



# EcoA Tips

Notes & news from  
EcoAnalytics Research

Welcome to newsletter #15, a garden of useful guidance beginning with a tip-toe through the *tutips*.

## Three tips based on new research:

**Tip 1:** Get in front of greenwashing

**Tip 2:** Talk about tools and tangible next steps

**Tip 3:** Blame frames: know when and how to point fingers

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# Three tips for engaging audiences around misinformation, tangible actions and blame

# The Science of Cranky Uncle

## Part 1. Why we can't ignore misinformation



**Use humour to reveal the truth:** Humour can counter misinformation, powerfully. See, for example [The Cranky Uncle](#) app/game, which helps individuals develop the ability to see through untruths.

### Tip 1: Get in front of greenwashing

Canadians are getting better at seeing through lies about climate change and conservation and, thanks to initiatives geared to kids, the next generation will be even better at this ([CBC Kids News](#)). But for now, industry (and government) *greenwashing* is getting more sophisticated and more money is flowing into efforts to convince Canadians that oil and gas expansion is actually a viable climate solution. As highlighted in our [March issue of EcoA Tips](#) many Canadians remain uncertain about climate solutions and paths forward, and are at risk of falling for misinformation that could lessen demand for urgent action. However, a growing body of research, lots of creativity and even humour are helping audiences see through the greenwash — and counter it.

### What the data says

EcoA's recent [Climate of Change survey](#) uncovered a lot of uncertainty among Canadians on the urgency of climate action and conservation and the efficacy, feasibility and cost of several climate solutions. As outlined in Tip 2, below, much of this uncertainty relates to details about implementation and personal impacts. It is also greatly influenced by deceptive language, and lobbying by industry, and greenwashing by governments as well as industry. EcoA researcher Lori Thorlakson has shown how industry has changed its [corporate language](#) to adapt to changing Canadian expectations, in self-

serving ways, in recent years. [InfluenceMaps'](#) recent report also details efforts by oil and gas companies to influence climate policy and public opinion. As discussed in [Re.Climate's recent webinar on greenwashing](#), many of the narratives are now focused on climate delay rather than denial and the oil industry is trying to cast itself as part of the solution. It is also trying to popularize narratives that connect overly ambitious climate action to food insecurity and the high cost of living while also casting doubt on the efficacy of renewable energy sources, claiming these are unreliable, too expensive and difficult to scale-up — despite plenty of research discrediting these claims.

