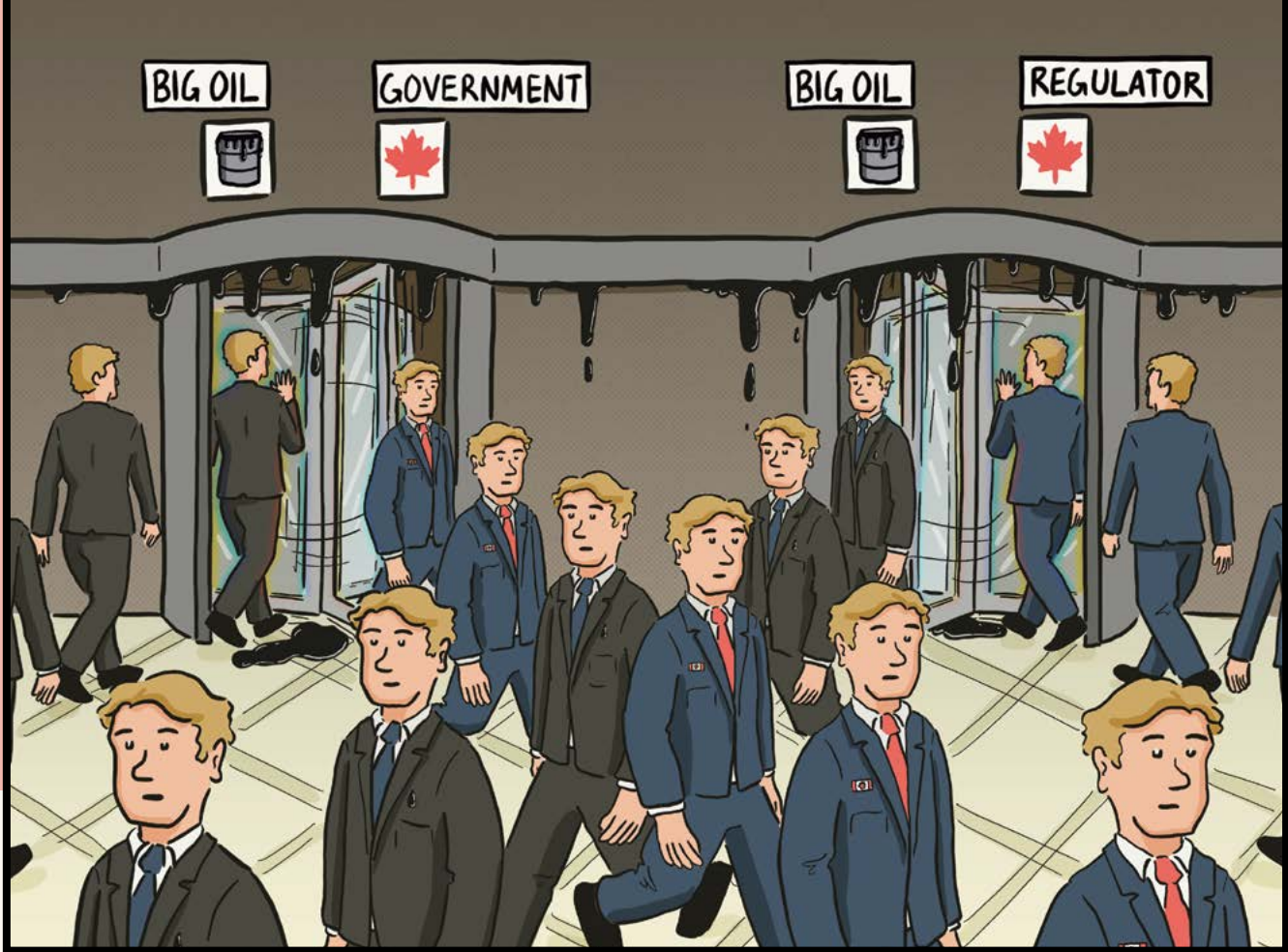
Here is an excerpt of lobbying tactics the former TC Energy exec promoted, quoted directly from the Narwhal's investigation:

- Cultivating relationships with influential bureaucrats to gain political support for corporate initiatives
- Encouraging TC Energy staff to seek out opportunities to meet politicians in casual settings, with the goal of having conversations that flow between "personal and professional, that

advances our initiatives"

