

This PDF includes a chapter from the following book:

# **The Resistance Dilemma**

## **Place-Based Movements and the Climate Crisis**

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## 8 The Impact of Pipeline Resistance

Fall 2016 was a very busy time for the Trudeau government on the energy and climate front. On October 3, as environment ministers were meeting to hammer out final details of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, Prime Minister Trudeau rose in the House of Commons to announce the basic architecture of his climate plan. Saying, “We will not walk away from science, and we will not deny the unavoidable,” Trudeau announced that the federal government would set a floor price for carbon pollution:

The price will be set at a level that will help Canada reach its targets for greenhouse gas emissions, while providing businesses with greater stability and improved predictability.

Provinces and territories will have a choice in how they implement this pricing. They can put a direct price on carbon pollution, or they can adopt a cap-and-trade system, with the expectation that it be stringent enough to meet or exceed the federal benchmark.

The government proposes that the price on carbon pollution should start at a minimum of \$10 per tonne in 2018, rising by \$10 each year to \$50 per tonne in 2022.

Provinces and territories that choose cap-and-trade systems will need to decrease emissions in line to both Canada’s target and to the reductions expected in jurisdictions that choose a price-based system.

If neither price nor cap and trade is in place by 2018, the Government of Canada will implement a price in that jurisdiction. (Trudeau 2016a)

On November 29, 2016, Trudeau announced that he was rejecting the Northern Gateway Pipeline but approving the Trans Mountain Expansion Project and another project, Line 3 to the American Midwest (Trudeau 2016b). Just over a week later, on December 9, the first ministers formally endorsed the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, although

Saskatchewan and Manitoba dissented (Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat 2016b).

These developments reflected the fruits of a well-organized and resourceful environmental campaign that had been more than a decade in the making. This chapter builds on the previous four pipeline case study chapters to address the first of this book's four core questions: has the strategy of place-based resistance to fossil fuel development been effective at promoting climate action and the reduction of global warming emissions? To address this question, the first section reviews the analytical framework introduced in the first chapter and then reviews and compares the four pipeline case studies to describe and explain the impact of the anti-pipeline campaigns on their proximate goal of stopping pipelines. The second section addresses the anti-pipeline campaigns' broader goal of promoting improved climate policy from governments. The final section reconsiders the state of the oil sands regime after a concerted political backlash to resistance in the latter part of the decade.

### **Impact of Anti-pipeline Campaigns on Pipeline Expansion**

The theory about the influence of infrastructure resistance presented in chapter 1 contained four hypotheses on the relative power of project opponents:

1. The greater the place-based risks in relation to local economic benefits, the more vulnerable the project is to resistance.
2. The more access opponents have to veto points, the more vulnerable the project is to resistance.
3. The more the project can take advantage of existing infrastructure, the less vulnerable it is to resistance.
4. The greater the geographical separation of risks and benefits, the more vulnerable the project is to resistance.

This framework helps explain the outcomes in our four cases.

With respect to the proximate goal of stopping pipelines, the campaign has been very successful. Of the four major oil sands pipelines targeted by environmentalists, the only one that is currently under construction is Trans Mountain. Keystone XL was canceled by Obama. Trump sought to reverse that decision, but it was then canceled again by Biden. Energy East was canceled by the proponent, frustrated by the relentless opposition, especially in Quebec. Northern Gateway was rejected by the Federal Court of Appeal after

deep and sustained resistance and then terminated by the Trudeau government. Trans Mountain was approved by the Trudeau government in 2016 but then abandoned by the proponent, Kinder Morgan, because of political uncertainty created in large part by the place-based resistance against it. It was purchased by the government of Canada but was then blocked by the Federal Court of Appeal. It has now been reapproved by the Trudeau government, a decision that was upheld by the Federal Court of Appeal, and leave to appeal to the Supreme Court were denied. Limited pipeline construction in British Columbia began in spring 2020.

