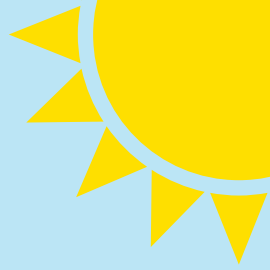


BC SOLUTIONS

News & Commentary from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' BC Office | SEPTEMBER 2019



Who's who in big oil? Corporate Mapping Project database launched

BY SHANNON DAUB

Four years ago, the Corporate Mapping Project (CMP) set out to investigate the power and influence of Canada's oil, gas and coal industries. And this summer we launched a centrepiece of the project's efforts: a comprehensive database of who's who in the fossil fuel sector and beyond.

To highlight key industry players, we created the *Fossil-Power Top 50* listing. The listing includes the biggest producers and transporters of oil, gas and coal in Canada, many of whose names we recognize—but it also includes enablers and legitimators. Enablers are organizations that directly support fossil fuel production, and legitimators are influential organizations that facilitate or promote continued expansion and dependence on fossil fuel extraction. You can check out the Top 50 listings on pages 2 and 3 in this issue—and go online to take a look at the detailed case studies and network maps we created for each: corporatemapping.ca/top50.

In addition to the *Fossil-Power Top 50*, the CMP database includes more than 230 Canada-based fossil fuel corporations and maps the industry's connections to the larger corporate sector in Canada and globally.

The database allows users to explore these connections and create network maps showing different kinds of relationships—such as how companies are connected through common →

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board members and ownership relations (e.g., take a look at how closely connected Canada’s big banks are to the fossil fuel sector). Examples of network maps can be seen online in each of the *Fossil-Power Top 50* profiles like Suncor, the Royal Bank of Canada and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP).

This publicly accessible database is a resource for anyone who wants to investigate and monitor corporate power. It allows us to see the network of fossil fuel industry influence, track the close connections between this industry and other economic sectors and uncover the links between powerful corporations, governments and advocacy groups that support them.



Legitimizing organizations persuade the public or political elites that “business as usual” must continue and that an urgent shift away from dependence on fossil fuels is unfeasible or unnecessary. Legitimizers include industry associations, think tanks, lobby groups, business councils and pro-oil advocacy groups.



These Western Canada-based corporations extract fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal), transport them and/or process them. These are the Canadian extractive corporations with the greatest emissions footprint (including end-use emissions when extracted fossil fuels are consumed).

EMITTERS	HEAD OFFICE
Arc Resources	Calgary, AB
ATCO	Calgary, AB
Canadian Natural Resources Limited	Calgary, AB
Cenovus Energy	Calgary, AB
CNOOC (formerly Nexen Energy)	Calgary, AB
Crescent Point Energy Corporation	Calgary, AB
Enbridge	Calgary, AB
Encana	Calgary, AB
Gibson Energy	Calgary, AB
Husky Energy	Calgary, AB
Imperial Oil	Calgary, AB
Kinder Morgan Canada	Calgary, AB
LNG Canada	N/A
MEG Energy	Calgary, AB
Pembina Pipeline Corporation	Calgary, AB
Shell Canada	Calgary, AB
Suncor	Calgary, AB
Teck Resources	Vancouver, BC
Tourmaline Oil Corporation	Calgary, AB
TransAlta	Calgary, AB
TransCanada	Calgary, AB

LEGITIMATORS	HEAD OFFICE
Alberta Chamber of Resources	Edmonton, AB
Business Council of British Columbia	Vancouver, BC
Business Council of Canada	Ottawa, ON
Canada Action	N/A
Canada West Foundation	Calgary, AB
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)	Calgary, AB
Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (CEPA)	Calgary, AB
Canadian Gas Association	Ottawa, ON
Canadian Oil Sands Innovation Alliance (COSIA)	Calgary, AB
C.D. Howe Institute	Toronto, ON
Edwards School of Business	Saskatoon, SK
Energy Council of Canada	Ottawa, ON
Fraser Institute	Vancouver, BC
MacDonald-Laurier Institute	Ottawa, ON
Manning Centre for Building Democracy	Calgary, AB
The Rebel Media	Toronto, ON
Resource Works	Vancouver, BC
University of Calgary	Calgary, AB



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

To view the case studies and learn more about this study, visit: CORPORATEMAPPING.CA/TOP50



These organizations enable fossil fuel production. The *Fossil-Power Top 50* List includes banks and industry-friendly regulators.

