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EcoA Tips

Notes & news from EcoAnalytics Research

Welcome to EcoA Tips #9, blossoms of knowledge to communicate for stronger environmental action. What you'll find below:

Three communications tips:

- **Tip 1:** Degrowth
- **Tip 2:** Fairness
- **Tip 3:** Costs

*Tips 1 and 3 are accompanied by mock social posts – something you've liked in recent issues. [Still useful?](#)

Other research

- Lack of diversity in nature imagery
- Trust issues
- Growing appetite to meet climate commitments

EcoA News and Calendar

[Ideas, suggestions, comments?: Survey](#)



Slow down: Degrowth may not be as dodgy a concept as you think, as revealed in the first tip, below. *Photo credit: extinctionrebellion.de*

Three tips for engaging Canadians with sensitivity to beliefs about systemic change, fairness and the cost of living:

Tip 1. Bring degrowth into the discussion

But be careful in doing this. For example, as shown in the highlighted text of mock social-media post below, you might want to remind audiences that the **pandemic has shown once again** how ordinary people working together can achieve positive change, and **use “we” as your subject**. You could talk about reining in consumption and unsustainable economic activities (e.g., unlimited air travel), **reducing the amount of time at work** and commuting, investing more in caring professions and families etc.: elements that would **bring our economy more into balance with nature**, towards a so-called steady-state. Many environmental groups have viewed conversations about degrowth as dodgy, liable to alienate supporters, but the views and

to have changed during the pandemic and the great majority now seem receptive to discussions about systemic change, including degrowth. This is one of several key findings of a follow-up analysis of a cohort of EcoA Member-Supporters first polled in the spring of 2019 by Erick Lachapelle. The survey of 335 (drawn from the original sample was 2,653) found that on average 87% said they would support or strongly support "an environmental organization that emphasizes degrowth as a major priority." The survey conducted in December by Marjolaine Martel-Morin, a PhD candidate at l'Université de Montréal, with Dr. Lachapelle, also confirmed an earlier finding that supporters fall into four general clusters (Active Radicals, Active Reformers, Moderate Reformers and Passive Pragmatists), and that support for degrowth is greatest among those in the first two clusters.

Target demographics: Youth, 18-34, and women, 35-70, Canada-wide, who support environmental organizations, and their friends.

Gender: N/A; Education level: Post-secondary and higher.

Note: The highlighting below links the social media text to specific guidance offered above.


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We can do this, Canada!: Work fewer hours, reduce our material consumption and steady our economy, bringing it into balance with nature in ways that slow climate change, limit loss of biodiversity and give our children hope. It took a pandemic to remind us, perhaps, but, together, we can achieve almost anything. Find out more about the benefits of degrowth, here.



Slowing down our economy
 would bring us into balance
 with nature

NGOWEBSITE.ORG
Not all economic growth is good
 Find out more about the benefits of degrowth

Learn more

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Tip 2: Focus on fairness, but...

Remember that fairness means different things to different people.

Fairness is a strong strategic frame to communicate the benefits of projects or policies for transitioning to renewable energy, even [topping effectiveness](#) as the strongest determinant of public opinion. However, before using it, consider the diverse experiences of the community you're aiming to reach, to know what "fairness" actually means to them. For example, [research](#) by Climate Outreach, an NGO based in the United Kingdom, indicates that in targeting economically vulnerable people we need to recognize that many do not have the means to change their energy consumption and are already concerned about changes that threaten their freedom and basic needs.

Messaging for these groups should align then with their perspectives and emphasize that the responsibility for change lies with governments, businesses and the wealthy — those with much larger carbon footprints, power and money. New research by Dr. Louise

paramount concern in engaging communities about renewable energy projects. Ensure that the engagement process is clear, honest and balanced; that it is championed by locally-trusted proponents who understand the community's particular history; and clearly articulate the benefits to the community. Comeau's recent [study](#) of factors affecting social acceptance of renewable energy projects, with focus groups in western Canada and the Atlantic provinces, indicates that individuals often evaluate the fairness of a policy or measure by comparing the outcomes for oneself (or a group one belongs to) with the outcomes for others.



