



*Re.Climate*TM

COMMUNICATING FOR CHANGE

Re.Climate is Canada's go-to centre for training, research and strategy on climate change communication and engagement at Carleton University.

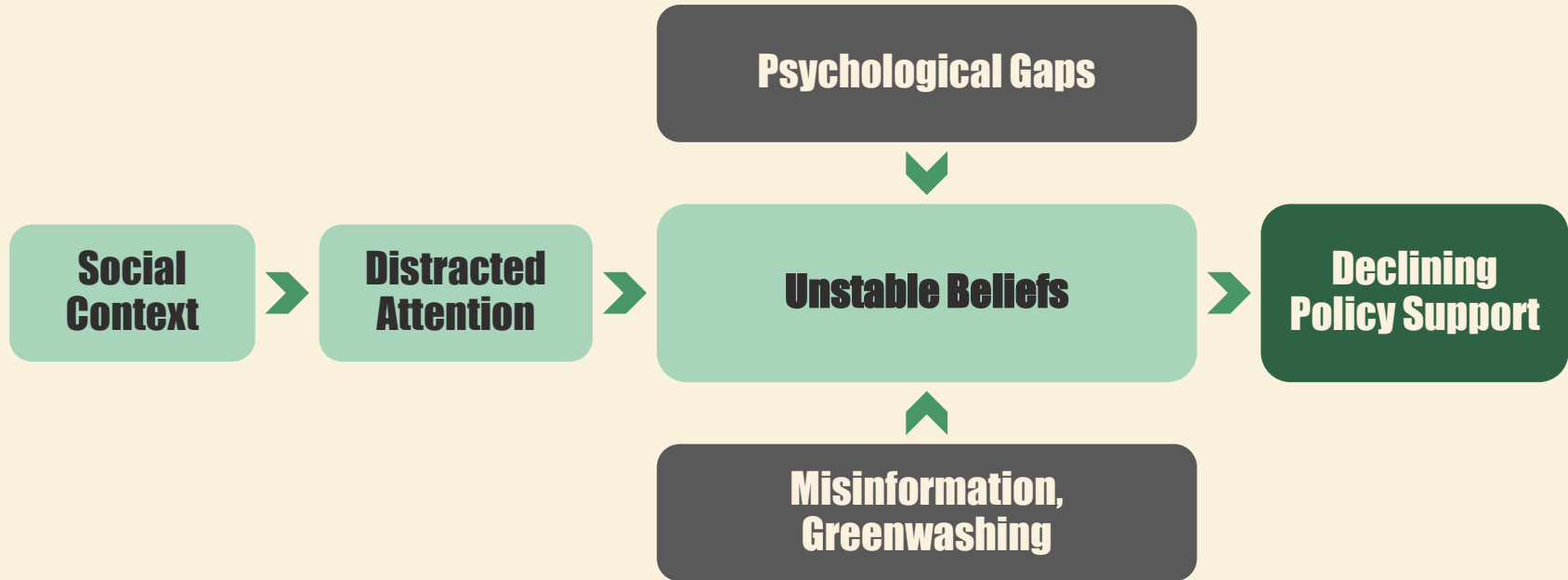
CAN WE BUILD A SOCIAL CONSENSUS FOR CLIMATE ACTION?

A Numbers Game:
Moveable Middle or Climbing a Ladder?

Overview

- Set context
- Briefly describe recent research and takeaways
- Summarize results important to your campaigns

Where we are is not great and getting worse



Dark Green = Dependent Variables

Light Green = Independent Variables (Predictors)

Gray = Moderators

The five Canada's of climate change engagement (EcoAnalytics)

Ranked by Climate Change Engagement:

1. Progressive Activists: 17%
2. **Civic Nationals: 19%**
3. Centrist Liberals: 21%
4. Disengaged Middle*: 28%
5. Fossil Fuel Conservatives: 15%

*Three sub-segments of the disengaged middle identified: Concerned (48%), Civic (27%), and Passive (25%)

Ranked by Social and Political Values:

1. Progressive Activists
2. Centrist Liberals
3. Disengaged Middle*
4. **Civic Nationals****
5. Fossil Fuel Conservatives