ENABLERS	HEAD OFFICE
Alberta Energy Regulator	Calgary, AB
Bank of Montreal	Toronto, ON
Bank of Nova Scotia	Toronto, ON
BC Oil and Gas Commission	Victoria & Fort St. John, BC
C3 Alliance	Vancouver, BC
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC)	Toronto, ON
Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board	Toronto, ON
National Energy Board	Calgary, AB
Power Corporation of Canada	Toronto, ON & Montreal, PQ
Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)	Toronto, ON
Toronto-Dominion Bank	Toronto, ON

A word of thanks

The Corporate Mapping Project database was developed with the help of a fantastic team of researchers, students, web developers and others. I want to say a special thanks to Bill Carroll, Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria and my fellow CMP Co-Director, for his leadership expertise designing the research and overseeing the student team building the data set. We are also grateful to LittleSis.org, a grassroots watchdog group connecting the dots between the world's most powerful people and organizations. We partnered with Little Sis to help build and host the database using their powerful open source platform.

Coming soon: Corporate mapping workshops

We're developing webinars and workshops for individuals and organizations wanting to learn more about doing corporate research and how to use the CMP database and network mapping tool. These will be available starting this fall. If you're interested, contact the CMP's project manager Thi Vu, thi@policyalternatives.ca.

Shannon Daub is the CCPA-BC Director and Co-Director of the Corporate Mapping Project.

Jason Kenney's deleted fossil fuel research funding tweet

You know you're doing something right when you are attacked by Alberta Premier Jason Kenney due to your high-profile research about the power of the fossil fuel industry.

In July, Kenney took to Twitter to complain about the Corporate Mapping Project's (CMP) work, focusing on the fact that the research received federal funding through a SSHRC grant. Kenney tweeted:

The federal government benefits massively from taxes generated by our oil and gas industry & workers. So why did the Trudeau Liberals give \$2.5 million to a left wing special interest group to attack our energy industry?

It is important to note that SSHRC research funding is not awarded by elected officials, but through a highly competitive, arms-length review process. This is a foundational principle for academic freedom and democracy.

Ironically, the decision to award the grant was in fact made during the previous administration of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in which Jason Kenney was a cabinet minister—which many Twitter users were very quick to bring to Kenney's attention.

Kenney's tweet—which was later deleted—appears to have been prompted by an op-ed written by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. That op-ed made a number of inaccurate claims about our work, taking issue in particular with the CMP's database of who's who in Canada's fossil fuel industry.

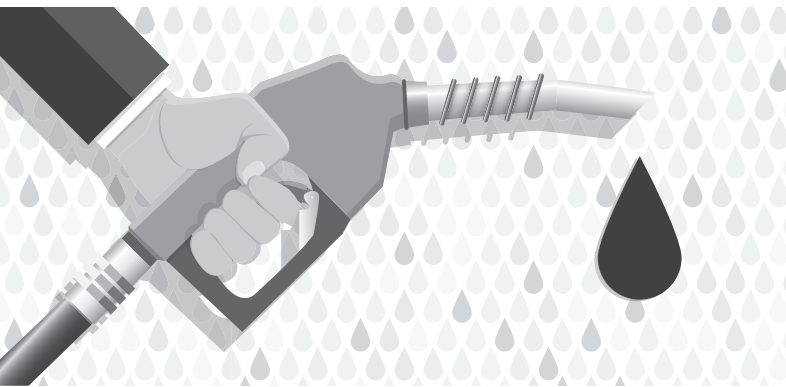
Given Kenney is the former head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, we aren't too surprised to see him reinforcing their messaging. And given that he has established a \$30 million dollar "war room" to target critics of Alberta's oil and gas industry, we might expect more of these attacks to be directed our way.