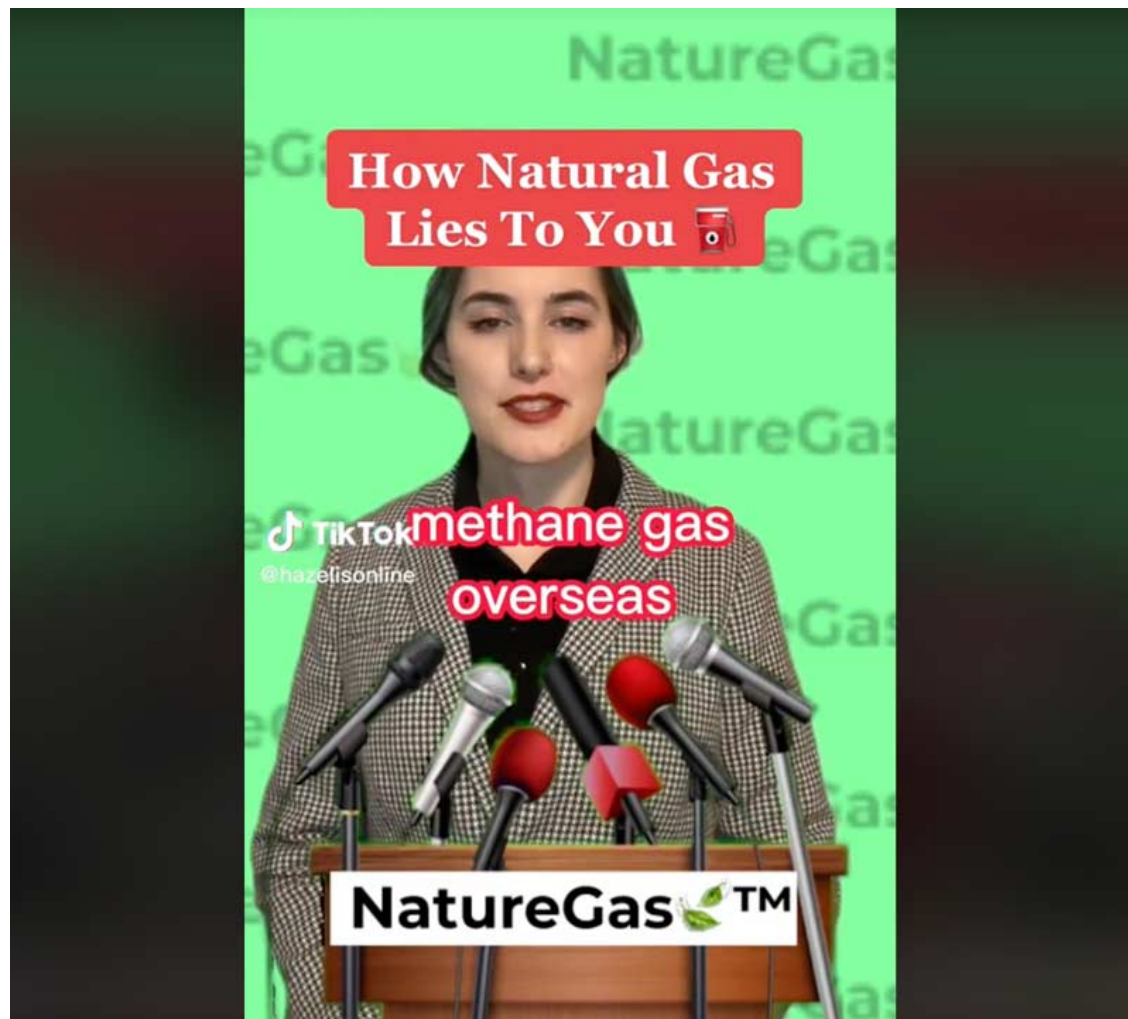
## How to use this

While greenwashing is common, the high number of Canadians uncertain about climate and conservation solutions represent an opportunity to engage folks without entrenched beliefs and open to considering the truth. In approaching this audience, be careful to choose credible messengers, and pick the right narrative frames, or choose messaging that fits with its worldview and existing knowledge. This is a hot topic of study at the moment with lots to be learned about how to counter misinformation. Other approaches to help audiences get better at recognizing greenwashing include:

- [Prime people for accuracy](#): when people are primed to assess messaging based on accuracy, they are less inclined to spread false information.
- [Pre-bunk](#): let folks know they will be exposed to greenwashing and provide them with the tools to recognize and challenge it. Here, satire and other forms of humour are good for sowing seeds of skepticism about *bullshit* in many audiences.
- Help people identify climate misinformation techniques and common words used for this. [Paltering](#), for example, advances statements that are, on their own, literally true—but create a misleading overall impression: a common ploy of Big Oil companies such as Exxon.
- Highlight the industry tactic of confusing the timeline for transitioning to renewable energy, and its use of [words](#) such as “unabated”, “inefficient subsidies”, “ethical”, “natural” and “clean oil” to further confuse audiences.
- Support calls for transparency: better emissions accounting, banning advertising or sponsorship by the oil industry, denouncing PR firms that help spread misinformation.
- Amplify calls for climate literacy including climate-education reform.

## Specifics and mock post

While this influencer may not appeal to all audiences, she does a great job of mixing humour, satire and sass to pre-punk and de-bunk misinformation, helping hundreds of thousands of her followers tell the truth from the lies.



**Hazel's use of humour:** Check out *Hazelsonline* on [TikTok](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#) for examples of how humour can cut through corporate lies.

## Tip 2: Talk about tools and tangible next steps

The latest IPCC report is dire, but also highlights that we have all the tools we need to avert the worst of climate chaos and biodiversity loss. But, despite a tool-belt of proven solutions, Canadians are struggling to understand how these tools will work and the tangible next steps to be taken. This is an opportunity for showcasing successes, building confidence, trust and momentum.

### What the data says

[EcoA's summer 2022 qualitative study](#), by Environics, found that Canadians recognize the problem and the need to do something about it, but struggle

with knowledge gaps and differing opinions on solutions. On top of this, climate change and biodiversity loss still seems like a [distant problem](#) to many and a full-scale transition to renewable energy feels formidable, scary and hard to imagine. But as the qualitative research reveals, people are open to the need for solutions, many indicating that we can't afford not to adopt them, despite pervasive concerns about cost. The upshot: Canadians need to see both biodiversity and climate solutions in action and understand at a personal level how they work.

