

NOVEMBER 2016

# CANADIANS TALK CLIMATE ACTION:

#CANCLIMATEACTION  
TOWN HALLS REPORT



The Climate  
Reality Project  
CANADA

leadnow.ca  
people powered change

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Paris Agreement on climate change is an historic document that clearly recognizes the need for greater ambition to prevent runaway global warming. Canada's commitments in Paris and the First Ministers' *Vancouver Declaration on Clean Growth and Climate Change* are encouraging to Canadians who seek urgent, responsible climate policy from the federal and provincial governments. The government's public engagement process is an exciting opportunity for citizens to inform a long-overdue pan-Canadian climate action framework.

On Earth Day 2016, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change launched a public engagement strategy to "seek input from Canadians, including Indigenous peoples, on how to address climate change and promote clean growth."<sup>1</sup> As part of this work, Canadians were offered tools and advice for holding town halls in their own communities. Canadians were also encouraged to share their ideas on Twitter with the hashtags #CANClimateAction and #ActionClimatCAN in French.

Members of Parliament representing every political party except the Bloc Québécois hosted **eighty-six climate change town halls** across the country. Civil society organizations and citizens' groups also organized independent town halls and small meetings, bringing the total number of events to more than 100, with

more than 8,200 estimated participants. The focus of this report is primarily on those town halls for which Members of Parliament provided meeting summaries to us by email or submitted their notes to the engagement portal.

To inform this report, Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada engaged an independent outside firm, Montreal-based Nexalogy, to perform a lexical analysis of notes captured by MP staff and volunteers at 45 town hall events. Of these analyzed events, 42 town halls involved at least one MP. In total, **2,305 English comments and 894 French comments** were identified from the town hall notes, representing individual comments or summaries of table discussions. To create a more complete picture of the town hall conversations, we added **3,071 social media messages from Twitter** that included the #CANClimateAction tag from most days for which we analyzed town halls notes. Responses on the French #ActionClimatCAN hashtag were not analyzed as more than 70% of messages - versus 11% in English - originated from government accounts.

**This report summarizes, for the first time, key findings from town halls involving Members of Parliament and contributions from highly-engaged Canadians participating in-person and on Twitter, from the perspective of Leadnow.ca and The Climate Reality**

<sup>1</sup> Environment and Climate Change Canada, "Government of Canada launches interactive website on clean growth and climate change", April 21, 2016. <http://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/government-of-canada-launches-interactive-website-on-clean-growth-and-climate-change-576575151.html>

Project Canada. The report is aimed at Canadian political leaders working to advance national climate action and who want to better understand the priorities and concerns of highly-engaged Canadians.

Our key findings are:

- **Participants recognize the opportunity of a fully-renewable energy economy** that supports community economic development and helps transition workers out of legacy industries like oil, gas, and coal. Obstacles are often seen as political and cultural, rather than technological or technical.
- **Highly-engaged Canadians expect government climate action plans to be evidence-based and grounded in current data and climate science.**
- **Unlike most governments, participants do not separate natural resource policy and environmental policy.** Participants, in general, understand that fossil fuel use is the primary driver of global warming and all town halls analyzed included discussion about natural resource development, use, and export. Other related policy

domains, such as trade, electoral reform, and Indigenous rights and Reconciliation, featured repeatedly in participant comments.

- **Many participants reject a contradictory “all of the above” strategy** that includes continued fossil fuel subsidies and infrastructure expansion while pursuing emissions reductions and “clean growth” in the economy. Several town hall notes include references to research that finds Canada will struggle or be unable to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while constructing new fossil fuel infrastructure like the Kinder Morgan and Energy East pipelines.
- **Engagement across ministries and provincial governments was minimal.** Voices of pertinent federal ministers, provincial premiers and environment ministries were essentially absent from the online conversation.

Based on our analysis of the town halls involving Members of Parliament, Leadnow.ca and The Climate Reality Project Canada make the following recommendations for government:

## **RECOMMENDATION ONE: ADDRESS CONCERNS THAT CANADA WON'T KEEP PACE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES' EFFORTS TO LIMIT CLIMATE CHANGE AND END FOSSIL FUEL USE**

In 2015, the IPCC calculated global carbon budgets for a likely chance (66%) of limiting global warming below 2°C, and a medium chance (50%) of limiting warming below 1.5°C. Canada's fossil fuel reserves alone exceed these thresholds and are among the highest-cost reserves globally.<sup>2</sup>

Many Canadians who took part in these MP town halls closely follow current climate science, policy analysis, and commentary. Many believe that because Canada has undertaken to build new infrastructure and to

maintain subsidies for fossil fuels, its current climate action plans will not prevent the country from exceeding this budget. Several speakers urged a firm commitment to the more cautious 1.5°C warming target set in Paris. Government announcements about climate action should strive to improve Canadians' understanding of current science and provide guidance that helps reduce exposure to risk from both global warming and worldwide efforts to end fossil fuel use.

## **RECOMMENDATION TWO: RECOGNIZE THAT CANADIANS DO NOT SEE CLIMATE ACTION AS AN EXCLUSIVELY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE**

We urge continuous and ongoing MP-led engagement

with Canadians on climate change. However, the

<sup>2</sup> Christophe McGlade & Paul Ekins, “The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2°C,” *Nature*, 8 Jan 2015, <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v517/n7533/full/nature14016.html>



Canadians who took part in the most recent series of town halls do not see climate action as an exclusively environmental issue. Our analysis shows many participants provided feedback on issues including public transit, housing, taxation, trade, and national security as they relate to climate change.

The Environment and Climate Change Minister was highly involved throughout the process. Notably, Minister McKenna made more contributions than any other Canadian to the #CANClimateAction and #ActionClimatCAN discussions on Twitter. Despite

significant public interest in climate action as it relates to policy areas like trade, transportation and taxation, those federal ministries were not actively involved in this public engagement process.<sup>3</sup> We recommend including areas of government other than the Environment Ministry in future climate action engagement. More active involvement from Ministers in hosting town halls and participating in online conversations, as Minister McKenna did throughout the process, would improve engagement with Canadians on the policy areas they consider most relevant to climate action.

## RECOMMENDATION THREE: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

As active participants in the public engagement process since the Earth Day announcement, Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada observed that shifting timelines, opaque methodology, inadequate site planning and non-transparent submissions made it more difficult for civil society to participate effectively in the process.

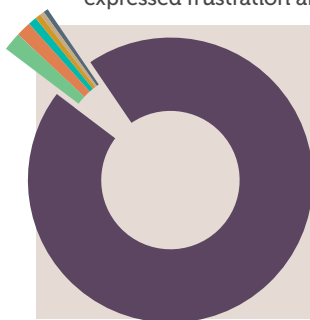
To improve future engagement processes, we recommend:

- **A process that encourages more uniform feedback.** The myriad ways feedback was captured at the various townhalls challenged our ability to aggregate and summarize those conversations. We suggest using standardized feedback form or online system to capture responses to pre-drafted questions.
- **Clearer communication about how input and feedback from public engagement activities will be incorporated into national climate planning.** It remains unclear how government will use feedback collected at the town halls. Some participants expressed frustration about this and noted that

a failure to clearly communicate how their input was used could discourage participation in future events or contribute to cynicism about how public consultations are conducted.

- A more active government role in ensuring an informed discussion, and limiting the impact of misinformation campaigns and climate science deniers. Some participants, especially in the online forum, contributed misinformation and engaged in behaviour described by others as “trolling”.<sup>4</sup> Anticipating this in future events, we encourage dedicated moderation by staff with clearer codes of conduct for participation in these engagement activities.

We appreciate the government’s efforts in providing engagement opportunities for Canadians and see opportunity to improve future processes. Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada are excited that Canada is set to announce a climate action plan. This is something our country has never done and means Canada will soon be part of the global community urgently confronting the most significant threat of our time.