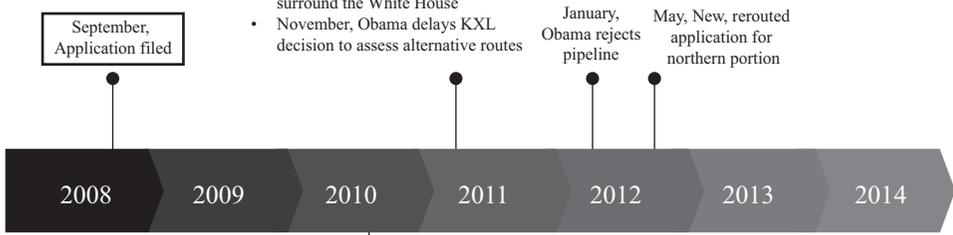
These pipeline controversies are not independent, discrete cases. They are interrelated in two ways. First, they all arise from the same imperative—the growth of the oil sands. That growth imperative gives the oil sands coalition the same strategic objective in each case—increasing market access—but it also gives the anti-pipeline coalition the same strategic objective in each case: constrain oil sands growth in order to limit its environmental consequences.

The second source of interdependence among the pipeline controversies is their relationship to each other in time. Scholars have long noted the importance of timing and sequence in policy agendas and actions (Pierson 2000; Pralle 2006b). Figure 8.1 shows the relationships in time between the four proposals. Northern Gateway was the first one formally proposed, but the first version of its proposal was withdrawn before it became a major controversy. Keystone XL was the first high-profile case. The oil sands coalition was banking on it, with Prime Minister Harper publicly declaring it a “no brainer.” When Obama responded to the resistance strategy by delaying the project significantly in 2011, the oil sands coalition quickly ramped up pressure on the repropoed Northern Gateway. The sudden desperation for Northern Gateway is best indicated by Joe Oliver’s infamous “foreign radicals” open letter.

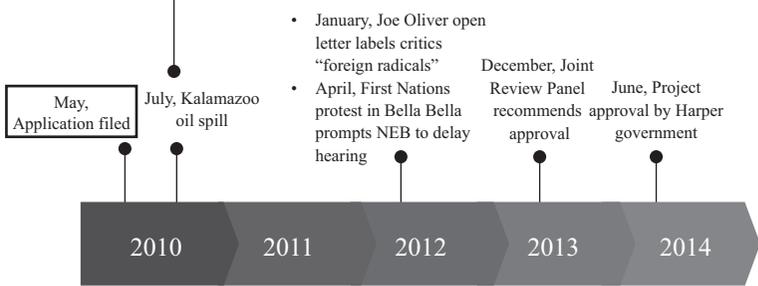
As Northern Gateway then stalled in 2012, the Trans Mountain Expansion Project became the sector’s new hope. When protests ramped up on Burnaby Mountain late in 2014, the oil sands coalition rapidly shifted to Energy East. Then, when it ran aground in Quebec in 2015, the coalition doubled down on Trans Mountain, at that point the only alternative that still seemed politically viable.

The analytical framework helps explain why Trans Mountain thus far has been more successful than three other pipelines. All four pipelines have salient, concentrated risks—the risk of tanker spills in the Northern