The CCPA's work on the CMP—and on the many other subjects we're involved with—has always been independent of political oversight. And it continues to be largely funded by thousands of individuals like you, who believe in the importance of research that speaks truth to power.

How our analysis impacted the call for the BC Utilities Commission gas price investigation

BY EMIRA MEARS

In April of this year, CCPA-BC senior economist Marc Lee and research associate David Hughes made timely interventions into the very animated public conversations about record-high gas prices in the province.



At that time, prices had soared to over \$1.70 per litre in Metro Vancouver and the provincial Opposition and newly elected Alberta government were both pointing the finger at the BC government claiming the rising costs could be directly linked to the government's resistance to the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The timing of the rising costs at the pump came on the heels of a scheduled 1.2-cent carbon tax increase, leading many who oppose the carbon tax to claim that it was behind the soaring prices. As we pointed out, however, over a three-year period from April 2016 to April 2019, consumers had seen a 55-cent-per-litre increase in Vancouver. Of that price hike, 6.3 cents per litre was from tax increases. BC's carbon tax increased 1.2 cents per litre on each of April 1, 2018 and 2019. Just under 4 cents per litre is from the federal Goods and Services Tax, which is levied on the overall pump price. Those numbers do not add up to the 55-cent increase consumers were seeing at the pump.

Not only were we able to shift the conversation; we quickly saw the provincial government call for the BC Utilities Commission to oversee the inquiry that is now in progress.

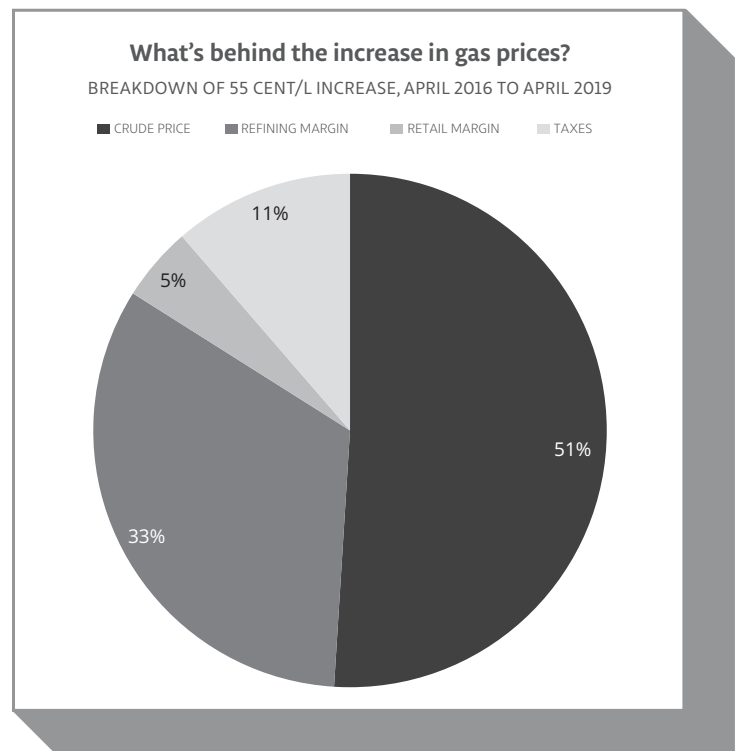
The other 49 cents of the 55-cent-per-litre price increase is from non-tax (i.e. market) factors, which include the price of crude oil, the margin (i.e. mark-up) taken by refineries and the margin taken by gas retailers.

After the release of our analysis that questioned the role that

corporate oil profits played in the increased costs, Marc spent a day doing back-to-back media interviews with coverage in the *Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *The Times Colonist*, *The Star*, CBC radio and TV, Global TV, CTV and in community print and broadcast news outlets across the province. We also launched an online tool so that supporters of greater transparency could add their voices to the call for an investigation into who was profiting from the increased prices. Not only were we able to shift the conversation; we quickly saw the provincial government call for the BC Utilities Commission to oversee the inquiry that is now in progress into what is truly behind the sharp increases in fuel costs for BC consumers.

At press time, the public hearings had wrapped up and we're waiting for the Commission's report. We continue to call for more transparency as well as for increased government investment in public transit to provide viable alternatives for people across the province.