**People can be socially conservative and concerned about climate change

TAKEAWAYS: REINFORCING WHAT WE KNOW

CHALLENGE

Unstable climate beliefs, weak understanding of Canada's global contribution to climate change leading to perceptions of unfairness, rationalization, solutions skepticism and confusion

CHOICE

Engage more segments of the Canadian population or lose the numbers game

Change approach, tone to engage more socially conservative Canadians

Avoid finger pointing in favour of We all Contribute, Fair Share

OPPORTUNITY

Hand the mic

Counter solutions misinformation and greenwashing

Craft positive messages that grab attention

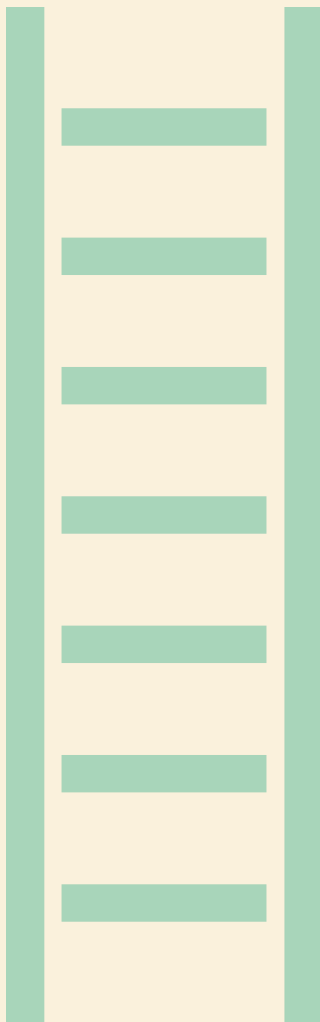
Situate climate action in terms of Canada's Place in the World



STAYING REAL

We know what to do to
build social consensus

THE MATH IS SIMPLE: THERE IS NO WINNING WITH 17%



Are we willing to engage with,
speak to, socially conservative
Canadians?

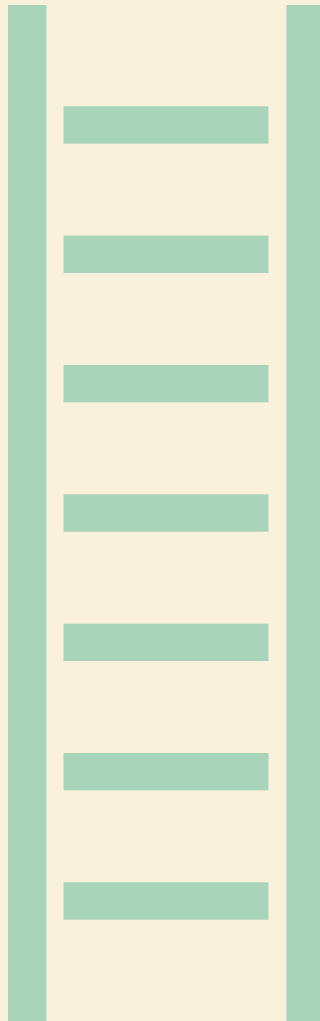


To build social consensus
on climate action, we need
other segments



Progressive Activists are
only 17% of the population

MORE LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT THAN MOVEABLE MIDDLE



Positive rather than aggressive, negative messaging. Want to hear from front-line scientists, health professionals, technology experts



Other segments: Motivated to Hold Polluters Accountable But more WE/US than them. Canada and Other Countries



Progressive Activists: Ready for detail, climate progress stories, want to hold polluters accountable

CHALLENGES REAL TOO: AGENCY, EFFICACY WEAK

- “Canada is a small player.”
 - “What Canada does won’t make any difference.”
 - Climate change is a global problem: “No one cares what Canada does.”
 - “What we do has absolutely no impact.”
- Climate solutions are inaccessible, unaffordable, unattainable
 - Climate solutions don’t work
 - Climate solutions are “unrealistic”, especially the timelines
 - “We have to be realistic.”