**PARTICIPATION OF RELEVANT MINISTRIES IN #CANCLIMATEACTION SOCIAL MEDIA CONVERSATION**

754	■ Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
14	■ Ministry of Natural Resources
9	■ Ministry of Transport
4	■ Prime Minister's Office
3	■ Ministry of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
3	■ Ministry of Finance
2	■ Ministry of Infrastructure and Communities
0	■ Ministry of Democratic Institutions
0	■ Ministry of International Trade

Broader public participation in future consultations would be aided by deeper internal engagement across key government ministries, measured here by one proxy, Twitter activity.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3: Twitter Engagement

<sup>4</sup> Spencer Van Dyk, “Climate consultation swamped by internet trolls”, Capital News Online, October 14th, 2016, <http://capitalnews.ca/climate-consultation-swamped-by-internet-trolls/>

# CONTEXT FOR CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE ACTION



*"Engaging Canadians on our plans and efforts to address climate change is something I view as essential. Since April 2016, Canadians from coast to coast shared their ideas and contributed to the online conversation on climate change and clean growth."*

*"I wish to thank all Canadians for their participation and support of Canada's ongoing effort to address climate change and develop a nation plan. Let's keep the conversation going with #CANClimateAction."*

- The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change<sup>5</sup>

*"I want to say thank you for listening to us. This is what democracy looks like, and this is a wonderful opportunity."*

- Victor Frankel, secretary-general of the McGill Post Graduate Students' Society at Marc Garneau's Town Hall<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> ECCC, "Government of Canada launches interactive website on clean growth and climate change" April 16 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Matt D'Amours, "Marc Garneau Directly Addresses Citizens on Climate Change", The Link Newspaper, September 17, 2016, <http://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/marc-garneau-directly-addresses-citizens-on-climate-change>

In March 2016, Canada's Premiers and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Canada's First Ministers) issued the Vancouver Declaration on Clean Growth and Climate Change. In their declaration, Canada's First Ministers agreed that:

*"We will build on the momentum of the Paris Agreement by developing a concrete plan to achieve Canada's international commitments through a pan-Canadian framework for clean growth and climate change."*<sup>7</sup>

Following this announcement, a coalition of grassroots,

First Nations, religious, democracy and environmental groups formed to increase the expected ambition of a national climate change plan. This group launched the "People's Climate Plan" campaign to increase the level of engagement in the plan's development by Canadians interested in a responsible, just, and science-based national climate plan.

This organizing effort was coordinated by Leadnow, 350.org, the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, The Climate Reality Project Canada and the Council of Canadians. This report is written from the perspective of Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada.

## CORE ORGANIZERS IN PEOPLE'S CLIMATE PLAN:

Leadnow, Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, The Climate Reality Project Canada, Council of Canadians, and 350.org

## OTHER INVOLVED GROUPS:

350 Kingston, 350 Vancouver, Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion (BROKE), Calgary Climate Action Network, Citizens United for a Sustainable Planet, Climat Compétences, Climate Justice Saskatoon, CoopSol du Cafe Equitable, Development and Peace, Divest Waterloo, Ecology Action Centre, West Kootenay EcoSociety, East End Against Line 9, Environment Hamilton, Fossil Free Faith Canada, Idle No More, Indigenous Climate Action, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Kitsilano Indian Band, Leap Manifesto, Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition (MEJC), Responsible Energy Action, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, South Lake Simcoe Naturalists, Stand (formerly ForestEthics), Toronto350, United Church of Canada

The People's Climate Plan coalition identified three key principles that should be included in any Canadian climate plans:

1. **Science-based:** Realistically demonstrate a path to meeting Canada's commitments made at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP 21).
2. **Justice-based:** Ensure a just transition for energy workers, Indigenous Peoples, and communities impacted by global warming and the fossil fuel industry.
3. **100% Renewable:** Plan for a managed retreat from fossil fuel use and transition to a fully renewable energy system by 2050.

Between April and September 2016, the People's Climate Plan coalition encouraged Canadians to take part in the government's public engagement process that provided guidance for hosting town halls on climate action.

When announcing the consultation, Minister McKenna also introduced digital consultation elements, including a new social media hashtags (#CANClimateAction; #ActionClimatCAN) and web forum.

In May 2016, Leadnow emailed every Member of Parliament and encouraged each of them to host a town

<sup>7</sup> Canada's First Ministers, "Vancouver Declaration on clean growth and climate change", March 3, 2016, <http://www.scics.gc.ca/english/conferences.asp?a=viewdocument&id=2401>



hall in their riding as part of this consultation process. Organizations in the People's Climate Plan coalition also contacted their supporters and invited them to ask their Members of Parliament to host town halls. Lacking an official registry of town halls, our organizations created a national map that included, to the best of our knowledge, town hall times and locations across the country. When we learned of a climate action town hall between May and August, we contacted supporters in that riding to let them know their Member of Parliament was looking for their feedback.

In September 2016, Leadnow emailed every Member of Parliament again. We asked whether they had held a town hall and, if so, to send us notes from their meeting.

In a few cases, we downloaded minutes from MP-hosted town halls that were available online.

Once we received the notes, we combined them into a single database for machine-analysis by Nexalogy. To create a more complete picture of the town hall conversations, we added social media messages from Twitter that included the #CANClimateAction tag from days for which we analyzed town halls notes. Findings from this analysis inform our report, along with media coverage from the town hall events.

In the next section, we share stories from some of the town halls and describe the breadth of highly-engaged Canadians who participated.

## WHO TOOK PART IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE TOWN HALLS?

*"What was demonstrated [at our town hall] was citizens are able and willing to organize themselves and to rally behind a people's climate plan — one that works for communities, for Indigenous Peoples and for people across the world already feeling the impacts of climate change. While I hope the Liberals took away some of the important ideas and solutions brought forth by community members, I hope they have also learned a lesson about our community's tenacity — of its ability to organize, to consult one another and to speak out and be heard in order to hold this government accountable to bold climate action."*

Clayton Thomas-Muller is a member of Mathias Colomb Cree Nation and campaigner for the People's Climate Plan.<sup>8</sup>



During the engagement process, our coalition tracked 13 citizen-led events and 76 MP-involved town halls. Using town hall notes, media coverage, and counts from participants, we estimate over 8,200 people participated in these events across Canada. The lack of an official registry made calculating this number challenging; it is possible that we are not aware of some MP-involved discussions that took place.

In many cases, the events involved a few dozen local residents. In larger cities, MPs from multiple ridings combined some events. On June 17th, more than 250 people came out to an event hosted by Minister McKenna involving three Toronto Liberal MPs and Ontario Environment and Climate Change Minister Glen Murray. In Waterloo, more than 300 people assembled at Kitchener City Hall to discuss climate action with local MPs; newspaper coverage cited the California wildfires

<sup>8</sup> Clayton Thomas-Muller, "A refreshing change on climate talks", Winnipeg Free Press, May 30, 2016, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/a-refreshing-change-on-climate-talks-381274991.html>

and Louisiana floods as a motivator for the high turnout, as well as record summer temperatures.<sup>9</sup>

The discussions largely took place at public buildings including churches, universities, and community centres. Across Canada, many participants documented their involvement in social media or digitally-engaged their MP or a Minister, allowing people to participate remotely.

In ridings outside Canada's largest cities, the town hall discussions were more intimate and often organized in collaboration with local experts, organizations, and cultural groups. This newspaper description of a town hall in the South Okanagan-West Kootenay riding shows the diversity of participants in this BC riding:

*Approximately 100 people turned out for the event, sharing their views and ideas for [MP Richard] Cannings to take back to the House of Commons in Ottawa. Rev. Greg Powell, minister of the United Church in Castlegar and a member of the West Kootenay EcoSociety board of directors, and Laura Sacks, a member of the Citizens' Climate Lobby, moderated the public input portion of the evening, and the Sounds of the Heart Doukhobor Ladies Choir set the tone for the evening by singing hymns about peace and unity.*<sup>10</sup>

Before turning to the content of the town hall discussions analyzed, we provide some observations about the people who took part.

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## **PARTICIPANTS ARE HIGHLY-ENGAGED ON CLIMATE AND ENERGY ISSUES**

In promoting these engagement opportunities, our organizations understood that participants were unlikely to be a representative sample of Canadians. As in any such public engagement process, there is a self-selection bias as interested individuals elect to take part.

Canadians attending these events are considered highly-engaged because they are likely to have opted-in

to receiving communication from a Minister or Member of Parliament, an organization involved with the People's Climate Plan, or an expert, colleague, or organization promoting the public engagement process. This constituency is highly relevant for decision-makers as they are more likely than other Canadians to remain involved as government announces and implements climate actions plans.