Emira Mears is the CCPA-BC's Associate Director.



Building a universal child care system in BC means rethinking how we fund new spaces

BY IGLIKA IVANOVA & LYNELL ANDERSON

Last year, the BC government made landmark investments in child care, reducing costs for thousands of families. And those in \$10-a-day prototypes (2,500 spaces throughout the province) are finally experiencing truly affordable child care.

However, too many families are still desperate for access to quality, licensed child care.

BC only has licensed spaces for 18 per cent of young children, and a poll conducted for the \$10aDay Campaign showed that 70 per cent of parents who sought child care delayed returning to work after parental leave because care wasn't available.

In its unprecedented investment, the BC government addressed this supply problem by earmarking funding for 22,000 new licensed spaces by 2020/21—but the vast majority are yet to open.

That delay is because the current BC government inherited a space creation approach that does not work. It relies on individual child care providers applying for government grants to help develop new facilities. Many private providers then own the facilities that taxpayers helped buy.

Uptake of these grants has been limited as few providers have the time, expertise or resources to build quality spaces. Imagine if we relied on grants to fund public schools, expecting groups of parents or teachers to demonstrate the need, find the location, oversee construction and raise additional capital funds.

The BC government should invest in custom-designed, high-quality modular child care facilities and locate them on public land around the province.

To quickly meet the needs of BC families we need to rethink how we fund new spaces and invest in publicly owned child care facilities. The recently announced partnership between the Province and the City of Vancouver leads the way. It is a three-year, multi-facility agreement to create 2,300 new publicly owned spaces in public facilities. The agreement leverages Vancouver's decades long commitment to and expertise in child care development.

To build on this approach province-wide, government needs to plan and fund child care facilities just like they do for schools. This would allow for proper capacity planning, creating quality spaces faster and more affordably, and ensuring that public investments create public—not private—assets.



BC cannot transform the existing patchwork of services into a coherent, quality system without a capital plan and budget for child care expansion—plus additional investments to recruit and retain well-qualified, fairly compensated educators to staff the system.

As an immediate next step, the BC government should invest in custom-designed, high-quality modular child care facilities and locate them on public land around the province. Planning must be done with local communities to address areas of highest need first.

BC is in a great position to make new strategic capital investments in child care. Our provincial debt is low relative to the size of our economy and we have room to significantly increase public investment in public assets. With debt service costs at historic lows, now is the perfect time to introduce a new child care capital budget to fund a large public child care expansion.

Iglika Ivanova is a senior economist with the CCPA-BC. Lynell Anderson, CPA, CGA, is a child care researcher and advocate and a CCPA-BC research associate.

What do you have to earn to afford rental housing?

BY MARC LEE & DAVID MACDONALD

Metro Vancouver home prices have been in the news in recent months, with prices falling and the total number of sales for both detached homes and condos at multi-decade lows. However, for the more than one-third of households in Metro Vancouver who rent (and over half of households in the City of Vancouver), the affordability crisis is as acute as ever.

The high cost of buying housing has led many to continue to rent resulting in extremely low vacancy rates and upward pressure on rents. Our latest research does the math on affordability for renters across the country broken down by neighbourhood, and the picture that emerges in Metro Vancouver is both striking and, to anyone in the rental market, not surprising.

The data converts rent into the hourly wage that would be required to afford an apartment, assuming a standard 40-hour job for 52 weeks a year, and allocating no more than 30 per cent of pre-tax earnings to be spent on rent. Rental data are from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CHMC) October 2018 *Urban Rental Market Survey*. These neighbourhood-level data only cover purpose-built rental stock, to which we have added (more expensive) rented condos, but does not include secondary suites.

For the Metro Vancouver region as a whole, the average rental housing wage is \$26.72 per hour for a one-bedroom and \$35.43 per hour for a two-bedroom.

For the Metro Vancouver region as a whole, the average rental housing wage is \$26.72 per hour for a one-bedroom and \$35.43 per hour for a two-bedroom. That is, you need to be making almost \$27 an hour, full-year and full-time, to limit rent to 30 per cent of your income (utilities not included).