- Drafting proposed government policies and persuading "underpaid and overworked" public servants to use these and other TC Energy messaging on official government briefing notes for top politicians and decision makers
- Deliberately placing staff at public events to ask scripted questions to politicians and press them to talk about the company's priorities in front of an audience
- Leveraging relationships with Canadian diplomats to have them "deliver a pro-LNG message" to prominent politicians
- Using "validators" such as "Indigenous people, Indigenous leaders and the general public" to sway government decisions
- Forming partnerships with third parties "who are happy to work with and take direction from TC on shifting government policy"
- Influencing the media to suppress stories that could be harmful to the company's reputation

In the U.S., fossil fuel lobbyists spent over \$154 million USD in 2024 on political lobbying. Due to Canada's weak disclosure requirements for lobbyists, we don't know how much Big Oil spends on lobbying in Canada.



TACTIC 8: THE REVOLVING DOOR

THE TACTIC

The fossil fuel industry influences government policy and decisions through the workforce crossover between the industry and the public service sector or political parties. There is a “revolving door” of individuals who work in both the oil and gas industry and with the government – despite some rules intended to limit lobbyist government crossover.

Federal officials leave their public roles to take jobs in the private sector working for the fossil fuel industry (often after a change in government). People within the fossil fuel industry move from working within the industry (often from a higher up position), to working within politically aligned governments, as advisors, on review boards or governance bodies, etc., and then may return to the industry again, including as lobbyists or board members. This is frequently enabled by pro-oil political parties, but has occurred across multiple major parties and also exists within the public service.

THE STRATEGY

Individuals moving into government from the fossil fuel industry have the opportunity to directly influence policies, decisions, programs, or other politicians. The cozy relationships the fossil fuel industry builds with willing governments also create readily available access to decision makers.

Individuals who move from government to private industry often bring insider knowledge and networks that can be used to leverage public policies they helped put in place to benefit their new corporate employer.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

Greenpeace identified 15 fossil fuel lobbyists who disclosed, in 2023, that they'd previously been employed as senior federal officials, ministerial staff and policy advisers.

In 2024, the B.C.-based advocacy group Dogwood used the Investigative Journalism Foundation's "Revolving Door" database to highlight that 136 former provincial government officials were working as lobbyists, including for twelve fossil fuel companies.

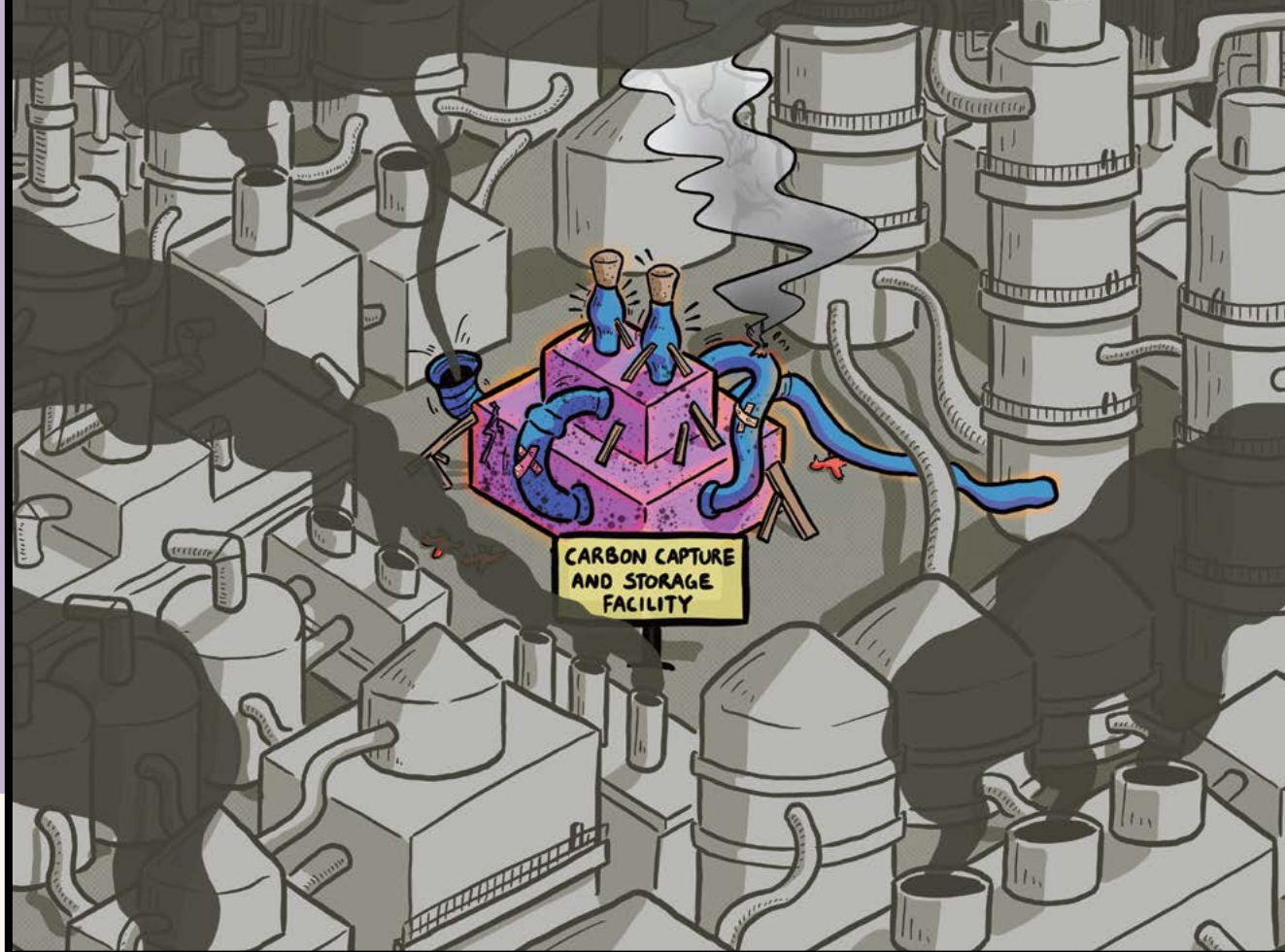
Dogwood highlights the following examples:

- A former B.C. cabinet minister joined lobbyist efforts of Woodfiber LNG, which aims to export two million tons a year of fossil gas from a terminal near Squamish.
- A former chief of staff for the B.C. Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation went on to work for TC Energy, which is one of the companies behind the controversial Prince Rupert Gas Transmission pipeline.
- A former Chief of Staff to the B.C. Minister of Finance became a lobbyist for Canada's biggest fracking company, Tourmaline Oil Corp.

In Ontario, a former Senior Government Affairs Strategist for Enbridge became Chief of Staff to the Ontario Minister of Energy. Starting January 2026, the former Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Energy Board will become the new President and CEO of the Canadian Gas Association.

In Alberta, the current Assistant Deputy Minister, Air, Climate and Clean Technology, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, was a lobbyist for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) for nearly a decade, directly moving from CAPP into government. CAPP lobbying records show that just weeks before the Assistant Deputy Minister took his new role, CAPP was pushing that very ministry to "repeal implementation of the carbon levy", one of the few regulations that create some accountability for big industrial polluters.

It was also recently revealed that the chief of Staff for Alberta's Minister of Energy and Minerals also leads the Alberta Resource Advocacy Foundation (ARAF), as well as having worked for pro-oil groups Alberta Proud and Canada Strong and Proud. ARAF is registered as a third-party political advertiser, meaning they run political ads during the election period. Meanwhile, ARAF's chief financial officer is a lobbyist at the public relations firm Alberta Counsel, and has lobbied the Alberta Ministry of Energy more than two dozen times on behalf of Canadian Gas Association, Enbridge, Tourmaline Oil Corp. and more. This type of conflict of interest shouldn't be allowed, but it is common when there's a revolving door between Big Oil and different levels of government.



TACTIC 9: THE ILLUSIONIST- FALSE SOLUTIONS

THE TACTIC

Big Oil is convincing the public and governments to support false solutions, like carbon capture and storage (CCS). False solutions are ineffective techno-fixes for the climate crisis that can't realistically reduce emissions at the scale we need. They rely on unproven technologies, overly complex market work-arounds, or are too expensive to be effectively deployed. Prioritising false solutions diverts resources from effective solutions such as renewable energy, which is substantially cheaper, directly reduces climate pollution, and offers opportunities to disperse benefits to communities.

THE STRATEGY

Big Oil is pushing these false solutions to convince governments and the public to delay action that directly reduces fossil fuel demand, so they can continue business as usual.

