

# EcoA Tips

## Notes & news from EcoAnalytics Research



Welcome to *EcoA Tips* #11, a *back-to-school* issue full of pencil-sharp pointers to position your group in the front row of communicators.

### Three tips based on new research:

**Tip 1:** Raise the bar for climate action

**Tip 2:** Highlight the costs of not doing enough

**Tip 3:** Use hope to inspire youth

### Other resources

- Diversify faces in your photos
- Public supports suing Big Oil
- Keep the oldsters engaged
- Teach climate change in schools

### EcoA News and calendar

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**Electric moment:** Last month California said it would ban the sale of non-electric cars by 2035, building on Biden's climate change bill. Canadians could support similar bold action for sake of competitiveness. *Photo credit: Jenny Ueberberg via Unsplash*

## Three tips for engagement around

# competitiveness, costs of inaction, and countering despair in youth

## Tip 1: Raise the bar for climate action

It was something to celebrate last month when U.S. President Joe Biden signed into law a bill injecting \$392 billion over 10 years into climate action, including renewables, green manufacturing, infrastructure and consumer incentives. We can use this moment to push for comparable spending in Canada., by communicating the opportunities for our economy and transition to renewables created by Biden's historic bill.

### What the data say

EcoA's April 2022 [National Omnibus](#) survey shows that, even before Biden's "Inflation Reduction Act" (don't be misled by the name), Canadians of all political stripes were keen to see our economy ready itself to compete in a global market far less dependent on fossil fuels. Even half of Canadians who show little support for immediate climate action are open to "moving quickly" to ensure our economy is *competitive* in this changing world.

### How to use this

The passing of Biden's climate bill comes as flooding, extreme heat and drought worldwide have pushed the environment to the top of Canadians' [list of concerns](#). So, now is the time to call for comparable policies that allow the Canadian economy to make the most of provisions in the new US legislation, building green infrastructure and clearing the way for our green industries to exploit opportunities. Focus on specific opportunities to make our economy more competitive, highlighting the [investments](#) Biden is making in clean electricity standards, wind, solar, electric vehicle manufacturing, *green* hydrogen, more sustainable agriculture and transportation and rural clean energy. Emphasize that a large majority of Canadians demand an economy that can compete globally, and stress the solid economic, as well as environmental, arguments for acting now. The US has just triggered a sea-change in the global economy: it's time to tell our governments to raise the bar for Canada's climate action.

**Mock social media post, starring Ryan and Rachel**

**Describe the higher level of ambition for renewables investment set by Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. Draw on EcoA data indicating a solid majority of us want Canada to *move quickly* to ensure our economy is competitive globally as the world decarbonizes. Identify specific areas of investment. Call on the federal government to make a comparable investment in Canada's new clean electricity standard, now before Parliament. Make a clear call to action.**



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President Biden's historic climate bill has raised the bar for investment in renewable energy. The global economy is changing fast and Canadians want to be ready. The pathway to a net-zero electrical grid by 2035 is clear. But it needs a comparable commitment to renewables from Justin Trudeau. Sign our petition here.



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**Sign our petition for clean electricity**

[Learn more](#)



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## Tip 2: Highlight the costs of not doing enough

While renewables are rapidly gaining traction and viability for consumers and communities, too many people still believe that harnessing the power of the sun and wind, etc. is far more expensive than our fossilized status quo. It's time to puncture this fallacy (which vested interests want us to believe), and reveal the true costs of not doing enough.

### What the data says

Careful research into the language of corporate reports by Drs. Lori Thorlakson, University of Alberta, and Melanee Thomas, University of Calgary, (two political scientists and EcoA Research Advisors) shows that listed corporations have, over the last decade, increasingly framed climate solutions in one of two ways: acknowledging the problem and embracing optimism about technical innovation; or shifting away from outright climate denial to skepticism about the costs of energy transition and climate policies. The latter findings echo the results from EcoA's qualitative research, [Environmental solutions: Views about the path forward, June 2021](#), which revealed a common perception that the energy transition is expensive and unreliable.