## How to use this

We need to clarify details about the paths forward. The best way to do this is by using concrete, local examples of success and the benefits that follow: municipalities that have banned gas hook-ups in new buildings with positive health effects, public transit that reduces commute-times, and Indigenous protected and conserved areas (IPCAs) (or Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)) that support local economies as well as biodiversity, etc. These smaller, local successes are happening all over. They are relatively easy to access and are a tangible way to see the cumulative benefits of local progress nationwide. While the impact of a progressive local decision on an individual may seem small, the impact of many such decisions, combined, on Canadian society at large, will be much greater and could have domino effects. Use these examples to build confidence among Canadians in climate and biodiversity solutions and the power of community advocacy. Amplify successes to build momentum, leveraging these local achievements to pressure community decision-makers everywhere.

## Mock post

Use **momentum and peer pressure** to amplify successes and inspire other communities. **Outline goals and achievements. Provide some implementation details. Show how many others have already done this. And issue a call to action.**



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What do Victoria, Saanich, Nelson and Quebec City have in common?

They've all banned natural gas hook-ups for new buildings, starting next year in some cases! Local groups of citizens across Canada are pressing their local governments to pass bylaws that reduce and eliminate fossil gas. Find out more about banning fossil fuel in new buildings in your community.



[ECOANALYTICSCANADA.ORG](http://ECOANALYTICSCANADA.ORG)

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*Photos (clockwise from top right): Mike Benna via Unsplash, Erika Rathje, Tim Geenens via Unsplash, Reid Naaykens via Unsplash*



**Right message, right audience:** The case for assigning blame in climate change is strong, but be careful how you frame your argument, and know your audience. *Photo: stockking on Freepik*

### **Tip 3: Blame frames: know when and how to point fingers**

Canadians are connecting extreme weather and the harm it causes to climate change and they are connecting this to the oil and gas industry. Nationwide, they are also connecting inflation to instability in the oil and gas sector. In our [last issue](#), our guidance focused on using this personal experience of climate impacts to leverage government action. In this issue we focus on how to frame that advocacy with different audiences. Everyone has a different perspective, so we need to take care in the language we use to help audiences understand why pointing fingers at the oil and gas industry is in fact the responsible thing to do.

#### **What the data says**

EcoA's [2022 Climate of Change Survey](#) shows that Canadians are connecting extreme weather, harm, financial loss and mental health issues to climate change, and connecting climate change to oil and gas producers. But that same survey also shows the effectiveness of casting blame on the O&G industry varies widely depending on how the blame is framed. The Climate of Change survey, by Erick Lachapelle, Professor of Political Science at l'Université de Montréal, found that loaded, more confrontational language

only works well with some audiences.

To find out who respondents hold the most responsible for causing climate change—industry, government or individuals—the survey tested three frames: oil and gas companies misled us; oil and gas companies should do their fair share; and companies that produce, burn and transport fossil fuels are most to blame. Left leaning audiences and those that are already engaged as well as residents in BC and Quebec responded well to the “misled” frame, placing most blame on the oil and gas industry. However, other audiences responded better to the less inflammatory “produce and transport” frame. In some cases, the loaded language even prompted respondents to point their fingers more at government than industry. This type of response was often correlated to respondents who, earlier in the survey, indicated that they did not believe that, or were uncertain if, industry has misled us about the connection between burning fossil fuels and climate change. Many also felt that both government, as well as industry, were to blame.

## How to use this

These insights mean we need to think about our audiences carefully. Are they already engaged? Will messaging about oil and gas lies make them mad and want to act? Or will it turn them off? What does your framing assume about your audience’s experience, perspective and knowledge? Are you trying to evoke an emotion or encourage learning? If you are unsure about your audience's level of engagement, avoid loaded, confrontational language. The messaging framework below outlines different key messages and tactics for audiences needing different key messages for engagement on the same issue.

Note, too, that our next newsletter will have more guidance on frames and messages for talking about the accountability of industry and governments, drawing on fresh data from a major national survey fielded last month.

**Mock messaging framework** for engaging two different audiences (informed and active; and concerned yet inactive) in support of a campaign demanding accountability from Canada’s oil and gas sector.

**Aim:** Build the case for casting blame on, and demanding corrective action from, Canada’s major oil and gas companies.