Media attending the event often commented on the expertise and literacy of participants at the town hall events. One reporter from a Kwantlen Polytechnic University campus paper The Runner wrote of the Cloverdale-Langley town hall:

*"The answers [MP John Aldag] got were surprisingly passionate and thought-out. Each of the attendees spoke extensively about how to approach climate change, even though some of them professed to being novices on the subject. Others were extremely well-versed and involved in environmental organizations, and the combination resulted in a free-flowing and educational forum."*<sup>11</sup>

Youth were active participants throughout the process. Some of this active involvement can be credited to the organizing efforts of youth-led groups like the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition and campus fossil fuel divestment campaigns. Student newspapers were sometimes the only media publications to cover town hall events. In contrast, the Toronto Star published a climate denier criticizing Canada's climate action planning efforts.<sup>12</sup>

A student journalist at Carleton University, Spencer Van Dyk, recently published an analysis of comments from the online portal at [letstalkclimateaction.ca](http://letstalkclimateaction.ca). She reported that "Nearly half of the posts are taken up by the top 10 commenters, and 19 per cent of the total posts were made by just one person: Trevor Marr. There were 4,045 commenters in total." <sup>13</sup>

Youth expressed frustration in many of their comments about a sense of intergenerational injustice and constrained options for their futures:

*A 25-year-old bluntly told [MP Bob] Bratina*

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9 Luisa D'Amato, "On climate change, we want aggressive action, and soon", The Waterloo Region Record, August 25, 2016, <http://www.therecord.com/opinion-story/6823784-d-amato-on-climate-change-we-want-aggressive-action-and-soon/>

10 Chelsea Novak, "South Okanagan-West Kootenay MP Richard Cannings holds Climate Action Town Hall", Rossland News, July 5, 2016, <http://www.rosslandnews.com/news/385612351.html>

11 Alyssa Laube, "Liberal MP Talks Climate Change", The Runner, July 26, 2016, <http://runnermag.ca/2016/07/liberal-mp-talks-climate-change/>

12 Tom Harris, "Town halls on climate change are a setup", Toronto Sun, July 10, 2016, <http://www.torontosun.com/2016/07/10/town-halls-on-climate-change-are-a-setup>

13 Van Dyck, Capital News Online.

that “young people are screwed because of your generation” but added that the Liberal government has an opportunity because “young people want you to succeed and we understand that things are going to be difficult but things are already difficult.”

He said he has friends working in the Alberta tar sands who “don’t want to work there but they have to because they have to feed their families” and urged the government to stop subsidizing oil companies and spend those monies on retraining energy workers.<sup>14</sup>

forest diseases and invasive species.

“One woman expressed her concern that the changes in area lakes promoted algae growth. She suggested that blue-green algae could wipe out an entire lake community making it toxic to native species and cottagers alike.”<sup>16</sup>



While frustration is palpable among many younger participants, youth are also encouraged by the engagement process:

*In Yellowknife, 13-year-old Linnea Azzolini’s described her experience: “I’m a huge environmentalist, and I have a dream of doing hands-on work for the environment when I grow up. This is the first actual thing I’ve been to, but it’s really exciting.”<sup>15</sup>*

Older Canadians, including many residents outside of Canada’s biggest cities, brought their own insight to the discussions. In newspaper coverage from Bancroft, long-time residents spoke to observed changes in their lifetime and risks to the tourism economy:

*“Many attendees were long-time cottagers of the area. They discussed what they have seen happen over the course of their lives in the area including area lakes thawing more quickly, warmer water temperatures and new and a higher frequency of*

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## **PARTICIPANTS CONSIDER CLIMATE ACTION URGENT AND OVERDUE**

Many of the participants expressed concern about the pace of change. Calls for a “war-like mobilization” were repeated at town halls across Canada, citing both the danger to Canadians and a moral imperative to act.

In North Bay, Ontario, one speaker was quoted in The Bay Today, comparing climate action in 2016 to the Manhattan Project during the Second World War:

*...like the U.S. development of the atomic bomb during the war, we would need to assemble the greatest minds—experts of the environment—and not be afraid to spend mass amounts of funding to find a solution.*

*“We are already so far gone,” he said, noting that like the Manhattan project, we would need to*

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14 “Poor planning scored”, Hamilton Catch, July 11, 2016, [http://hamiltoncatch.org/view\\_article.php?id=1428](http://hamiltoncatch.org/view_article.php?id=1428)

15 Richard Gleeson, “Yellowknifers join Catherine McKenna to talk climate change”, CBC News North, July 12, 2016 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/catherine-mckenna-in-yellowknife-1.3675024>

16 Sarah Sobanski, “Eco-friendly locals meet at town hall”, Bancroft This Week, July 21, 2016, <http://www.bancroftthisweek.com/?p=6744>



*come up with something very big, very fast. [The speaker's] biggest fear was his prediction of a global refugee crisis that would destabilise Europe and North America as populated areas near the equator in Africa and India become virtually uninhabitable from heat and drought.<sup>17</sup>*

*affect the bottom line and change how we build things [adaptation]. Recurring and worsening drought conditions have led the City to investigate alternative water sources. It would cost \$20 million to switch to pumping and treating lake water to replace our small low flow gravity feed system that barely meets our needs under these hotter conditions.*

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## **PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED ELECTED OFFICIALS FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

At many of the events, elected officials from other levels of government took part in the town halls. Local city councillors, members of provincial legislatures, and provincial ministers attended town halls across Canada. Participating Canadians frequently recognized that the federal government cannot act alone, requiring cooperation from provinces, municipalities, and regional governments.

In some cases, attending elected officials themselves acknowledged the need for more action at their own levels of government. For example, in media coverage from the Rossland town hall:

*Many who attended the town hall in Rossland were in favour of carbon taxes rather than a cap and trade agreement, including Councillor Aaron Cosbey. Cosbey spoke in favour of a carbon tax as a private citizen, but also spoke on behalf of the City of Rossland. He said that the city supports a move toward renewable energy and lowering emissions, but also said, "It's not enough. We saw the figures that Richard put up on the screen. We saw the targets that were agreed to in Paris: two degrees or 1.5 if we can get there."<sup>18</sup>*

References to extreme weather and disasters accompanied appeals for more timely action.

Anna Purcell, a City Councillor from Nelson, was summarized in their community's town hall notes:

*Anna noted that from a municipal perspective climate change is already very expensive. Last year's record wind storm cost the city \$1 million and the 2013 flash flood cost \$340,000. If events like this are going to become yearly events, it will*

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## **RECOGNIZING SELF-SELECTION BIAS OF PARTICIPANTS**

Due to the efforts of the People's Climate Plan coalition and other organizations, as well as the self-selection bias implicit in a public engagement process like this, participants were more likely than an average Canadian to call for urgent, ambitious climate action.

Canadians who took part in these town halls should be assumed to be more aware of and concerned about climate change than most Canadians. While these participants are not representative of Canadians in general, analysis of their feedback as highly-engaged, climate-focused Canadians can be useful to decision-makers looking to make and communicate decisions about climate action.

In a small number of cases, participants discouraged climate action. One speaker in Calgary said:

*We are not having an impact [on limiting climate change] and this is in a nation that must heat its homes 8 months of the year on average. Why are we allowing China, India, Russia – all the "major" emitters to do nothing while we put our economy and lives at huge risk?*

Indeed, compared to other methods in the government's engagement process (especially the online portal) there are far fewer opponents of climate action or those denying climate science.<sup>19</sup> With regard to the government's stakeholder engagement efforts, an analysis of Twitter conversations revealed very little activity from provincial premiers and ministries of the environment. Additionally, federal ministers whose mandate letters explicitly cite climate change as a

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<sup>17</sup> Ryen Veldhuis, "Climate change a dire issue, Rota told", BayToday.ca, July 14, 2016, <https://www.baytoday.ca/local-news/climate-change-a-dire-issue-rotatold-336856>

<sup>18</sup> Novak, Rossland News.

<sup>19</sup> Van Dyck, Capital News Online

common challenge facing the nation as a whole, were entirely absent from the online conversation.<sup>20</sup>

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## PARTICIPANT CONCERNS WITH THE PROCESS AND PRIORITIZATION

*“On a balmy Friday night, June 17, the atrium at the Brickworks is jammed packed with more than 250 people who’ve come to this town hall – one of dozens being held across the country by the Trudeau government to help develop a federal climate action plan due this fall. It’s all very democratic. But are policy makers really listening or is this a good game of green optics to help the feds build their climate cred and pipelines, too?” – Now Toronto<sup>21</sup>*

Across Canada, notes and media coverage from MP-involved town halls included references to concerns about how feedback collected at the town halls will be incorporated into a national climate action framework.

From the Orleans riding, a participant speaking to MP Andrew Leslie and MPP Marie-France Lalonde wrote: “As a participant, it felt good to stand in front of those who represent us and state personal opinions on a matter of such significance; and seeing them take note. It is difficult, however, not to be skeptical of the process.”<sup>22</sup>

In the Peterborough Examiner’s coverage of Minister Maryam Monsef’s town hall, a participant, spoke to her cautious trust in the process:

*[Jane] Scott thought the meeting was a great way to have voices heard and it makes her hopeful for change. But she’ll believe that change when she sees it.*

*“I actually have to see some action on the part of the federal government,” she said.*

*With Monsef open to ideas, Scott sees the meetings as an opportunity to effect change in the government. “I really trust her integrity, so I hope she brings our voice to the capital,” Scott said.<sup>23</sup>*

Some were concerned that their contributions wouldn’t be meaningful. One said, that their involvement “still leaves a sense of emptiness as the evening’s outputs aren’t anything government, business, or NGO analysts aren’t aware of... In my view, it’s unlikely that scenario would yield any breakthroughs on climate change.”<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, their involvement with a government-designed process to solicit feedback on climate action shows participants see value in their engagement. In fact, a sense of optimism, opportunity, and excitement is observable in many of the notes we analyzed. In the next section, we discuss key findings from their comments in town hall notes and Twitter discussion.



