

Submission to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment ([CAPE](http://www.cape.ca)) (www.cape.ca)

Our organization, voicing the concerns of physicians and health advocates across Canada, welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly, and Equitable Manner.

A just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels is the greatest health opportunity of this century with significant potential to improve health outcomes, reduce health costs and improve well-being. In this submission we focus primarily on how to overcome obstruction from vested interests and the fossil fuel industry that has successfully managed to block the energy transition and health protective policies to phase out fossil fuels to date. Further, we highlight the importance of healthy information ecosystems and informed populations and communities that have access to the information they need to make decisions that are in the best interests of their own health and well-being, community health and the health of future generations. We understand the primary barrier to the transition away from fossil fuels to be the cultural power of the fossil fuel economy which reproduces dominant narratives through advertising, disinformation and institutional capture, and limits our collective capacity to imagine, let alone demand, alternatives. We put forward that contesting this cultural power is a health imperative and recognising that human health and ecological health are inseparable can be both the foundation of the transition and its most compelling public argument.

We look forward to further opportunities to discuss and expand on the ideas and concerns outlined in this submission.

Barriers: Polluted Information Ecosystems, Political Capture, and Economies Designed for Accumulation Rather Than Wellbeing

Fossil fuels are the leading cause of climate change and a major driver of the air, water, and soil pollution responsible for millions of preventable deaths each year. The case for a rapid and equitable transition is overwhelming. Yet vested interests and industry have successfully managed to block the energy transition and health-protective policies to phase out fossil fuels to date. Understanding why requires looking beyond technical and financial barriers to the deeper forces that shape what societies believe is possible, who holds power over political decisions, and what kinds of futures we are able to imagine.

Transforming narratives, paradigms, and culture — how we understand the world, whose knowledge counts, and what we value — is essential to unlocking a just transition. In this line, we focus on three interconnected barriers. First, the systematic pollution of information ecosystems through industry disinformation, advertising, greenwashing, and unregulated digital platforms that amplify false narratives at scale, corrupting the public understanding upon which democratic climate action depends. Second, the political capture of institutions at every level, from national legislatures to multilateral climate processes, by fossil fuel interests whose lobbying power outweighs the public health imperative to act. Third, the dominance of growth-centred economic paradigms that treat the Earth as a resource to extract and reward the cost-shifting of health and environmental externalities at the expense of human and ecological wellbeing, and which foreclose the political imagination needed to envision economies of health and well-being.

Polluted Information Ecosystems

An informed society is the foundation of collective action. However, along with the pollution of our atmosphere, air and waters from climate pollutants, we are facing widespread pollution of our information ecosystems. A transition away from fossil fuels and the transformation of supply and demand that it entails requires access to consistent, reliable, accurate and evidence-based information for citizens, communities, businesses, subnational governments, civil society, media organizations, and universities. Access to such information is indispensable for mobilizing society, raising awareness and fostering public participation, enabling accountability, overcoming obstruction, and building public trust in climate policies and actions.

Polluted information ecosystems obstruct the transition through multiple mechanisms: active disinformation campaigns by fossil fuel interests to sow doubt on climate science; advertising, public relations, and sponsorship deployed to purchase social licence and delay action; greenwashing and disparagement of renewable energy to mislead the public and policymakers; unregulated digital platforms and AI-accelerated disinformation that amplifies false narratives at scale; unequal access to environmental health information for frontline and affected communities; and the silencing of journalists and environmental defenders. The landmark Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change, adopted at COP30, recognises these threats as among the defining governance challenges of our time, "weakening the foundations of public debate and public trust and undermining societies' capacity to build collective solutions."

Political Capture

The fossil fuel industry deliberately influences public narratives and political processes to undermine climate policy and delay the energy transition, including at multilateral climate governance forums. Extensive government lobbying by the fossil fuel industry shapes legislation, weakens environmental and health regulation, and delays the policy action urgently needed to protect public health. Industry interference in UNFCCC and other multilateral processes distorts diplomatic outcomes and undermines the integrity of international cooperation. More than [1,600 fossil fuel lobbyists](#) were granted access to the COP30 climate talks in Belém outnumbering almost every country delegation with the exception of host country Brazil. Regulatory measures for fossil fuels are less stringent than for other health-harming products such as tobacco and alcohol, despite comparable or greater health burdens. Black and Indigenous Peoples, frontline communities, workers, women, social movements, and other marginalized peoples — not to mention the voice of nature and future generations — are too often excluded and silenced while fossil fuel interests continue to dominate decision-making and public narratives. After 30 years, UNFCCC still lacks a robust and coherent conflict of interest policy.