WE KNOW WE WANT TO AVOID PITFALLS

...in our climate change communications

YET, WE TRIGGER RESISTANCE

By 'getting people's identity backs up'

We should avoid triggering:

- Reactance (perceived threats to freedom/control); Boomerang effects (opposite effects than intended)
- Rationalization, Counter-arguing, Motivated reasoning (social identity threats)
- Solutions Skepticism, Confusion (overly optimistic, misinformation, legitimate doubts)
- Fatalism (too late perceptions)

“It’s like, well for all you people living in the past and, you know, just keep living the way you are with your gas car. And your old house and yeah, basically the connotation is you’re kind of like a loser. You’re not with it. I don’t like that.”

Rob, Male, 45 – 54, MB
DISENGAGED MIDDLE (CONCERNED)

SOLUTIONS SKEPTICISM IS WIDESPREAD

- Participants in all segments expressed skepticism and confusion about climate change solutions like electrification, electricity supply
- Criticisms of EV's: lifecycle issues, mining impacts, lack of adequate electricity supply, range and charging concerns and negative experiences, battery life and cost risks
- Criticisms of heat pumps: Unreliability in cold climates, the need for back up, lack of supply, high electricity bills
- Most feel 2035 targets are unrealistic

“I think it is possible, but I think they’ve got to do a ton more development on them such as the distance. That or the range of the cars and even more so the charge timing. I can’t see to go from here to Halifax. It’s 4 h. And if I have to stop like after 3 h and stand and wait for 5 h for my car to recharge to get the rest of the way. Hello, I’m not leaving.”

Brett, Male, 35-44, ON
PROGRESSIVE ACTIVIST

**PATHWAYS:
ACT ON WHAT WE KNOW**

HOLDING POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE CROSSES SEGMENTS

- Two versions of Hold Polluters Accountable were tested in focus groups
- Preferred narrative for all groups except Progressive Activists (preferred in retest group)
- Tension around whether to hold polluters accountable by targeting one sector, singled-out (e.g., oil and gas sector)

- There is so much misinformation about the oil and gas industry's role in climate change (e.g., Pathways Alliance) that basic facts about the sectors emissions growth profile were doubted
- Alberta residents are confused by contradicting "facts". Especially a concern if we are to engage Civic Nationals
- Pre-bunk impacts on consumers from trickle down effects of regulating polluters
- Profile Canada's responsibility in terms of emissions, global context because people want to know "WE are All in This Together"

HOW TO HOLD ACCOUNTABLE; TARGET OR NOT TARGET?

- Targeting oil and gas sector generates negative reactions in all less engaged segments
- If the goal is to engage more segments, be wary of Finger Pointing, Blaming, Vilifying which generated very strong reactions to perceived attacks on oil and gas sector and Alberta
- Western-based participants perceive the sector as important to the Canadian economy
- Misinformation, disinformation and greenwashing causing confusion
 - “I don’t know what to believe”
- Health professionals (e.g., CAPE) credible for all participants

HOLD POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE NARRATIVE

Climate change is having a devastating impact on our planet and on communities across the globe, including ours. More of us are experiencing water shortages, days so hot we can't go outside, higher food and air conditioning bills. Forest fires pollute the air we breathe.

We've been emitting heat-trapping carbon pollution for decades.

According to Government of Canada data, between 1990 and 2021, the increase in total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada was mostly due to a 88% increase in emissions from the oil and gas sector and a 27% increase from the transport sector.

The logic is simple. We shouldn't let companies profit from putting our future in jeopardy. It's only fair that companies are held accountable through regulations to cap oil and gas pollution and to make auto manufacturers produce less polluting vehicles for Canadians.

CLIMATE PROGRESS: PROGRESSIVE ACTIVISTS, WITH FACTS, BALANCE

- Preferred narrative for Progressive Activists

...But the work isn't finished. We need more clean energy to power our communities, clean up the air and water, and protect our health. If we reduce pollution 10% every year, we can end climate change before it is too late for our kids. We need less talk and more action.

“You know, saying it’s too late, I thought that was a pretty soft pitch. This one I love that it’s starting strong with something positive. And I like that it has some very specific activities because I think it makes it real it makes it quantifiable in a way... And it’s kind of a nice springboard to having a very specific target and what that means. In terms of the impact, the positive impact. So I really like that and I love the closing line because it’s, it encapsulates everything.”