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20 Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, “Minister of Infrastructure and Communities Mandate Letter”, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-infrastructure-and-communities-mandate-letter> ; see also table in Appendix 3

21 Adria Vasil, “Liberals’ climate change-up plan”, NOW Toronto Magazine, June 21, 2016, <https://nowtoronto.com/news/ecoholic/liberals-climate-change-plan/>

22 Felipe Guerrero, “Orleans Climate Town Hall Meeting: Progress Being Made Within Imperfection”, Ecology Ottawa, July 27, 2016, <https://ecologyottawa.ca/2016/07/27/orleans-climate-town-hall-meeting-progress-being-made-within-imperfection/>

23 Jessica Nyznik, “Monsef hosts climate change meeting”, The Peterborough Examiner, June 25, 2016, <http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/2016/06/25/monsef-hosts-climate-change-meeting>

24 Guerrero, Ecology Ottawa.

# WHAT CANADIANS SAID DURING THE TOWN HALLS

*“We’re not going to be able to make the tough decisions unless people like you across the country are pushing people like me, the politicians, to be ambitious in how we tackle climate change.” – Minister McKenna at June 17th Toronto Town Hall<sup>25</sup>*

Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada aggregated notes captured at 53 climate action town halls that involved Members of Parliament between May and October 2016. Our two organizations contracted an outside party, Nexalogy, to perform a lexical analysis of the content in the MP notes and Twitter comments tagged with “#CANClimateAction” and “ActionClimatCAN” on days town halls were held. We also examined reports and notes drafted by members of the public and citizens groups, like the Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition, in addition to MP notes. Media coverage of the town halls, where available, were also used to supplement our descriptions.

Analysis from Nexalogy provide quantitative insight into the most frequently used words in Twitter discussions and town hall notes and the words that appeared near them. After removing the most commonly used words, like “government”, “climate”, or “Canada”, Nexalogy analyzed which words appeared most frequently alongside the remaining top words. By comparing the town hall data across Canada, we were able to identify converging national trends as well as regional outliers.

In the Twitter discussion, 5 key words trended on the days we analyzed:

- Energy (249)
- Community (164)
- Fuel (102)
- Pipeline (71)
- Indigenous (41)

In the town hall notes, these were the top words, as per the Nexalogy analysis:

- Energy (400)
- Tax (166)
- Local (124)
- Industry (110)
- Indigenous (88)

All the town hall notes analyzed include mentions of a price on carbon pollution, in almost all cases with support. In fact, Canadians speaking to carbon pricing were overwhelmingly supportive, with only a small number resisting or criticizing efforts to price carbon. Many supporters included words like “major” and

“ambitious” in their appeals for federal carbon pricing policy.

*“We need major government policy – carbon tax, cap and trade, public transport incentives.” – Vancouver Kingsway Speaker*

The analyzed notes also include repeated references to other key themes express with less uniform phrasing. These include variations of:

- Subsidies (106)
- Pipelines (101)
- Trade (64)
- Transportation (multiple terms, including public transit and electric vehicles).

We combined the lexical analysis with a qualitative analysis of notes from MP-involved town halls and media coverage. From this, we made the following key findings about participants:

- **Support for a 100% renewable energy economy is strong and linked to community economic development and transition for fossil fuel workers**
- **There is an expectation that climate action plans be evidence-based and informed by current data and climate science**
- **Feedback is not restricted to environmental policy, with natural resource infrastructure policy understood to be a critical component of climate action**
- **Continued subsidization and infrastructure expansion for the fossil fuel industry is understood to be in conflict with responsible climate action planning**

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## SUPPORT FOR 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY

The guidelines for public engagement published on [letstalkclimateaction.ca](http://letstalkclimateaction.ca) suggested that participants organize their discussion around the following questions:

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<sup>25</sup> Vasil, Now Toronto Magazine.



- What have been your own experiences with the impacts of climate change ?
- What are the solutions to reducing greenhouse gases that you would like to see governments, businesses, and communities implement?
- What are your ideas to both grow the economy and jobs while reducing emissions?
- What are some ideas to promote innovation and new technologies in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
- What can Canada do to better adapt to impacts of climate change and support affected communities, including Indigenous communities?

While these questions make no direct mention of renewable energy, the topic featured prominently in all discussions. Participants at the town halls were enthusiastic about renewable energy, with localized knowledge and an understanding of regional differences and opportunities.

Solar featured most prominently in ridings across Canada. Regionally, geothermal was prominent in conversation from Calgary, often with a bridge to oil well reclamation and transition opportunities for the oil and gas sector. In town halls in Atlantic provinces, tidal and other ocean-based energy were often mentioned with enthusiasm.

- Solar (included in 151 comments)
- Wind (75)
- Geothermal (56)
- Biomass, BioFuel (18, 5)
- Tidal/Tide (16)

Many participants spoke to the economic development opportunities that arise from climate actions like renewable energy deployment and building energy efficiency programs. Across Canada, cooperative and community-ownership featured in responses from participants who see climate action as a way to keep more jobs and capital in their communities. Canadians also drew attention to the economic development opportunity for First Nation and Northern communities.

The tidal energy capacity of the Bay of Fundy received repeated mentions. In Fredericton, one said, "New Brunswick's Bay of Fundy has the highest tides in the world and could be an opportunity to create jobs and produce renewable tidal energy." In Halifax,

another suggested Canada's government "research environmental implications for ocean turbines... increase investment in tidal energy [and] increase development of small-scale tidal energy".

On the west coast, in Cowichan-Malahat, a speaker encouraged Canada to support the "commercialization of ocean energy, tidal power and wave energy". This sentiment was also expressed at town halls held in North Vancouver, Waterloo and Kingston.

Many local communities are setting 100% renewable goals. In some cases, the summertime town halls provided opportunities to advance this work. The West Kootenay EcoSociety used the town hall to build support for 100% renewable energy:

*"100% Renewable Kootenays is our new initiative to do our fair share in tackling the climate crisis from home, right here in the West Kootenays... Our petition asks local governments to adopt the goal of phasing out fossil fuels and transitioning to 100% renewable in all energy use for electricity, heating & cooling, transportation, waste management, and industry by 2050."*<sup>26</sup>

Many of the participants see renewable energy as an economic development opportunity, especially related to local ownership and decentralized energy production.

In Renfrew-Nipissing, one speaker said:

*Government needs to provide subsidies to small local enterprises and personal incentives to produce green energy: e.g., small solar farms, use of rivers, creeks to generate power, starting small business encouraging the use of recyclables like glass containers instead of plastic, building more energy efficient homes. Local green solutions would create employment.*

As Canada continues its transition to lower-carbon economic activities, participants see opportunity for renewable energy in a managed decline of the fossil fuel industry. Abandoned wells were repeatedly mentioned as a vector for deploying more geothermal energy.

*"Geothermal heated greenhouses can be implemented on the >400,000 working and inactive oil and gas wells in the province. Heat doesn't have to be created by burning fossil fuels. Direct food from these greenhouses to communities with a priority to those disadvantaged. They can benefit first and be*

<sup>26</sup> Montana Burgess, "People of the West Kootenays are showing up big time", West Kootenay Eco Society, <http://www.ecosociety.ca/BlogWestKootsCommunityisAwesome>

*a part of the change without having to pay for the change. Greenhouse jobs for disadvantaged people.” – Calgary Centre*

Across Canada, participants encouraged innovative ownership and funding models for renewable energy projects. Cooperative and community-owned examples were frequently mentioned, with support for neighbourhood and district energy systems.

The Calgary Centre town hall, in particular, included references to community and cooperative ownership:

*We need to grow initiatives such as Alberta Solar Co-op, where member-investors own the company and the capital stays where it’s grown.*

Also in Calgary Centre, multiple participants called for support to install solar energy systems in low-income and assisted living communities. In Calgary and many other ridings, solar energy is understood to be an economic development opportunity for Northern and rural communities.

*Solar systems in living assistance housing (cost reduction). Community solar projects for the disadvantaged... Subsidies to northern communities and other low income communities for solar.*

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## URGENT, EVIDENCE-BASED CLIMATE ACTION

*“...scientists have been telling politicians what needs to be done for decades now. We citizens appreciate being heard, but we’re essentially just parroting the scientific findings that researchers have already made you all aware of.” – Ville-Marie (Montreal) Speaker*

Climate change is frightening to many participants. While it is understood that the need for action is urgent, people also understand that we have delayed a responsible and appropriate response to global warming. It is understandable that Canadians who are highly-engaged and literate about climate change are nervous about the pace of change and this is something that distinguishes many participants from the Canadian public-at-large. Similarly, participants expressed uncertainty about the degree of climate instability, some questioning the scientific consensus that underpins global commitments to stop runaway climate change.