Poverty of political imagination and growth-centred paradigms

The poverty of political imagination and growth rather than well-being economic paradigms represents perhaps the deepest and most neglected barrier. Dominant economic frameworks, shaped by colonialism and extractivism, treat the Earth as a resource to exploit and measure prosperity through GDP rather than the health, wellbeing, and resilience of communities and ecosystems. These paradigms systematically obscure the true health and environmental costs of fossil fuel dependence while marginalising Indigenous, relational, and plural knowledge systems that offer profoundly different visions of how societies can flourish. The fossil fuel industry actively reinforces these paradigms

through advertising that associates carbon-intensive consumption with prosperity, freedom, and progress embedding extractivist values in culture, education, and public life.

Education systems reproduce extractive, growth-oriented paradigms while marginalizing Indigenous, local, and relational ways of knowing, narrowing the boundaries of political imagination at precisely the moment when bold new visions are needed. Overcoming this barrier requires cultural transformation: new imaginaries of wellbeing economies rooted in care, reciprocity, sufficiency, and justice; where wellbeing is valued above profit; recognition of the rights of nature and the interdependence of all life; and the democratisation of knowledge and governance so that the communities bearing the greatest burden of fossil fuel harm are centred in designing the transition.

Potential Levers for Accelerating Implementation

In the face of these challenges, we propose the following levers and policies as a means to accelerate the implementation of the transition away from fossil fuels.

Lever 1: Fossil Fuel Advertising Bans as a Public Health Intervention

Prohibiting fossil fuel advertising and marketing is an easy to implement, low-cost intervention that recognizes the health harms of fossil fuels and contributes to reducing demand, denormalizing high-carbon consumption, and constraining the political interference of the fossil fuel industry. Fossil fuel advertising does not merely promote specific products but actively shapes cultural narratives about prosperity, progress, and desirable lifestyles, narratives rooted in violent histories of conquest, domination, and exploitation, including of the land and vulnerable populations. Advertising promotes and normalizes high carbon and luxury consumption. As bans on tobacco advertising helped shift smoking from socially acceptable to stigmatized behaviour, restrictions on fossil fuel advertising may contribute to reframing carbon-intensive consumption as socially irresponsible rather than aspirational. Research on social tipping interventions suggests that ad restrictions contribute to cascading norm changes that can help accelerate a transition away from fossil fuels [while protecting public health and aligning with the right to a healthy environment](#).

Fossil fuel advertising bans are low-cost, high-impact policies that can catalyze broader narrative shifts. Comprehensive tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship bans are considered a World Health Organization (WHO) "best buy" for public health due to their effectiveness in reducing demand and low-cost. Advertising bans should include sponsorship of public institutions, sports, cultural events, educational programs, and online spaces. The UN Secretary-General has called for a global fossil fuel advertising ban, and a growing number of cities have already enacted such bans.

Policy and regulatory mechanisms include comprehensive advertising and sponsorship bans in national and subnational law; restrictions across digital and traditional media; health warning labels on fossil fuel products and appliances; disclosure requirements on advertising spending; international guidelines under WHO and UN processes; and monitoring and enforcement mechanisms with penalties.

Lever 2: Safeguarding Healthy Information Ecosystems

A healthy information ecosystem enables informed public debate, builds public trust in climate issues, and accelerates the political will needed for rapid transition. Fossil fuel interests fund disinformation campaigns that sow doubt about climate science, delay policy action, and entrench existing business models. AI is accelerating this threat, expanding the scale, speed, and sophistication of disinformation production, especially on

social media platforms. Protecting information environments requires curtailing climate disinformation and thwarting obstruction from vested interests.

The landmark [Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) provides a roadmap for countering greenwashing, protecting journalists and environmental defenders, and for binding regulation of digital platforms to address climate disinformation. Other policy and regulatory mechanisms include Big Tech and AI regulation and transparency requirements; regulation, enforcement, and transparency for social media platforms; protection of environmental defenders and journalists; robust greenwashing regulations; consumer education, labelling, and mandatory health warning labels on fossil fuel products; and full resourcing of the Global Fund for Information Integrity on Climate Change.

Lever 3: Curtailing Political Interference by Fossil Fuel Interests

Governments and public institutions should establish robust conflict-of-interest safeguards to prevent the fossil fuel industry from interfering in health protective climate policy-making. The health community has valuable lessons to offer on confronting and rooting out industry interference to preserve scientific integrity and protect public health. From tobacco to infant formula, the health sector has developed rigorous conflict-of-interest protocols, public disclosure norms, restrictions on advertising and promotion, and institutional safeguards to prevent commercial interests from distorting life-saving policy. The 2003 Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Article 5.3 delivered binding measures to keep tobacco industry influence at arm's length. The WHO's Framework of Engagement with Non-state actors (FENSA) has rules for transparent engagement and outlines red-line industries such as the arms and tobacco industries. Similar measures to protect climate and energy policy and governance from fossil fuel industry interference should be applied to restore public trust and protect integrity.