Penny, Female, 55-64, ON
PROGRESSIVE ACTIVIST

CLIMATE PROGRESS: BE REAL ABOUT CHALLENGES

The truth is we're making progress in cutting the pollution unbalancing the climate. Research shows Canada's emissions are shrinking; Investments in solutions are growing.

Renewable energy like hydro, wind and solar with storage technologies, and nuclear. Consumers are buying plug-in hybrids and electric vehicles, and installing cold-climate heat pumps that work in -30C temperatures.

Rules are being set to regulate mining and to ensure vehicle and battery recycling.

But the work isn't finished. We need more clean energy to power our communities, clean up the air and water, and protect our health. When we say yes to clean electricity solutions, we control climate change before it is too late for our kids.

LATER IS TOO LATE

This Narrative Triggers Fatalism for Some

You don't have to be a scientist to see how our climate has changed.

Our overheating planet is already putting lives and livelihoods at risk.

More and more of us are experiencing water shortages, days we can't go outside, higher food and air conditioning bills. Air quality is worse from forest fires.

Most importantly, it's putting our children's futures at risk.

It's our responsibility to protect nature so we leave behind a safe, liveable world for future generations.

We need immediate action on climate change, because later is too late.

“I think the problem is that once you kind of personalize it, it's like it's too big of a problem and you know, I can't change the climate for my kids or my grandkids.”

James, Male, 35-54, ON
PROGRESSIVE ACTIVIST

“Like I said, I believe we're at over that tipping point where we have to mitigate the damage at this point.”

Donald, Male, 65+, BC
CENTRIST LIBERAL

CANADA IN THE WORLD: POTENTIAL WITH CARE

We're all seeing how our climate is changing. Our overheating planet is already putting lives and livelihoods at risk.

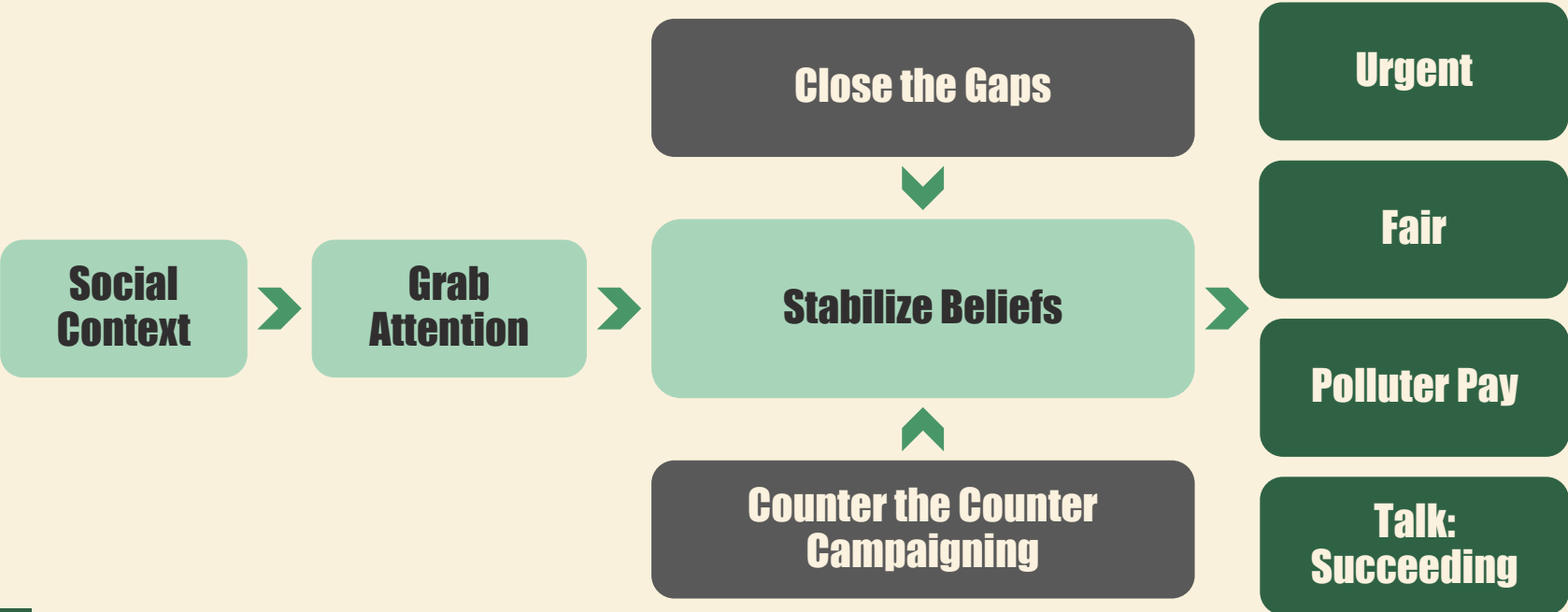
More and more of us are experiencing water shortages, days so hot we can't go outside, higher food and air conditioning bills. Forest fires pollute the air we breathe. Most importantly, it's putting our children's futures at risk.