Others are concerned about the financial, business and employment implications of a national economy no longer oriented around fossil fuel export.

A summary from MP Wayne Stetski’s town hall captures the tone in his riding’s discussion:

*Many people spoke about how much they valued our beautiful planet and the natural environment. There is fear of the planet facing extinction, fear of what will be left for our grandchildren...*

*A speaker from Peru urged our government not to destroy our ecosystems in Canada as has happened in his country. Grave concern was expressed several times that we are undervaluing our natural environment and giving in to vested corporate interests.*

While Canadians are frustrated by recent inaction on climate change, they are encouraged by Canada’s historic environmental accomplishments. But they are also ready for more serious and urgent action. Comments from participants and media coverage of the town hall events show that Canadians are concerned about Canada’s competitiveness and reputation following the UN Climate Change Agreement signed in Paris in 2015.

At Minister Garneau’s town hall, a speaker named Anthony is quoted as saying:

*“[I] would like to see honesty about effort required to respect to 2 degree [global warming target] . We’re on track for 3-4 degrees. Harper targets still present in Trudeau government. Will lead to massive increase in warming. Test policy suggestions against carbon budget; no approval [if policies] fail that test.”*

Across Canada, several participants referred to the international commitments to limit global warming and demonstrated a familiarity with recent research publications and Canada’s national emissions reduction commitments.

Notes from Kootenay-Columbia included this summary of comments made about the mitigation theme in the climate action framework:

*“We need hard GHG [greenhouse gas] targets and a clear timeline to be as successful as the Montreal protocol was for CFCs. To reduce GHG we need to say NO to LNG and NO to pipelines. These sentiments were supported by the entire audience. The tar sands cannot expand if we are*

*to avoid going past 2 degrees. Expanding the tar sands to sell bitumen to China for profits is not the answer.”*

Also in that section, participants urged leaving some fossil fuel reserves unused. A speaker in Calgary-Centre said, “we in Canada need to get away from oil and gas – leave it in the ground and go solar across Canada.” Similar statements, urging Canada to leave some oil and gas reserves “in the ground”, appeared in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia.

For both moral reasons and concerns over global commitments to assess carbon risk and divest from fossil fuels, some participants urged public sector divestment from fossil fuels. In New Brunswick and Quebec, speakers urged divestment of Canada’s Public Pension plan from oil and gas businesses. In North Vancouver, a speaker noted the divestment campaigns underway in municipalities. In Calgary Centre, a speaker spoke to the opportunities for investment in clean technology that comes from fossil fuel divestment.

Many participants expressed frustration with Justin Trudeau and other members of government’s insistence that Canada can meet its climate change commitments while expanding the fossil fuel sector. Highly-engaged Canadians who understand the causes of climate change may be frustrated to hear comments like those made by MP Patty Hadju, who said: “We do believe we can transport our oil in a way that’s safe but also in a way that addresses the issue of climate change”.<sup>27</sup>

News coverage of the North Bay town hall quoted one participant:

*“We need to stop worrying about where fossil fuels are being burned. We can’t say it doesn’t count if we aren’t burning it here,” he said, referring to our exports like the tar sands. “It’s a global issue so it does count.”<sup>28</sup>*

Participants noticed contradictions between Canada’s rhetoric on climate action and decisions that impact our country’s emissions. Failure to address those contradictions threatens Canada’s international reputation and alienates some of the most likely supporters of meaningful Canadian climate action.

In Vancouver-Kingsway, one commenter was quoted saying, “The federal government needs to stop contradicting itself... Don’t speak vaguely about climate change to please fossil fuel industry.”

Many participants underlined how this view is supported by climate science. Doctors Simon Donner and Kirsten Zickfeld of the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University calculated emissions pathways for Canada consistent with the Paris climate agreement. They concluded that the options for Canada are “extremely limited” if we hope to meet international commitments that are likely to avoid runaway global climate change.<sup>29</sup> In the article “Can Canada reduce greenhouse gas emissions while still supporting western Canada’s oil industry?”, UBC scientist Simon Donner writes:

*The implications are clear. If the federal government is serious about its climate commitments, approving the pipeline expansion would require either tremendous, arguably unrealistic, emissions reductions by other sectors of the economy, or a large investment in purchasing emissions credits from overseas.<sup>30</sup>*

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## CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING IS NOT AN “ENVIRONMENT” ISSUE

Participants at these events do not distinguish climate action as a solely “environmental” issue. Instead, those offering feedback on climate action made comments related to transportation, housing, international trade agreements, Indigenous rights and reconciliation, and subsidies.

The five top words that came up in the town hall notes: energy (400), tax (166), local (124), industry (110), and Indigenous (88) demonstrate the degree to which participants see this as an intersectional issue.

In our analysis of the Twitter conversation, Minister McKenna’s contributions overwhelmed those of other Cabinet Ministers. While this is understandable, due to this consultation being coordinated by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), such a siloed approach does not align with the perspective of Canadians. Of the

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27 Jodi Lundmark, “Climate change talks draw huge crowds”, The Chronicle Herald, May 25, 2016. [http://www.chroniclejournal.com/news/local/climate-change-talks-draw-huge-crowds/article\\_1051b5c8-2225-11e6-b15b-7b1f77baae2.html](http://www.chroniclejournal.com/news/local/climate-change-talks-draw-huge-crowds/article_1051b5c8-2225-11e6-b15b-7b1f77baae2.html)

28 Veldhuis, Bay Today.

29 Simon Donner and Kirsten Zickfeld, “Canada’s Contribution to Meeting the Temperature Limits in the Paris Climate Agreement” (2016), <http://simondonner.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Donner-and-Zickfeld-Canada-and-the-Paris-Climate-Agreement.pdf>

30 Simon Donner, “Can Canada reduce greenhouse gas emissions while still supporting western Canada’s oil industry?”, Vancouver Observer, October 17th, 2016. “<http://www.vancouverobserver.com/opinion/can-canada-reduce-greenhouse-gas-emissions-while-still-supporting-western-canada-s-oil>

834 tweets with the #ActionClimatCAN tag published between April 15 and October 27, two thirds came from accounts associated with Minister McKenna and 3.6% came from other government accounts. While the English tag #CANClimateAction saw a considerably more activity, 11% of the 7333 tweets were attributable to ECCC and McKenna, while 0.5% originated from other Ministries and Ministers.<sup>31</sup>

Participation by the federal political parties and environment critics was similarly scant, with the Liberal and Green parties publishing only once. There was no activity from provincial Premiers or Environment Ministries with the exception of solo publications by Environment Ontario and the Premier of New Brunswick.

Consideration of the jobs and economic impact of climate action and a managed retreat from fossil fuels were important for many participants. Calls for stronger government action in supporting transition and re-training of fossil fuel workers appeared across Canada. While Alberta did not host many town halls, the Calgary Centre meeting notes included many comments speaking to the impact on workers. In particular, the work of Iron and Earth and their Workers' Climate Plan is promoted and celebrated.<sup>32</sup>

While a small number of participants called for immediate shut down of Canada's fossil fuel sector, "transition" was a clear theme, mentioned 92 times in the notes we analyzed. In one case, a commenter said: "We need training and resources for workers in carbon intensive jobs so they can fully participate in the new economy. We need a just transition for workers to 100% renewable energy and green jobs" (Kootenay-Columbia).

## Trade

MP notes from Fredericton summarized the general concern with trade agreements and climate action: "Participants expressed concern that the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) will interfere with local efforts to combat climate change and national sovereignty."

At least seven commenters urged a rejection of the Trans Pacific Partnership in Calgary. In Mississauga, a speaker criticized the secrecy with which the TPP was negotiated and warned against provisions that undermine Canadian climate action.

In New Brunswick and Halifax, investor-state dispute settlement provisions were repeatedly mentioned. On the West Coast, a speaker in Vancouver-Kingsway was recorded: "Cancel participation in the Trans Pacific Partnership and any international agreements that include investor-state dispute settlement clauses. In Ville-Marie (Montreal), another said: "If we continue to sign trade deals like the TPP that put the current economic system and corporate power ahead of scientific logic, no amount of polite conversation and citizen brainstorming are going to solve the crisis."

At a citizen-led town hall in Prime Minister Trudeau's riding of Papineau, MP Peter Schiefke heard suggestions that highlighted community-led solutions to environmental constraints posed by free trade agreements: "Local currencies that encourage local commerce."