Put another way, the median household income in Vancouver in 2017 was \$73,800, which works out to a full-time wage of \$35.48 per hour. Thus, about half of households could afford to live in a two-bedroom apartment. For unattached individuals, median income is much lower: \$34,700 translates into a full-time wage of \$16.68 per hour.

Vancouver's most pricey rental housing is in and around the downtown peninsula (Downtown North, South False Creek and North False Creek), at an average one-bedroom rent of around \$2,000 per month, which translates into a wage of about \$38

per hour at the 30 per cent rent-to-income threshold. A two-bedroom apartment in these areas is more like \$2,600 to \$3,200 per month, requiring a wage of \$50 to 60 per hour.

Vancouver's West End includes a lot of older purpose-built rental stock and is somewhat more affordable, with one-bedroom rents around \$1,700 per month, with a wage of \$33 per hour to stay under the 30 per cent rent-to-income threshold. A two-bedroom apartment is more like \$2,400 per month, requiring a wage of more than \$45 per hour.

Rental housing costs tend to fall the farther away one moves away from the downtown core. In neighbourhoods like Kitsilano, Mount Pleasant, Cedar Cottage and Lonsdale, for example, one-bedroom rents of \$1,300–1,500 per month would require a wage of \$25–29 per hour. A notable exception is UBC, which has among the most expensive rents (only slightly less than downtown).

It is important to note that these calculations are based on average rents which include all of the people currently housed, some of whom pay much lower than market rents due to rent controls and from having lived in a home for a long time. If one has to move, rents for available apartments may be much higher than the averages cited above, and the hourly wage required correspondingly higher.

As housing gets more expensive in the central city, low-wage workers must move farther away in order to find affordable accommodation. This poses increased time and financial costs for transportation, including the increased likelihood of needing a car. In Metro Vancouver, we see a higher share of low-income rentals near transit stations, although this stock is increasingly under threat due to the lure of condo redevelopments (looking at you, Burnaby).

Another way to look at the data is to calculate what it would take for someone earning minimum wage to afford rental housing in a particular area. In Metro Vancouver, to live anywhere close to downtown, it would take three full-time minimum wage jobs to afford a one-bedroom apartment. A two-bedroom



apartment in those same areas would require four to five full-time minimum wage jobs! Of the 70 neighbourhoods in Metro Vancouver, there isn't a single area where a full-time minimum wage worker could afford the average one-bedroom apartment, much less a two-bedroom one.

These calculations are based on the October 2018 minimum wage, but even with the recent increase from \$12.65 to \$13.85 per hour in BC, the minimum wage remains well below the market rental wage calculated (and rents have gone up in the interim too). From all of these data a clear picture emerges: for low-wage workers in the region, decent rental housing is simply unaffordable.

Of the 70 neighbourhoods in Metro Vancouver, there isn't a single area where a full-time minimum wage worker could afford the average one-bedroom apartment, much less a two-bedroom one.

This highlights the urgent need for social housing with rent-g geared-to-income units. The market simply is not providing an adequate supply of affordable rental housing.

Overall in Metro Vancouver, social housing is only about 5 per cent of the total housing stock, a number that is very low

compared to other jurisdictions. It has also been many decades since purpose-built rental housing was a common development, with incentives for developers currently skewed towards building condos. While a large share of condos may be rented out, those do not have the stability of tenure as dedicated rental housing.

After taking a couple decades off, it's about time governments got back into the housing game. There has been renewed efforts on the part of the federal and BC governments to build more dedicated affordable housing, but as our data show, there is a lot more work to do.

Marc Lee is a senior economist at the CCPA-BC and the author of Getting Serious About Affordable Housing: Towards a Plan for Metro Vancouver. David Macdonald is a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – National Office and the author of Unaccommodating: Rental Housing Wage in Canada, available at: policyalternatives.ca/unaccommodating.