Canada has a responsibility to do its part to protect nature so we leave behind a safe, liveable world for future generations.

According to a global database, our per person emissions are almost 60% higher than Norway, another cold-climate country with a major oil and gas industry. Our total emissions also put Canada in the top 10 of the world's biggest climate polluters.

To protect Canadians, we need global cooperation on climate change. Canada must do its part so others will do theirs.

IF WE WANT TO STOP THE BLEEDING...



- Dark Green = Dependent Variables
- Light Green = Independent Variables (Predictors)
- Gray = Moderators

SUMMARY Tensions to consider

- Responsible and Accountable:
 - Target the oil and gas sector. Legitimate from an emissions point of view, but is triggering to less engaged segments
 - Consumers say they use these products, that we all have a role to play, and should not be left off the hook. Where's the WE in THEY?
 - Or a plot by industry to diffuse their responsibility, a sign they are winning the rhetorical game. Focus groups prove the point? Or do we rob people of their agency?
- Communicating with Social Conservatives:
 - Are we willing to speak to their values, their sense of fairness, concerns about change, social order?
- Can we agree on message and tactics to collaborate on? Necessary or unnecessary?
 - Can we match social conservatives discipline?
- Can we add a dash of humility to our technology optimistic communications on energy transition to acknowledge the bumpy ride ahead (S-curve with its hype, trough and realistic phases), within an overall frame of inevitability about the path we are on?

SUMMARY Tensions to consider

- Are wildfires an apocalypse trap?
 - A pathway to engage the less engaged, but over the long term?
 - Attribution science has a role, post event
 - Media upskilling critical to countering misinformation
 - How do we engage in these key moments without triggering fatalism, debilitating eco-anxiety?
 - Build agency through imagery of people working together?
- Wildfires connect with feelings of anxiety and empathy across segments, but:
 - Greatest connection is to health/air quality not burning fossil fuels
 - Strongest connections are to climate change impacts/adaptation, not fossil fuel emissions
 - Misinformation, disinformation needs countering
 - Need skilled forest professionals and wildland firefighters and health professionals to make the links among weather conditions, climate change and burning fossil fuels

MORE TARGETED, BUT ALSO MORE CROSS-SEGMENT ENGAGEMENT



Social media testing aimed at the socially conservative: Hold Polluters Accountable, We All Can do Our Fair Share, Canada in the World, Canada is Not Acting Alone, Solutions Work



Redirect other segments from the carbon tax to health impacts of climate impact risks like wildfires? Counter misinformation, greenwashing.



Mobilize Progressive Activists. Ask them to join a campaign

SUMMARY

Connection to Fossil Fuel Proliferation Treaty

- Opportunity to situate Canada internationally
 - Opportunity to frame the campaign as Hold Polluters Accountable (Canada)
 - Opportunity to Situate Canada's Fair Share in a global context, to tell stories about what other countries are doing
 - Opportunity to profile scientists, health professionals and lived experience to your networks
- Challenge is the Treaty is more petition like than action like
 - May be too abstract and too negative for non-engaged Canadians
 - The moment calls for us all to counter misinformation, disinformation and greenwashing. Doing this by attacking Canada's efforts could undermine an opportunity to build social efficacy around our ability to make progress



Thank You

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