### How to use this

Use personal examples, from local communities where possible, to emphasize the practicality and affordability of renewables. Highlight the less obvious costs of fossil fuels embedded in taxes and price tags and monthly bills, as the below story reel does. The list of costs is lengthy: subsidies to the oil and gas sector, cleaning up after dirty industries, building and rebuilding dykes, floodways and bridges in response to changing weather, health costs of treating asthma and other illnesses tied to air pollution, higher grocery bills, etc.

**Mock social media post: reel engagement**

The below story reel illustrates how a brisk sequence of familiar yet compelling images, with minimal text can anchor your argument in the viewer's mind, encouraging action. [Watch the video](#)



**Tip 3: Use hope to inspire youth**

With another Global Youth Climate strike on September 23rd, communicators are re-engaging with young Canadians. The youth climate movement has changed significantly since its last major moment, in 2019, when hundreds of thousands of Canadians spilled into the streets to raise awareness of the real danger of climate change. Three years later, the scale of threat is perhaps more visible but Canadian governments have taken only halting steps to do anything about it; so it's little wonder that [pessimism and anxiety](#) are at high levels, [particularly in youth](#), as many despair for the future. Hope, personal

action and a credible vision of the future, post-carbon, are key to keeping young people engaged.

## What the data says

[EcoA research on the values and behaviour of youth](#) (2019) pinpoints psychological barriers to overcome in engaging this group in environmental action:

- Tokenism, a sense of unfairness that one should have to make personal lifestyle changes when big industry is the root cause
- Lack of knowledge of actions and impacts, the perception that one doesn't know where to begin and a feeling of being overwhelmed
- Concerns that changing one's behaviour might affect relationships with friends and the achievement of life-goals

Establishing environmental action as "normal behaviour" and tackling perceptions of tokenism were, therefore, key recommendations from this research. [Recent advice](#) from education researchers in Chicago echoes this guidance. The studies suggest that hopeful frames and messaging about climate change in schools and post-secondary institutions produce good results.

Discussions that envision positive aspects of a low-carbon economy and lifestyle and describe real proposed policies and promising new technology can banish despair and *doomism* among youth and renew their sense of hope and personal agency.

## How to use this

Tone-deaf communication about terrifying aspects of the climate emergency, government inaction and unaccountability can feed fatalism. Instead focus on hope and solutions (without sugar-coating the threat). Yale University researchers also recommend specific ways of [speaking with youth](#): keeping it "simple, serious and solvable". *Simple*: personal, relevant and basic (e.g., "Heat in minus heat out equals change of heat — that's what climate change is"). *Serious*: focus on local examples of climate change like crop failure, floods, heat domes. *Solvable*: emphasize this is a long game, and there is little to gain from feeling guilty about one's lifestyle, or trying to solve everything — it's about continuing the fight.

You might also consider working with social media influencers who embody hope, or learning from them. Influencers play a significant role in normalizing environmental behaviour, another key strategy for engaging youth (and others). Influencers build trust with their audiences through their expertise, (apparent) authenticity and the intimate bonds they build with their online communities. Below are links to some popular environmental influencers who emphasize hope and *norming* (some of these links may require an Instagram account):

[@kweenwerk](#)

[@eco\\_tok](#)

[@zerowastehome](#)

## Other resources



**Face It:** Efforts to engage more diverse audiences in environmental protection can be helped by images portraying a diversity of people enjoying nature. *Photo credit: iStock*

### Diversify the faces in your photos

A [new study](#) from Climate Outreach (UK) reveals how viewers on different social media platforms respond to different types of images in environmental posts. It also highlights the significant positive impact of putting more, and more *diverse-looking*, people in your images (rather than just fair-skinned, Caucasian faces). For more on the use of visuals, join us for an *Opinionation* webinar, 12:30pm ET, Sept. 29th. (See EcoA News, below, for details.)