View the interactive rental housing wage maps at:
policyalternatives.ca/rentalwages (Canada)
policynote.ca/housing-wage (Metro Vancouver)

What we can accomplish together: A conversation with Alex Hemingway

BY LINDSEY BERTRAND

The CCPA-BC's Alex Hemingway believes that BC can address the challenges we face—from the housing crisis, to strained education and health care systems, to the deepening climate emergency. What we need, he tells us, is to put to use available resources in order to implement workable policy solutions and strengthen public services. Doing this would mean creating a fairer tax system and rebuilding BC's public sector—about which our resident public finance researcher has a lot to say. I sat down with Alex to learn more about the better future his research shows is possible.



To start, I have to ask: How did you come to be so passionate about public finance and services?

Things really clicked for me was when I was finishing high school (2001/02) and we had the beginning of major education funding cuts in BC. In Prince George where I grew up, this led to the closure of about 15 to 20 schools—and it was pretty intense to see a kind of dismantling of our public education while I was in the system.

I was in film class that year and made a short documentary about the funding cuts. I interviewed a local MLA who was also a cabinet minister and they refused to acknowledge that cuts to education had taken place. The argument was that there was only a funding *freeze*. This meant funding wasn't increasing even to compensate for inflation, but by the MLA's logic that didn't count as a cut.

That clashed so dramatically with the reality that I could see

in front of me—of massive planned school closures—that, for me, it felt like an introduction to how statistics and economic jargon can be used to mislead people. The experience motivated me to better understand statistics and economics, and to use them for more constructive purposes.

Now that you've been doing this research a while, what would you say is the most important thing you've learned?

The single most striking thing is just how rich we are as a country and as a province, but how little of that wealth we've so far harnessed for the public good—for investments in our public services and making people's lives better.

So what needs to happen?

We need to empower people to see what we can accomplish with all the wealth we have and that we all create.

Over many years, people have been told—and in many cases have started to believe—that there's not much we can do about the challenges facing our province and country. As an example, it's come to the point where talking about ending homelessness is seen as utopian when actually it's well within our grasp. Building a home for everyone is not rocket science, and we can afford it as a society. More to the point, we can't afford not to do so.

But there are so many important issues to tackle.

Anyone who pays attention to issues of social and economic justice can be overwhelmed by how much is wrong in the world. But these are all interconnected problems, which means we can make progress from many different angles. At the CCPA-BC, we cover a lot of issues—health care, K-12 education, housing, pensions, election finance, worker rights and more—not just because they're all important, but also because they relate to each other. For example, getting big money out of politics can have a big effect on what kinds of policies are advanced, and changes to taxation policy then impacts our ability to fund public services.

Some of that has been happening in recent years, such as reigning in the power of corporations and the wealthy by limiting political donations. What other changes are you glad to have seen?

There are a few big ones. The current government has been going in the right direction by increasing taxes on the highest income earners and corporations (and getting rid of our least fair tax, MSP premiums). Those changes mean more tax fairness, and more money for public services.

Another area where they've broken new ground is with housing policies. The speculation tax and new taxes on BC's highest-end properties help in multiple ways: they reduce the incentives to treat housing as an investment commodity, they raise revenue that can be invested directly in affordable housing, and they help reduce wealth inequality.

Another big positive change, if I'm choosing three, is the BC government's major new investments in \$10-a-day child care. If that is rolled all the way out, they'll have created the first major new social program in the province in at least a generation. That's a powerful thing.

What drives you to keep pushing for policies to create a better future?

It's the same thing that drives anyone involved in progressive change: once you get some understanding of the injustice around us, there's no going back. I think, for most people, you can't come to understand how this world works and not at least want to do something about it. The next step is to realize there's a lot that we can do about it together.

I think that our work at the CCPA-BC contributes to much broader efforts of that kind. And I can tell our work makes a difference. I know it when we see the implementation of policies we've been advocating for years. I know it when public officials or the corporate sector are forced to respond to our reports. And most importantly, I know it from speaking with supporters and allies who tell us how our work helps arm them with facts and advances their own work in making their communities, province and country better.

In short, there's a lot of reason to be hopeful. If we work together, there's a tremendous amount we can do to make this province and world a better place. If more people get involved in making change in their community, we can take charge of the wealth we have in this province, and we can make all of our lives better.

Lindsey Bertrand is a communication specialist at the CCPA-BC. Alex Hemingway is an economist and the CCPA-BC's public finance policy analyst.