With a consensus established on the need to reduce emissions, the fossil fuel industry has propped up false solutions to portray themselves as participating in climate action. They do this to maintain social license with the public and to delay government regulations that would require them to reduce emissions, extraction, and production more quickly and drastically. They must also continue to project a favourable outlook for future oil and gas expansion and industry growth, as this affects their access to financing and the stock values of Big Oil companies.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

Major tar sands producers re-branded as the Pathways Alliance when public concern for climate change was at an all-time high, and began advertising about how the fossil fuel industry would use CCS to curb emissions. Academic research scrutinized their advertising blitz and found it was a widespread campaign of greenwashing.

Specifically, the Pathways Alliance has proposed a large-scale compressed CO₂ pipeline network and a sequestration hub near Cold Lake, Alberta, despite the safety and environmental risks to groundwater and communities along the CO₂ pipeline route.

They've relentlessly lobbied the Canadian government for support and more subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. To date, the Canadian government has failed to assess the impact of CCS in line with impacted First Nations' and Metis communities' concerns.





TACTIC 10: THE RENEWABLE RUNDOWN - UNDERMINING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

THE TACTIC

Oil and gas companies deter the development of renewable energy projects to keep us relying on their products, while sacrificing our climate to global warming. Fossil fuel companies use their public statements, media coverage, and advertising to cast doubt on the energy transition and the capability of renewable energy to safely, reliably, and affordably meet energy needs.

The fossil fuel industry and its allies actively spread disinformation about renewables and the need for oil. They also block and delay the rollout of renewable energy by pressuring governments to maintain or expand fossil fuel infrastructure, such as new gas plants in Ontario, and to allocate the government's limited resources toward false solutions that prop up oil. Subsidies and tax breaks that fossil fuel companies receive from the government, even for reducing emissions, delay the rollout of renewables and reduce the financial resources available for real climate solutions.

THE STRATEGY

Blocking, delaying, or undermining renewable energy slows the energy transition, thereby prolonging reliance on polluting oil, coal, and gas at both the infrastructure and individual-consumer scales. This keeps the profits flowing to their industry and wealthy CEOs.

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN IT BEFORE

When the federal government passed the final Clean Electricity Regulations (CER), in December 2024, Electricity Canada criticized them as too stringent. Electricity Canada is an industry association of electricity producers and distributors. Here's the catch, a large number of its members supply electricity from fossil gas, even if they also have renewable energy projects. TC Energy, Fortis and its subsidiaries, Capital Power, ENMAX Corporation, TransAlta, SaskPower, are some examples. Canada's Clean Electricity Regulations require the Canadian grid to have net-zero emissions by 2050, which means more renewable energy and limits on emissions from fossil fuel power plants, like coal and gas.

"Natural" gas suppliers pushed for loopholes in the regulations to keep fossil gas on the grid longer throughout their development. Electricity Canada also put out a misleading advertising campaign that pushed the false narrative that the technology for clean electricity wasn't ready and that Canada's grid would become less reliable if the CER passed.

Another problematic perpetrator of tactics to deter renewables are governments working in lock step with Big Oil's interests. This situation is evident in Alberta, where Premier Smith directly undermined renewables by spreading misleading narratives and by imposing a seven-month, industry-wide moratorium on new approvals for wind, solar,

geothermal, and other forms of renewable energy in August 2023, which halted investment in the otherwise thriving industry. The government of Alberta also spent \$8 million on an ad campaign against the CER, which relied heavily on casting doubt about the reliability and affordability of renewables with hyperbolic claims about Albertans "freezing in the dark".

One of the most common ways that fearmongering about renewables spreads is through social media. In 2025, investigative journalists at the National Observer uncovered a concerning story about dark-money oil and gas ads that targeted specific ridings in Ontario that were taking climate action.

In 2024, residents of St. Catharines and Thorold, who had rejected a proposal to expand Northland Power's gas plant the year prior, were heavily targeted by pro-fossil fuel ads. The ads appeared to be from different "shell" social media pages communicating with different tones and graphic styles, but all linked back to the same PR firm with a history of working with fossil fuel companies. One page was Energy Gap, with content that exclusively criticized and cast doubt on renewable energy. Then, all the pages disappeared at the end of the year.

This type of advertising approach exploits loopholes in financial and social media regulations in political advertising, while making it more difficult to trace. This makes the impact of these ad campaigns difficult to track and measure, yet the disinformation they perpetuate continues to circulate within communities. Misinformation about renewables then appears in genuine expressions of community concern, such as this petition in Arnprior, Ontario, against a local battery storage project that is rife with misinformation about the technology.