Policy and regulatory mechanisms include conflict of interest policies and lobbying rules at national and international levels; a UNFCCC conflict of interest framework to shield COP processes from fossil fuel industry capture and the exclusion of fossil fuel lobbyists from climate and energy policymaking.

Lever 4: Centring Health in the Transition

WHO has long demonstrated that reducing dependence on fossil fuels saves lives by cutting air pollution, preventing disease, and improving access to resilient health systems. A just transition would further enhance equity, protect frontline communities, and strengthen the social determinants of health for present and future generations. The fossil fuel economy is incompatible with human and ecological health. The mental and physical harm caused by heatwaves, air pollution, contamination, climate disasters, and displacement disproportionately impacts frontline and historically marginalized communities. These harms are systematically obscured while the health benefits of a rapid phase-out remain under-communicated.

The 2023 wildfire season in Canada led to an estimated 82,000 deaths globally. The coal phase-out in Ontario saved hundreds of lives per year and an estimated CAD 4.4 billion annually in avoided health care costs and lost productivity. The human health and health economic benefits from clean air as a result of phase out will accrue rapidly and locally with significant economic health cost savings. Health and well-being gains are more than co-benefits – they are the clearest, fastest return on decarbonization, the best defence of human rights, and the most compelling fiscal argument available. The savings from global health benefits of mitigation exceed the costs of implementation. In contrast, the failure to

truly phase out fossil fuels through reliance on false solutions and technologies such as carbon capture and storage, carbon offsets and geoengineering that undermine the transition perpetuate health harms.

By prioritizing a health and equity lens in the transition and using concrete health indicators and fiscal analysis, governments can strengthen policy ambition and implementation, shape new narratives about what a wellbeing economy looks like, and to catalyze widespread public support for the transition. The transition calls for valuing human and ecological health over corporate profit in law, policy, and narratives, including by embedding wellbeing indicators in phase-out strategies, resourcing health monitoring in frontline and fence-line communities, and holding industry accountable through the mandatory disclosure of health impacts and the polluter pays principle.

Policy and regulatory mechanisms include mandatory health impact assessments for all fossil fuel and energy policies; embedding health indicators in mitigation strategies; health cost accounting to assess health impacts and costs so as to integrate the hidden health costs of fossil fuels and benefits of phase-out into public budgets; implementing the polluter pays principle and establishing a fund to pay for damages from the climate crisis; and ensuring universal access to healthcare for all affected communities.

Lever 5: Radical Imagination and Community Innovation

The transition from fossil fuels is more than a technical or technological shift. It is an opportunity to radically reimagine wellbeing economies and communities rooted in resilience, sovereignty, and justice. Transforming demand requires new imaginaries driven by bold ideas and social innovations which seed the idea that radical transformations are not only possible but desirable. Social innovations created by and for communities need to be recognized for their value in the transition in reshaping norms along with technological innovations. Community-based learning and experimentation needs to be valued and resourced to accelerate practices such as mutual aid networks, repair and mending, collective ownership, provisioning and care work, as well as cooperative and solidarity economies, traditional livelihood practices and the revaluing of ancestral cultural practices.

Education systems both formal and informal play a decisive role in shaping societal values, worldviews, and the boundaries of political imagination. Dominant models reproduce extractive, growth-oriented paradigms while marginalizing Indigenous, local, and relational ways of knowing. Education should develop the skills and perspectives to implement just transitions that fundamentally dismantle fossil fuel colonialism, advance ecological literacy and respect for plural knowledge systems to sustain long-term cultural and behavioural shifts and enable societies to imagine and enact just and regenerative futures.

Policy, regulatory, and narrative mechanisms include preventing educational institutions from investing in or receiving funding from fossil fuel interests to preserve research integrity, funding, support for community-level solutions such as free public transit, local sustainable food production, affordable low-carbon housing, active transportation systems, and mental health services; funding and support for social innovations and local commons, initiatives in commoning such as community car and bike sharing programs, community-owned renewable energy projects, a youth climate corps; adopting degrowth and wellbeing policies and replacing GDP with wellbeing indicators in national planning; financial support for arts and culture to transition from high-carbon dependent sponsorship and for cultural creation of narratives on the energy transition; and mandating climate, energy, and ecological literacy in national curricula and planetary health curricula in medical training.