The sentiment was echoed in many other ridings, making this a surprising finding of the town hall note analysis:

- In Kootenay-Columbia: "Even if the government does everything we wish for, if we sign the Trans Pacific Partnership, we're toast. We really have to stop that free trade agreement from happening. It takes away our sovereignty as a nation to decide for ourselves on climate change legislation."
- In Renfrew-Nipissing: "Local industries have difficulty competing with imports; e.g., a Canadian company that manufactures solar panels could not sell them as cheaply as products made in China."
- In LaSalle-Émard-Verdun (Montreal): "We should not ratify the TPP because it will tie the hands of government and allow companies to sue our government. This isn't a matter of pitting environment against economy because the TPP will be bad for both."
- In Charlottetown: "There are specific concerns around Renewable Energy. Denmark's energy program sees 40% of electricity generated from renewables (mostly wind). But the program was implemented before many of the modern trade agreements and would have been impossible under modern-day trade agreements because it favours locally owned cooperatives."
- And another from Charlottetown: "PEI's 10-point wind energy program would violate CETA"

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix 3

<sup>32</sup> See: <http://www.workersclimateplan.ca>



[Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement with Europe] because it allows government to give preference to wind energy companies that promise local benefits. Ontario's Green Energy Act was struck down when Japan and the EU [European Union] sued over local content rules."

Independent media at town halls also highlighted concern over dispute resolution: "A retired educator pressed the federal government to reject trade agreements that give private corporations the right to sue governments. He contended that "this is a detriment in many ways to us taking action as Canadians" on climate and other issues such as providing financial incentives to switch to electric vehicles." <sup>33</sup>

## Indigenous Rights

*"UNDRIP must be ratified. Indigenous [communities] are among the most vulnerable facing climate change."*

- Toronto Danforth speaker

*"Respect the ancestral rights of the first nations (ex: Vaudreuil-Soulanges is unceded Algonquin land) by comprehensively applying the UN declaration on the rights of aboriginal peoples."*

- Vaudreuil-Soulanges speaker

*"Canada should ratify the actual UNDRIP, without reservation, giving Indigenous Peoples the right to free, prior and informed consent."*

- Parkdale-High Park speaker

*"The new climate denialism operates hand-in-glove with Indigenous Rights and Title Denialism, in which politicians claim to accept recent court rulings and the historic reality of Aboriginal Rights and Title, but are unwilling to accept what rights and title mean in practical policy terms."*

- Seth Klein and Shannon Daub <sup>34</sup>

Specific calls to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) were recorded in Waterloo, Nipissing-Timiskaming, Toronto Danforth, Parkdale High Park, Halifax, New Brunswick,

Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Papineau, Kingston and the Island, Calgary Centre, and repeatedly at a large town hall in Toronto involving multiple MPs.

Participants across Canada spoke enthusiastically about opportunities to advance Indigenous reconciliation through climate action. A commenter in Calgary Centre urged government to "study and implement UNDRIP at all levels of government" and support more public education on Canada's relationship with First Nations.

Despite clear enthusiasm for additional renewable energy, some speakers pointed to renewable energy projects being contested by Canada's First Nations. On British Columbia's Site C Dam project, some participants highlighted that a 100% renewable goal does not give a blank cheque to project development.

Reporting by the McGill Daily at Minster Garneau's town hall included this summary:

*"The development of the controversial "Site C" hydroelectric dam in British Columbia was also discussed; its very mention earning angry reactions from the audience. While proponents of the "Site C" project have called it as a step forward in bringing so-called clean energy to the province, numerous Indigenous communities have voiced ardent opposition to the project, which would flood thousands of hectares of traditional Indigenous land." <sup>35</sup>*

## Transportation

Another repeated theme in the town hall notes was transportation. When discussing transportation as a climate action, participants also made connections to land use, manufacturing, jobs, electrification and reductions in fossil fuel use. Again, this shows that Canadians do not silo climate action into an "environmental" portfolio and actively introduce ideas and concepts that fall under other areas of jurisdictional responsibility.

Top references to transportation-related words included:

- Transport[ation] (112)
- Transit (168)
- Bus (99)
- Rail (51)

<sup>33</sup> Hamilton Catch.

<sup>34</sup> Seth Klein and Shannon Daub, "The New Climate Denialism: Time for an Intervention," PolicyNote.ca, September 22, 2016, <http://www.policynote.ca/the-new-climate-denialism-time-for-an-intervention/>

<sup>35</sup> Dylan Munson, "Lots of ideas, few promises at climate town hall", The McGill Daily, October 28, 2016 <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2016/10/lots-of-ideas-few-promises-at-climate-townhall/>

- Bike or biking (36)
- Vehicle (54) and Electric Vehicle (34)

A summary of the Kanata-Carleton town hall from MP Karen McCrimmon reads: "Many constituents voiced strong support for the development and use of electric vehicles. Concerns were raised about the current cost of this technology, but it was suggested that manufacturing costs could be subsidized, and that subsidies to consumers could provide purchase incentives. Participants were also vocal about the potential job opportunities in research and manufacturing if such efforts were concentrated within Canada."

Participants want to see Crown corporations and government lead the way on electric vehicle transitions. In multiple ridings, continued electrification of Canada Post vehicles was encouraged, with a goal for the full electrification of government fleets.

Urban centres generated the most references to public transit. In Vancouver-Quadra and Vancouver-Kingsway, participants called for more investment in public transit. Speakers wanted to see improvements in transit quality, good local jobs, and decreased costs for users.

In Transport Minister Garneau's riding, a comment on passenger rail is captured: "Trains are good. High frequency train proposal Quebec city to Windsor. Need to assess how many cars would actually be left behind." In Renfrew-Nipissing, higher speed trains on existing routes was called for.

In Prime Minister Trudeau's riding of Papineau, the link between urban planning and increased transportation emissions was evoked: "Encourage densification and not urban sprawl when investing in public transportation."

## Ending support for expanding the fossil fuel industry in Canada

Despite the fact that the Ministry-suggested questions did not include a specific invitation for feedback on fossil fuel infrastructure or subsidies, such feedback often dominated discussions across Canada.

A consistent theme across all the town halls was a desire to stop the growth of Canada's fossil fuel sector and rapidly expand our renewable energy economy. Canadians see the plans and progress toward 100% renewable energy underway in other jurisdictions. There is a sense that our country may be left behind and miss out on economic opportunities because of our cultural and legacy investments in fossil fuel.

A speaker in Malapeque echoed the sentiment of many when she said: "The main barriers to this transition are social and political, not economic or technological. Every country can ramp up to 100% renewable energy by 2050."

In ridings across Canada speakers were frequently recorded making a clear request for government to "stop subsidizing the oil and gas industry." This specific request was recorded in ridings as far-ranging as North Vancouver, Calgary Centre, Parkdale-High Park, Waterloo, and New Brunswick.

One speaker in the riding of Saskatoon West echoed the words of many others, when he simply called on the government to "remove subsidies to fossil fuels and funnel to renewable energy development". Summary notes from the Kootenay-Columbia riding town hall read: "Numerous people demanded an end to all fossil fuel subsidies and a redirection of these funds towards green technology."

In some cases, specific tax measures are referenced in participant comments, underscoring their status as highly-engaged on these issues. In Orléans, a speaker said subsidies like the "Canadian Exploration Expense" tax deduction should be eliminated. In Hastings-Lennox and Addington, a speaker calls for the end of capital cost allowance accelerators that encourage the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure.

As a response, many suggested Canada shift subsidies from fossil fuel to renewable energy. MP notes from the Charlottetown town hall included this summary: "Subsidies to petroleum industry should stop – there should be some kind of 'reverse subsidy'. Since they've extracted so much wealth from the common good perhaps we could start taxing them instead of giving them money."

In Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, a participant is quoted saying: "To speed the transition to a low carbon economy, governments should provide incentives for clean technologies and remove subsidies for dirty technologies (e.g., remove subsidies for fossil fuels)."

An approach that involves balancing expanded fossil fuel extraction with climate action is considered unreasonable by many who spoke at these town halls. In Eglington-Lawrence, a speaker named Allen said the situation is urgent and "demands a radical response, not striking a balance."

Even many of those calling for a radical response recognize the political challenges of taking climate action in Canada. Michael in Charlottetown was summarized in the notes saying, "National undertakings

and projects on a grand scale are needed. It's not helpful to blame Alberta and one industry – the cost of clean energy should be borne by all." Echoing many other speakers across Canada, however, Michael added that "new pipelines and incomprehensible cap and trade mechanisms will not meet the challenge."