Fair winds?: Fairness means different things to different communities; so rural residents next to this wind farm in southern Alberta might have viewed the development very differently from folks in Calgary. *Photo credit: iStock*

Tip 3: After the flood, talk about cost of inaction


After the next extreme weather, engage specific audiences in deeper conversations about the **true cost of tackling climate change now** and the **cost of waiting** (see below mock post). And try working with other groups in a coordinated way to test different messages with different high-leverage audiences about the **false economy of not investing now** in climate-change mitigation. These include youth, people with higher education, political centrists or liberals and those who have experienced heat waves, floods, etc. recently, close to home: for example, British Columbians. Recent EcoA research by Environics and Erick Lachapelle of Université de Montreal, among others, shows that concern about the cost of living among Canadians has soared. Lachapelle's research, conducted in December, also shows that, despite a pandemic and economic concerns, Canadians' concerns about climate change have crystallized at high levels in recent years: 44% of Canadians now say they are "very concerned" about climate change, a ten point increase over 2015. And among British Columbians, 23% now believe climate change will harm them personally "a great deal", 14 points higher than in 2015. Lachapelle's survey reveals, as well, a steady increase in those who "strongly agree" with the statement "If we don't act now, climate change is going to cost a lot more later", from about 60% in 2019 to 68% from 2021. *Note: EcoA's national omnibus survey, to be fielded next week, includes framing questions about costs of investing in climate change, or waiting; so stay tuned for more on this later in the month.*

Target demographics of post: Canadian youth, 18–34, those with centrist or liberal political views, and British Columbians.


Gender: N/A;

Education level: Post-secondary and higher

Offered above.


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Cheaper transportation, improved health, new technologies: these are some of the benefits we could enjoy by addressing the twin emergencies of climate change and biodiversity loss now. Of course, we will need to invest heavily at first and work together as a nation with a clear plan and firm resolve. But waiting is no longer an option, as this would only burden us, and generations to come, with higher costs and greater harm. Learn more about what we can do, together, now—at a very reasonable cost.



Waiting makes
no cents

ECOANALYTICSCANADA.ORG

The benefits of investing in solutions
to climate change and biodiversity loss now

Learn more

Like Comment Share

Other research

Lack of diversity in nature imagery: A [recent report](#) by Climate Outreach and Natural England suggests that environmental groups in the UK are not connecting with new audiences because they use photos and other visual content that suggest, more often than not, that “nature is for white people.” The report includes interviews with diverse influencers of discussions about the outdoors, providing six practical principles for finding, developing and using ethnically, geographically and socially diverse nature visuals.

Trust issues: New surveys echo EcoA research (Nov.-Dec.) indicating we are less trusting. [Leger](#) finds that youth have little trust in large corporations (except banks), mainstream media, political parties and government. Banks and the police were the only institutions enjoying the trust of more than 60%. Younger Canadians also have a dismal view of the future: economic, social, environmental, short- and long-term. An [Ipsos poll](#), meanwhile, finds just 30% feel that other people can be trusted, close to the global median. And trust in governments has dropped to 43%, from 58% last year.

Growing appetite to meet climate commitments: More than 60% of those surveyed in a [Nanos survey](#) last month support Canada meeting its climate commitments despite growing energy costs, up from 50% in March 2018. Half of those surveyed believe now is the time for Canada to be ambitious in addressing climate change. Economic concerns over pandemic recovery are most often cited as reasons to delay climate action.



Deep canvassers: Volunteers and staff with West Kootenay EcoSociety, a new EcoA Subscriber, have had success testing novel methods of engaging conservative-minded Canadians in climate advocacy. *Photo credit: Dillon Kydd*

EcoA News

Welcome to the Kootenays: [West Kootenay EcoSociety](#), a new Subscriber, based in Nelson, BC, is a pioneer of something known as [deep canvassing](#), building support for climate action in communities that depend on heavy industry. This uses locals who are adept at talking about their own experiences and comfortable speaking with workers, retirees and others who may be hostile towards *environmentalists*. Doorstep and online conversations then move sensitively to deep-seeded concerns and biases, helping people resolve internal conflict and shift towards supporting climate action. "We're looking forward to working with the EcoAnalytics community to learn more about effective language for entry points into these real conversations," says Executive Director Montana Burgess.

Kate expectations: Kate McMahon, EcoA's new Project Manager, began work in the final days of March, bringing to the position expertise in project management, interpretive planning, community engagement and communications in the cultural and natural heritage sector in BC, Canada and the US. "I am so pleased to be joining the team," she says. "From what I hear, EcoAnalytics throws the best *Zoomtini* parties: cheers!"

Meeting at last!: Members and Researchers will meet in person—barring another spike in the pandemic—for two days at Toronto's Centre for Social Innovation, Wed. Sept. 28th and Thurs. Sept. 29th. Expect a packed agenda: reviewing research, developing new tools for knowledge translation, planning for the coming year—and socializing! EcoA will cover the cost of return air- and train-fares as well as accommodation, as appropriate.

Next bus: Environics' Sarah Robertson will present the results of our latest national omnibus survey, by the week of Apr. 25th. Among other issues the survey tests frames for talking about costs of climate action (and inaction) and the merits of rapid transformative action on climate change.

Calendar

April

20, week of Begin planning spring-summer round of research: details TBA.

26, week of Environics presents results of EcoA national omnibus survey.

May

24, week of Members agree on plan for next round of EcoA research.

June

6 EcoA Tips #10 shared with Members and Subscribers.

21, week of researchers begin Spring Summer research.

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