2019 Gideon Rosenbluth Memorial Lecture with David Green

The CCPA-BC is proud to present, in partnership with the Vancouver School of Economics at UBC, the 2019 Annual Gideon Rosenbluth Memorial Lecture. David Green will discuss a "basic income" as a policy option for British Columbia.



In an era of high inequality, continuing poverty, homelessness and housing issues, and concerns about the impact of new technologies on work, there is an appetite for considering radical policy shifts. In that context, a basic income has received a lot of attention across the policy discussion spectrum. It has been promoted as a policy tool that can help eliminate poverty, and which can also play a central role in restructuring society and the role of labour within it.

The question this lecture will consider is, "Is it the right policy for BC now?"

David Green—a member of the BC government's panel looking into a basic income—will first provide some background on trends in the economy that are related to the call for a basic income, and will describe the different forms a basic income will take, specify potential goals for it, and describe some of the costs and other practicalities. That will serve as the backdrop to a discussion with the audience about how they see a basic income—both its potential and its problems.

Thursday, October 3, 2019

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Vancouver Public Library Central Branch Alice Mackay Room, 350 W Georgia St, Vancouver, BC

Tickets: \$5* available at: ccpabc.ca/green2019

Please note that space is limited and seats will be reserved on a first come, first served basis.

* No one will be turned away for lack of funds. Call 604-801-5121 x221 to register at no cost.

Good public policy has lowered the living wage for now. Let's keep going.

BY HELENA SEIFERLING

On May 1, the Living Wage for Families Campaign released new living wage rates for 12 BC communities. Even though costs are increasing steeply for rent and other basic necessities, the cost of living for families with children is lower this year thanks to the provincial government's new child care policies.



The living wage is the hourly amount that each of two working parents with two young children must earn to meet their basic needs. It captures the overall cost of living in a community, including both family expenses and government taxes and transfers. This year, BC's living wages vary from \$14.03 per hour in the North Central Region to \$19.50 per hour in Metro Vancouver. All living wages calculated in BC this year have decreased from previous years.

Does this mean it's now cheaper to live in BC? Not necessarily. Costs for housing, food and transportation are climbing every year and the overall cost of living is still on an upward trend.

However, BC's recent child care investments are reducing out-of-pocket costs for families with young children by thousands of dollars. In Metro Vancouver, the living wage family saves \$8,213 on child care expenses this year—a 45 per cent reduction from 2018. These savings come from two programs: the income-tested Affordable Child Care Benefit (\$7,013) and the universal Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (\$1,200).

Without BC's new child care spending, however, the living wage rates would have increased considerably. For example, two parents with two children in Metro Vancouver would have had to each earn \$22.47 an hour in 2019 to cover their basic

expenses—a shocking 7.5 per cent increase over the 2018 living wage of \$20.91 per hour.

This is a win for some BC families, who for too long have struggled to get by in the midst of a housing crisis, a lack of affordable child care, and a minimum wage that stagnated for the first decade of this century. With the provincial government's recent steps in child care, its poverty reduction plan, and its newly introduced amendments to the Employment Standards Act to better protect workers' rights, a good quality of life is finally in sight for many families. This year's living wage calculations show that good policies are having an impact.

But while living wages are lower in 2019, much still needs to be done. Rent continues to be the most expensive item in the living wage budget and vacancy rates remain near-prohibitively low in most BC communities. Many families struggle with long wait lists for child care spaces (see page 5), or no accessible spaces at all, and \$10-a-day child care is still just a dream for most families.

The impact of the government's child care spending this year shows the power of good public policy to improve standards of living.

Costs in areas like transportation and food will continue to rise. And while the minimum wage increased to \$13.85 in June, a gap remains between the minimum wage and the living wage, particularly in high-cost communities like Vancouver and Victoria.

Moreover, the living wage methodology captures only one family type. We know that seniors, single people and families with younger children or teenagers are still experiencing challenges making ends meet.

The impact of the government's child care spending this year shows the power of good public policy to improve standards of living. By showing this same commitment in other policy areas, particularly housing, food and transportation, the government can ensure that all British Columbians are able to thrive.