### Public supports suing Big Oil

West Coast Environmental Law recently launched the Sue Big Oil campaign in BC, which is based partly on data generated by EcoAnalytics. A follow-up [poll](#) shows that 69% of British Columbians would support their local government suing the world's top fossil fuel companies for the costs of climate change. The poll also confirmed that 55% of British Columbians believe that they, or people they know, have been harmed by climate change.

### Keep the oldsters engaged

Older people are an important and often neglected demographic in terms of environmental communications, as they are a large voting group and may be more vulnerable to extreme weather. Recent research by [Climate Outreach](#) (*Britain Talks Climate*) suggests that older people in the UK are receptive to narratives in support of climate action that focus on consideration

and responsibility, community and international cooperation.

## Teach climate change in schools

Schools are the best place to address the [knowledge gap about climate change](#) among American youth, new research indicates. A [study](#) at the San Jose State University shows the potential for significant impact on emissions reduction, along with more engagement in community actions, through better climate-change curricula. Educators and parents worldwide [are pushing](#) for this improvement, with [overwhelming support](#) from teachers and parents of different political points of view.

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## EcoA News

### Members and researchers meet at last!

Research planning with Environics, "walking workshops" on efficacy, trust and fairness with EcoA researchers, "Great Translations" (short talks by Members on their knowledge translation successes, and failures) and discussions of innovative approaches to research: these are likely to be highlights of EcoA's annual meeting, Sept. 27th–29th, at the Centre for Social Innovation, in Toronto. Participants also won't want to miss out on the *kick-off* social at The Ocho Hotel bar on the 27th and supper together at The Queen Mother, on Queen St. West, on the 28th. For details, see [agenda](#).

### Webinars reveal research drawn from big data

All staff of Members and Subscribers are invited to two EcoA *Opinionation* webinars this month.

On Sept. 14, the Director of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, Dr. Anthony Leiserowitz, will present on the state of global opinion on climate change, including Canadian views, and opportunities and challenges revealed by *big data* collected in partnership with Facebook.



Then, Sept. 29th, EcoA Research Advisor, Dr. Erick Lachapelle will present on new behavioural research that uses visualizations of extreme weather impacts developed with Google Street View. The webinar also features Climate Outreach (UK) Visuals and Media Programme Lead Toby Smith, on visualizing impacts of climate change on oceans.

### Summer research results and fall planning

Two presentations by Environics Research this month should provide Members with useful guidance for engagement and advocacy on key current policy issues, and reveal opportunities for building on this knowledge in the fall. On Sept. 8th, Sarah Robertson will present the findings of detailed online

discussions in July with 45 individuals, exploring how perceptions of fairness, trust and efficacy influence Canadian views of climate and biodiversity policy initiatives. On Sept. 28th, Robertson will lead a "lunch-and-learn" discussion at our Annual Meeting on options for the next round of research that build on the qualitative findings.

## Social media testing

This month, five EcoAnalytics Members will begin working with international digital campaigns consultant Ari Pottens, and Project Manager Kate McMahon, on an approach to assessing social media guidance provided by EcoA. CCNB, CPAWS, DSF, Nature Canada and WCEL will test different posts through their channels and compare results. The aim is to develop a protocol for translating EcoA research into mutually supportive campaigns and actions.

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## Calendar

### September

**8**, 1:00pm ET, Environics Summer Research Results webinar

**14**, 1:30pm ET, *Opinionation* webinar, "Global opinion on climate change", Anthony Leiserowitz, Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

**27–29**, Members' Annual Meeting, Toronto

**29**, 12:30pm ET, *Opinionation* webinar, "New tools for visual engagement", Erick Lachapelle, UdeM, and Toby Smith, Climate Outreach

### October

**10 or 17, weeks of**, fall research plan is finalized

**31, week of (approximately)**, Environics fall research fielded

### November

**7**, *EcoA Tips* #12 newsletter shared with Members and Subscribers

**28, week of (approximately)**, Environics presents results of fall research

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## Like this newsletter?

If so, what's most useful, or likeable? If not, what's missing or dreadful? Submit your feedback and suggestions for future issues and EcoA Research Nutshells through this quick [survey](#).