In fact, "no pipelines" or "no new pipelines" appeared in notes from town halls across Canada, from Vancouver, BC to Malpeque, PEI and repeated mentions in Toronto. Interestingly, opponents of the Kinder Morgan pipeline in Calgary did not mention climate in their opposition, instead saying it would further depress historically low oil prices. One speaker said she was concerned that new pipelines "will drive the price of western Canada select below \$20 a barrel and hurt what oil patch we still have." Again, this shows that when Canadians are asked for input, respondents consider government decision-making about fossil fuel infrastructure to be a part of national climate action planning.

Media coverage of the town halls noted repeated references to anticipated pipeline approvals. For example, in Notre-dame-de-Grâce--Westmount, a reporter wrote: "Several times over the course of the consultation, audience members brought up the proposed Energy East pipeline and the delayed National Energy Board review, saying that the federal government needs to step in and scrap the project."

At the same town hall, a Concordia University student with Divest Concordia, Marcus Peters, said:

*"[The Liberals] essentially have the dream position for a government in power: they have a majority government, they've had the longest honeymoon period in Canadian political history, and they've made these promises that are very achievable, [but] they're still hesitating and looking for a more solid mandate from the public."*

<sup>36</sup>

Others expressed frustration that the government was moving forward on reducing Canada's carbon emissions while promoting new export of carbon overseas. Laurel Thompson, a member of the Citizens' Climate Lobby, told The Daily: "I hope that they issue a federal price on carbon. I just don't think it's going to be enough to do any good if they are also saying 'yes' to pipelines." <sup>37</sup>

The same reporter at that town hall added:

*"[New fossil fuel pipelines were] an especially hot topic of debate during the open mic session, where citizens were invited to pitch ideas directly to Garneau and his staff about combatting climate change. One attendee said Canada should "leave the carbon underground," which earned applause from the crowd. This reflected one of the main concerns of the night: the continuing expansion of Alberta's tar sands and the prospect of more oil pipelines."*<sup>38</sup>

Elsewhere in Canada, similar town hall discussions took place. In MP John Aldag's riding of Cloverdale-Langley City, the Kwantlen newspaper wrote:

*"The most sensational recommendation made was to shut down the tar sands and pipelines, potentially by cutting incentives and investment in the fossil fuel industry and putting them into clean energy instead."*<sup>39</sup>

In Ontario, one participant said, "Forget about the oil, forget about the pipelines, let's look at the people, those people who are struggling to make ends meet because of a dysfunctional energy program".

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<sup>36</sup> Link Newspaper.

<sup>37</sup> McGill Daily.

<sup>38</sup> McGill Daily.

<sup>39</sup> The Runner Magazine.

# KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadnow and the Climate Reality Project Canada offer a series of key findings based on our review content from the town halls between May and September 2016.

We find that participants at the MP-involved town halls:

- **Recognize the opportunity of renewable energy to support economic development and transition fossil fuel workers**
- **Expect evidence-based climate plans consistent with current climate science**
- **Do not isolate climate action as an environmental policy issue: instead, embed meaningful climate action in policy on trade, Indigenous rights, transportation, among other issues**
- **Reject suggestions that Canada can both support new fossil fuel infrastructure and take climate action that limits global warming below 2°C.**

Based on our analysis of the town halls involving Members of Parliament, we recommend government:

- **Address concerns that Canada won't keep pace with other countries' efforts to limit climate change and end fossil fuel use**
- **Recognize that Canadians do not see climate action as an exclusively environmental issue**
- **Maintain and improve public engagement processes, scaling the expertise that Canadian institutions have developed.**



# APPENDIX 1:

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To encourage participation in the public engagement process, Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada joined a coalition of national organizations to promote the town hall activities suggested by government. This coalition became the People's Climate Plan.

The People's Climate Plan coalition promoted three key principles for inclusion in all national and provincial climate plans:

1. **Science-based:** Must realistically demonstrate a path to meeting Canada's commitments made at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP 21)
2. **Justice-based:** Must ensure a just transition for energy workers, Indigenous Peoples, and communities impacted by global warming and the fossil fuel industry
3. **100% Renewable:** Must plan for a managed retreat from fossil fuel use and a fully renewable energy system by 2050.

Our organizations invited highly-engaged Canadians to join us in promoting these principles by:

1. **Requesting** their Member of Parliament host a town hall in their riding
2. **Promoting** the town hall and other engagement opportunities in their community
3. **Participating** in the town halls, and
4. **Reporting** back to the coalition with notes, video, photos, and other outputs from the meetings.

As part of our process, Leadnow contacted every Member of Parliament in May 2016 to notify them of the engagement opportunity and encouraged each to host a town hall in their riding. Several replied with concern about the short window available for them to organize a town hall with their constituents, because of the June 1st deadline for input to the government's working groups and a busy Parliamentary calendar. The online portal closed to submissions on September 27, though some Members of Parliament held their town halls well into October. A small number combined their climate town halls with electoral reform, national security, or other public consultations processes and most did not

submit notes to the climate consultation portal.

In a few cases, MPs co-hosted their town halls with local organizations or groups of citizens. In ridings where MPs chose not to host town halls, citizens sometimes organized their own events. Elected officials from other levels of government, including city councillors, provincial Environment Ministers, and provincial legislators attended meetings. As Twitter participation in Appendix 3 shows, Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna represented most ministerial contributions to the online engagement.

In September 2016, Leadnow emailed every Member of Parliament again. We asked them whether they held a town hall and, if so, to send us notes from their meeting. In a few cases, we downloaded minutes from MP-involved town halls that were submitted to the web forum at [letstalkclimateaction.ca](http://letstalkclimateaction.ca) or found online at MP or organizational web pages. Notes from 53 town halls met our criteria for a deeper, quantitative analysis to look for trends and patterns in what participants are offering as ideas and feedback.

After the end of the government's official public consultation period on the national climate change framework, Leadnow emailed every Member of Parliament. We asked them to indicate whether they held a town hall or not, to ensure that we provided MPs the opportunity to let us know about any that they held that we did not know about. Our email asked them to forward us an attachment or a direct link to any notes or summaries made at their town halls.

Some MPs sent us PDF or Microsoft Word files of their town hall reports. Others sent us links to web-based summaries or summaries posted on the online portal at [letstalkclimateaction.ca](http://letstalkclimateaction.ca). In some cases, notes were captured by MP constituency staff. Most did not reply: understandably, given that most MPs did not host climate town halls.

Finally, a request was made of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to provide any notes from MP town halls that were submitted via e-mail and not posted to the online portal. Unfortunately, this request was denied on the grounds of privacy.

A document would be considered for analysis if it met the following conditions:

- Documenting an MP-involved town hall, including those hosted or co-hosted by citizens' groups that involved an MP.
- Formatted into discrete sections identified by speaker, comment, or theme; uniform summaries by the MP or a single staff person or participant were not considered.
- Sent to us by a Member of Parliament or their office in response to our emailed request, discovered on the official web forum or an MP's official web page.

To ensure perspectives from Alberta and outside English Canada were included, we chose to analyze town hall notes from three events that did not involve MPs: Calgary-Centre, Vaudreuil-Soulanges, and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Town hall notes were provided by non-governmental organizations or downloaded from the government portal.

Once the notes were collected, content and metadata from the documents were extracted manually and added to a database aggregating the comments. Individuals' unique comments or discussion table summaries were added as unique rows in a combined database. Metadata was attached to each entry, identifying the riding, city, province, members of parliament attending, and date of the town hall.

To supplement these town hall notes, we purchased historical data of Twitter entries tagged with #CANClimateAction on days for which we had town hall notes. Tweets were collected for the days of April 28; May 24, 25, and 27; June 16, 28, 25, and 28; July 16 and 20; and August 4, 8, 10, 16, and 17. In addition to full lexical analysis of publications on these dates, we obtained quantitative data on publication frequency and participation of key government accounts from the entirety of the Twitter conversation between the launch of the hashtags on April 15 and October 27.

In total, 2305 English comments and 894 French comments were identified from the town hall notes. In addition, we analyzed 3071 Twitter messages tagged with #CANClimateAction sent on days that town halls were held.

This transformation of the Twitter and town hall data made it machine-readable and available for analysis by a third-party service. Nexalogy's lexical mapping tool identified the frequency and concurrence of key words. We combined this quantitative method by an outside organization with a qualitative analysis of the data by staff at Leadnow and The Climate Reality Project Canada to produce the findings in this report.

Our research design was challenged by a number of logistical limitations. Firstly, the way meetings were held and comments captured were not uniform across the country. In general, received notes are subjective summaries of comments or table discussions captured by MP staff, not verbatim transcriptions of what was said or discussed. In others, a constituent or organizational representative took notes, rather than an MP's staff. Because of this, the number of entries per document vary significantly, from a high of 579 from the Halifax riding notes to a low of 10 in the ridings of Cumberland-Colchester and Eglinton-Lawrence. Quebec's town hall was unique as their submission summarized the event in a single comment.

