

# TALKING CLIMATE

## TIP SHEET OF KEY FINDINGS



### THREE PRIORITY AUDIENCES

More effort is needed to engage women, youth, and New Canadians that are outside the traditional environmental community. Trade union, rural/agriculture and more conservative audiences are also worth engaging.

### THREE CORE MESSAGES

#### 1. “Extreme” weather events

*Frames: care, prepare, protect, extreme, flipped, unpredictable, unnatural*

- These things are precious to me (nature, landscape, outdoors, community, property)
- The weather is becoming extreme, has flipped, is unpredictable
- This makes me anxious and worried
- This is not how things should be. What I remember has changed or been lost
- Addressing climate change means protecting the things we love as they normally are
- [Start with validation] Our response to (a recent extreme weather event) shows how we pull together, and how we care for each other. Working together we can prepare for the future so that we can protect and defend the people and things we love.

#### 2. Transition

*Frames: steady, balanced, momentum, shift, accelerate, rebuild, path, journey*

- Focus groups participants define rapid AND incremental change as happening over the next five to 10 years.
  - We need steady and balanced change that builds momentum, accelerates the shift toward clean energy
- Change must start now—over five to ten years (or with a generational target).
- We can rebuild our energy system.
- Canada could be left behind if we do not transition (other countries are moving fast).

#### 3. Health

*Frames: renewal, empower, resilience, clean, protect, safety, children*

- [Start with the positive] Renewable energy using solar, wind, hydro or other technologies is a clean way to deliver the power we need.
- Renewing our energy system lowers air pollution, protects water, and helps slow climate change. Renewable energy protects our health.
- Medical professionals tell us that burning oil, coal and gas is not good for our health, pollutes the air we breathe, contaminates the water we drink, and unbalances the climate we depend on.
- Extreme weather from climate change is linked to many health impacts such as heatstroke, allergies, asthma, disease, anxiety and worry.
- The things we can do to help reduce climate change are also good for our health (e.g. healthy eating and active lifestyles).

## MESENTERS

Trusted messengers are:

- Knowledgeable, truthful, ethical
- Credible, in the sense that their message is consistent with their identity
- Can be people like us (peers: friends, family, neighbours)
- Specific to target audiences and leaders in their specific networks
- Not the “usual suspects”
- Not party affiliated

## CARBON PRICING

Carbon pricing is not the preferred frame on which to lead a climate change narrative discussion but it is hard to avoid in the current political environment. Knowing how to address it before pivoting back to climate change messaging will be important. A ‘tax’ frame has strong negative connotations for most audiences. Research shows that people evaluate carbon pricing policies by considering fairness (to them personally, relative to industry, and relative to what politicians should be doing), cost of living effects, and whether it works to cut pollution. If you are talking about carbon pricing, the goal is to neutralize arguments that frame carbon pricing as “costly” and a “tax grab.” The most effective supporting narrative is based on fairness (“polluters should pay”) and effectiveness (it works).

*Arguments against carbon pricing can sound convincing. But almost all economists believe that putting a price on carbon pollution is the most effective way to shrink greenhouse gas emissions. That is why pricing the pollution unbalancing the climate makes sense. The more we pollute, the more we pay. It is a fair way to hold polluters accountable. It is effective because it makes solutions like renewable energy more affordable.*

We can also soften opposition with information on how carbon-pricing revenue is used. Providing details on how household and industrial carbon pricing charges and rebates work is important to cost-of-living concerns. People also want to see that the revenue is going to purposes that they support.

## APPROACHES TO AVOID

1. Leading with economics. A focus on money activates selfish values; a focus on environmental and health benefits of solutions activates collective values. Communicate more about fairness.
2. Being overly optimistic: People want realism, clarity about the steps we must take to reach our goals. Don’t be afraid to include targets and timelines in narratives (see below), but claims must be backed up to be believed. Use hyperlinks to supportive documentation.

*We are at a crossroads. Our land, air and water are already feeling the effects of climate change. Economic inequality and precarious work are on the rise. Scientists tell us that, to prevent climate catastrophe, we must transition completely off fossil fuels in our lifetime. Canada can run entirely on renewable electricity by 2035 and we can have a 100% clean economy by 2050. We can do this and help reduce poverty and improve quality of life for people across the country.*

3. Being too polite: People want more passion: firm, clear, ethically driven, and bolder.
4. Expecting environment/climate change to be a vote winner. People may vote against someone without a climate plan, but not necessarily vote for someone who has a climate plan. People vote based on a portfolio of

concerns. Climate change communications should aim to make climate change one element of those portfolio of concerns for the target audience.

5. Regions differ and so communications and engagement strategies must differ. These communications tips have general application, but regional testing is essential to any communication strategy. One simply cannot assume a narrative that works in one province will work in another.

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