	<b>Audience: Alarmed (Informed and active)</b>	<b>Audience: Moveable Middle (Concerned but not yet</b>
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		<b>engaged)</b>
<b>Objective</b>	Emotional: enrage audience with and of O&G sector	Informational/emotional: sow seeds of distrust of O&G sector, and inform about practical solutions
<b>Call to action</b>	Show up at a protest, divest, call MP, sign petition to Sue Big Oil	Read more, learn to recognize greenwashing, think more about renewable alternatives
<b>Key messages</b>	<p>Oil &amp; gas companies have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known for 40 years</li> <li>• Hidden the damage</li> <li>• Profited at our and nature's expense</li> <li>• Lied and continue to do so</li> <li>• Your actions can help turn the tide against this corporate recklessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burning fossil fuels = climate chaos</li> <li>• Surging price of fossil fuels drives inflation</li> <li>• Increasing number of Canadians do not depend on O&amp;G for energy</li> <li>• Many Canadians now pay less for clean energy (heating, transportation)</li> <li>• Look out for greenwashing</li> </ul>
<b>Counter-narratives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O&amp;G are still needed for uses like plastics</li> <li>• Ethical Canadian O&amp;G can help developing countries to get off fossil-fuels</li> <li>• LNG is a critical transition fuel</li> <li>• Too aggressive climate action has undermined affordability and security</li> <li>• Large-scale transition to renewables is not possible</li> <li>• We will need oil for many years to come</li> <li>• The economy will collapse without it</li> <li>• Transitioning to renewables is too expensive</li> <li>• Electrification is worse for the environment</li> </ul>	

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## Other resources



**A fine line:** Climate humour is often pretty cynical, but can work to normalize climate concern and action.

## Comedic climate science

As mentioned in Tip 1, above, humour is a [powerful tactic](#) to combat misinformation and appeal to diverse audiences. Check out this (seriously informative) comedy sketch produced by the [Utopia Bureau](#). [Inside the Greenhouse](#), on the other hand, explores new (and humorous) ways of retelling climate change stories to deepen engagement with diverse audiences. If you need a laugh, check out [these short films](#).

## Climate romcom, anyone?

If romantic comedy is more your thing, you might enjoy [this approach](#) to debunking the cozy relationship between banks and fossil fuel companies.

## How is Canada measuring up?

This [cool widget](#) shows how countries are faring with setting and meeting climate targets on a variety of metrics.

## Recent *Mix*, ICYMI

Last month's EcoA [Energy Mix article](#) highlighted Canadians' desire for a strong emissions cap.

## What we are reading

[Braiding Sweetgrass](#): We challenge you to read this beautiful example of *two-eyed seeing* without adjusting your perception of the world just a little.

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## EcoA News

### Meeting to select from 11 research proposals

Members will meet May 18th to select EcoA's first customized research project, after a call for expressions of interest garnered 11 proposals from nine Member and Associate organizations. EcoA will share an options document in advance of the meeting, and Research Advisors as well as Environics VP Research Sarah Robertson will be on hand to offer advice.

### Into *The Mix*

EcoA is reaching a wider audience through not just its [new website](#) and public webinars, but also [The Energy Mix](#), the online climate news digest. Analytics as of March 1 show, e.g., that our story "Albertans Want a Just Transition, Despite Premier's Grumbling" (Jan. 23) had 369 readers, double our initial readership last summer, and triggered engagement on Twitter.

### Website refinements, translation

Less text, fast access to our library of EcoA documents, infographics and media are the latest features of our new website. Accordion-type headings allow quicker scanning, while access to our [searchable database](#) (70 reports, infographics, etc.) has been improved. Next: French translation.

### Annual meeting

Dates and details for our next annual meeting (in or near Toronto in the late winter or early spring of 2024) will be announced by early fall. This postponement will allow Members to assess two rounds of customized research and other major new initiatives (e.g. open sharing of all data and guidance) — and limit carbon emissions.

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## Calendar dates and times (ET)

### May

**9, 2pm ET**, Environics national survey results webinar

**18, 2pm ET**, Customized research selection workshop, Open to all Members, Associates and Researchers

### June

**5, week of**, Environics prepares for first round of Customized research preparation

**20, week of**, Semi-annual meeting, part II (Date TBC)

### July

**4**, EcoA Tips #16 arrives in your mailbox

**First half**, Environics expected to begin to field first round of customized research

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## Like this newsletter?

If so, why? If not, what's not to like? Submit your comments and suggestions for future issues and EcoA Research Nutshells in this quick [survey](#).