Some reports mix statements made at events and written feedback sent to MPs. Emails and written feedback were not always included when they were mentioned elsewhere in the notes.

In a small number of cases, participants communicated concerns to Leadnow that their MP notes do not, in their view, accurately capture what took place at meetings, or diminish the varying levels of support for various comments.

# APPENDIX 2:

## LIST OF TOWN HALLS IN LEXICAL ANALYSIS

TOWN HALL ANALYZED (BY RIDING)	FRENCH COMMENTS	ENGLISH COMMENTS
Ahuntsic-Cartierville	274	
Hull-Aylmer	34	
Papineau	243	
Pontiac	44	
Portneuf–Jacques-Cartier	50	
Québec	1	
Saint-Maurice Champlain	46	
Thérèse-De Blainville	28	
Vaudreuil-Soulanges	173	
Ville-Marie	1	
Charlottetown		42
Cumberland-Colchester		10
Eglinton-Lawrence		18
Fredericton		37
Grand Bay-Westfield		93
Halifax		579
Hastings—Lennox and Addington		60
Kanata-Carleton		14
Kingston & the Islands		31
Kootenay Columbia		40
LaSalle-Émard-Verdun		34
London West & London North Centre		13
Malpeque		19
Mississauga-Lakeshore		25
NDG-Westmount		32
Nipissing-Timiskaming		139
North Vancouver		106
Oakville North-Burlington		27
Orléans		46
Ottawa West-Nepean		42
Papineau		46
Parkdale-High Park		54
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke		169
Saanich-Gulf Islands		12
Saskatoon West		68
Spadina Fort York		44
Sydney-Victoria		11
Toronto Multi-MP'		44
Toronto-Danforth ONLY		106
Vancouver Quadra		26
Vancouver-Kingsway		144
Vaudreuil-Soulanges		34
Ville-Marie		119
Waterloo		21

# APPENDIX 3:

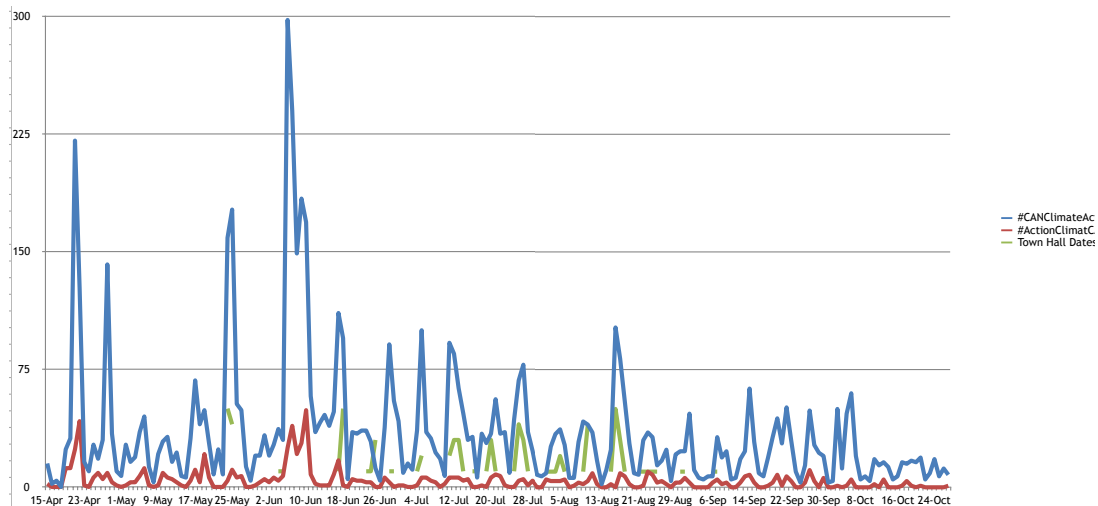
## TWITTER ENGAGEMENT APRIL 15 - OCT 27

N.B. This analysis includes all tweets (7333 in English; 834 in French, excluding retweets) in the date range and was completed separately from the selected dates used in the Nexalogy analysis. It provides a proxy for engagement breadth within federal and provincial government agencies, but deeper lexical analysis was not possible given the data's formatting. It is to be noted that many federal Ministers mentioned below organized or participated in Town Hall events, despite their inactivity on social media.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS			
ACCOUNT	HANDLE (where french handles exist, they were used for french count)	#CAN Climate Action	#Action Climat CAN
Justin Trudeau	@JustinTrudeau	3	3
Compte du PM	@CanadianPM	1	0
Parti Libéral du Canada	@liberal_party	1	1
Catherine McKenna, Min. Environnement	@CathMcKenna	250	47
Compte de la Min. Environnement	@ec_minister	353	320
Ministère de l'Environnement	@environnementca	182	186
Compte de la circonscription C. McKenna	@cmckennaottawa	9	4
Jim Carr	@JimCarr_wpg	0	0
Ministère des Ressources Naturelles	@nrCan	14	13
Chrystia Freeland	@cafreeland	0	0
Ministère des Affaires mondiales Canada	@CanadaTrade	0	0
Marc Garneau	@MarcGarneau	0	0
Ministère des Transports	@transport_gc	9	8
Mélanie Joly	@melaniejoly	0	0
Ministère du Patrimoine	@heritage_canada	0	0
Maryam Monsef	@MaryamMonsef	0	0
Ministère des Institutions démocratiques	@CdnDemocracy	0	0
Bill Morneau	@Bill_Morneau	0	0
Ministère des Finances	@FinanceCanada	2	2
Amarjeet Sohi	@SohiAmarjeet	0	0
Ministère des Infrastructures & Collectivités	@INFC_eng	2	2
Rona Ambrose (chef de l'opposition)	@RonaAmbrose	0	0
Parti Conservateur du Canada	@CPC_HQ	0	0
Ed Fast (critique-environnement)	@HonEdFast	0	0
Scott Reid (critique-environnement)	@ScottReidCPC	0	0
Tom Mulcair	@ThomasMulcair	0	0
Parti Nouveau Démocratique du Canada	@NDP_HQ	0	0
Linda Duncan (critique-environnement)	@LindaDuncanMP	0	0
Robert Aubin (critique-environnement)	@RobertAubinNPD	0	0
Elizabeth May	@ElizabethMay	0	0
Parti Vert du Canada	@CanadianGreens	1	0
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS			
ACCOUNT	HANDLE (where french handles exist, they were used for french count)	#CAN Climate Action	#Action Climat CAN
Glen Murray Min. Environnement ON	@Glen4Ont	0	0
Présidente - Conseil des Min. Environnement	@MaryPolak	0	0
Cathy Cox Ministre D�v. durable MB	@Min_CathyCox	0	0
Rob Renner Min. Environnement AB	@MinisterRenner		0



Ministère de l'Environnement ON	@onenvironnement	1	0
Gouvernement de la Saskatchewan	@SKGov	0	0
Gouvernement de la Colombie-Britannique	@BCCGovNews	0	0
Brian Gallant PM NB	@BrianGallantNB	0	0
Christy Clark PM CB	@christyclarkbc	0	0
Ministère de l'Environnement YK	@ENV_Yukon	0	0
Ministère de l'Environnement CB	@EnvBC	0	0
Gouvernement Territoires du Nord-Ouest	@GNWTannounce	0	0
Gouvernement du Nunavut	@GOVofNUNAVUT	0	0
Greg Selinger PM MB	@GregSelinger	0	0
Kathleen Wynne PM ON	@Kathleen_Wynne	0	0
Gouvernement du Manitoba	@MBGov	0	0
Ministère de l'Environnement QC	@MDDELCC	0	0
Gouvernement du Nouveau-Brunswick	@NewBrunswickGov	1	1
Gouvernement Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador	@NLTweets	0	0
Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Écosse	@nsgov	0	0
Gouvernement de l'Ontario	@ONgov	0	0
Gouvernement de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard	@PEICanada	0	0
Peter Taptuna PM NV	@PeterTaptuna	0	0
Philippe Couillard PM QC	@phcouillard	0	0
Brad Wall PM SK	@PremierBradWall	0	0
Darrell Pasloski PN YK	@PremierPasloski	0	0
Rachel Notley PM AB	@RachelNotley	0	0
Stephen McNeil PM NS	@StephenMcNeil	0	0
Gouvernement de l'Alberta	@YourAlberta	0	0
Gouvernement du Yukon	@yukongov		



Twitter activity timeline for English (blue) and French (red) hashtags (not including retweets), mapped over town hall dates (green). Each town hall event is represented by 10 units on vertical axis (May 25 = 5 events). Spikes in early June represent buzz around #Enviroweek and responses to Justin Trudeau's invitation to participate in the conversation. Many other spikes throughout summer were correlated with town hall activity.

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