Halena Seiferling is the Campaign Organizer for the Living Wage for Families Campaign.

Captured: Regulatory breakdown at the Oil and Gas Commission

BY BEN PARFITT

British Columbia's Oil and Gas Commission (OGC) bears many of the hallmarks of a "captured" regulator. Too often, the interests of the industry it regulates take precedence over the public interest.

Consider these three glaring examples:

In the spring of 2017, reports surfaced that companies drilling and fracking for natural gas had built dozens of dams without bothering to submit their plans for approval. At least one of those "illegal works" was as tall as a seven-storey apartment building. Many others were so poorly built that they were at risk of collapse. But the OGC never once heftily fined any of the companies that built the dams.

Later in 2017, news emerged that numerous natural gas wells were leaking and contaminating groundwater supplies. The OGC knew that this was the case in 2013. But it sat on the information and only acknowledged its existence after a copy of its "internal" report was leaked.

Then, in the spring of 2018, word surfaced that the OGC had deliberately held onto another damaging report, which showed that oil and gas companies systematically violated rules meant to protect critically threatened caribou populations.

Across the three cases, the worst "penalty" levied was that the OGC ordered the offending companies to fix their mistakes. Such orders, however, do not constitute "official findings of wrongdoing"—something that the OGC appears intent on avoiding.

It is imperative that the government not allow a captured regulator to continue to be at the helm. Maintaining the status quo only deepens public distrust.

To demonstrate this, the CCPA-BC looked at 115 enforcement actions posted on the OGC's website. Fully 99 of those actions involved orders with no finding of guilt. Another two involved tickets. Only 14 involved administrative tribunals where harsher penalties could theoretically be meted out. And even then, they rarely were.

In total, the penalties resulting from those 14 investigations totaled just under \$93,000—a drop in the bucket compared to the more than \$5 million in penalties that could have been levied.

Premier John Horgan indicated he was prepared to reform



the agency more than a year-and-a-half ago. But with less than half the time remaining in the current government's mandate, it needs to act quickly to make that happen.

One of the most effective things the government can do is to create an arm's length agency to oversee compliance and enforcement efforts in the fossil fuel sector.

At present, the OGC issues approvals for oil and gas industry activities like fracking and is responsible for ensuring that companies abide by the rules. But clearly, the latter is not happening effectively.

Additionally, the government can insist that the agency be more transparent. There is no excuse for suppressing documents that are clearly in the public interest and that ought to be available to compliance and enforcement personnel.

It is imperative that the government not allow a captured regulator to continue to be at the helm. Maintaining the status quo only deepens public distrust.

Ben Parfitt is the CCPA-BC's resource policy analyst and the author of Captured: British Columbia's Oil and Gas Commission and the Case for Reform, now available at: policyalternatives.ca/captured.



The CCPA-BC's annual gala fundraiser with Nancy MacLean

THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT
How libertarian intellectuals, billionaires and white supremacists shaped today's politics

Join us at the 2019 CCPA-BC gala to hear from Nancy MacLean, an award-winning historian whose latest book, *Democracy in Chains*, traces the anti-democratic roots of the right-wing politics now transforming the United States. MacLean's work documents the ideas, strategy and money behind the radical right's "relentless campaign to eliminate unions, suppress voting, privatize public education, stop action on climate change and alter the Constitution." Her research holds lessons for those seeking to better understand and make change in our current political climate.

Thursday, November 21, 2019 at 5:30 pm

Fraserview Hall, 8240 Fraser Street, Vancouver

The emcee for the evening will be Charlie Demers—author, comedian and regular on CBC Radio's The Debaters.

Individual tickets are \$110, including buffet dinner. Additionally, tables can be reserved for groups of eight (8) people. Tickets are available at: ccpabc.ca/bcgala2019.

Organizations: Become an event patron or book a table for your organization. To learn more about the benefits, contact Rav Kambo: rav@policyalternatives.ca or 604-801-5121 x 225.

For questions about the gala or individual tickets, contact Galen Hutcheson: ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca or 604-801-5121 x 221.

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