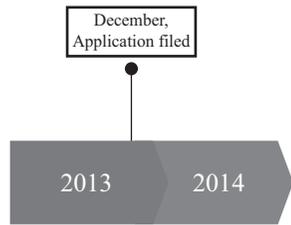
## Keystone XL



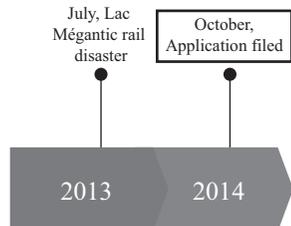
## Northern Gateway

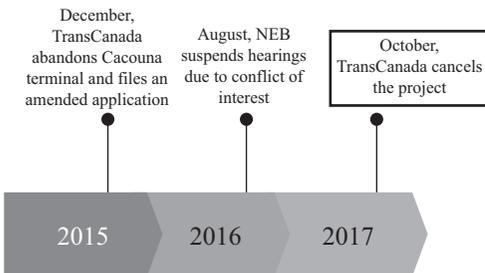
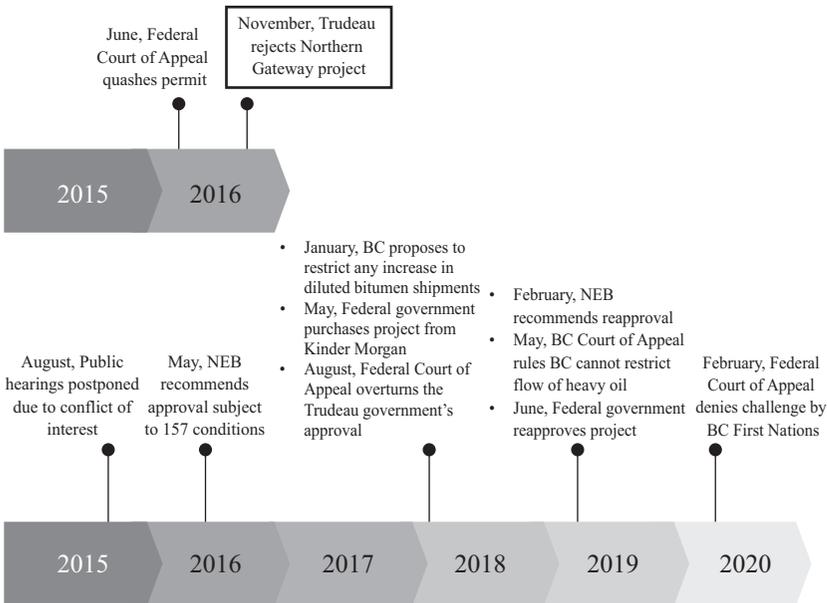
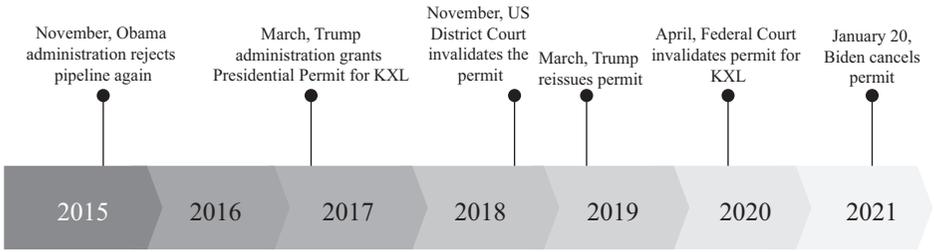


## Trans Mountain



## Energy East





**Figure 8.1**  
Temporal relationship between the four pipeline projects.

Gateway and Trans Mountain cases and the risk of pipeline spill to precious sources of clean water in the Keystone XL and Energy East cases.

In all four cases, the anti-pipeline coalition had access to critical veto points. Environmental and Indigenous access to courts has been a vital part of the resistance. Opponents certainly have not won all the judicial decisions, but in each case courts played a critical role. Political control over veto points is pivotal, a fact best demonstrated by the Keystone XL case: Obama killed the pipeline, Trump's election brought it back into play, but Biden again killed it. While Quebec may not have a legal veto, in Canadian politics on issues as grand as Energy East, it had a *de facto* veto. The stakes the competing coalitions have regarding what values are represented by those with formal decision authority explain why election strategies and outcomes have been so important to these competing coalitions.

It is no surprise that all four pipelines have geographically separated risks and benefits. Most of the economic benefits would go to the oil sector in Alberta, while the environmental risks of pipelines are elsewhere—across the Continental Divide in the Northern Gateway and Trans Mountain cases, across the forty-ninth parallel in the Keystone XL case, and in eastern Canada in the Energy East case. The great hope for Energy East was that it might avoid the fate of the other pipelines by spreading economic benefits more widely across the country, but the cancellation of the Cacouna deep-water terminal stripped the major Quebec-based benefit out of the project and rendered it even more vulnerable to Quebecers' opposition.

Trans Mountain got its greatest advantage from being able to rely mainly on existing infrastructure. Unlike Northern Gateway and Keystone XL, it was not a “greenfield project” but instead was twinned with an existing pipeline for most of its route. This helps explain why, despite the much greater number of people potentially affected by a pipeline or tanker spill in the Metro Vancouver region, Trans Mountain did not attract as much opposition in opinion polls. Energy East also had the potential to benefit from being able to repurpose an existing pipeline, but not where it probably mattered the most: east of Montreal in Quebec. It is noteworthy that two smaller, less contested oil sands pipeline projects that relied almost exclusively on existing infrastructure—Line 9 and Line 3—have both been approved and are either in operation or almost ready (Janzwood 2020). Environmentalists did campaign actively against Line 9 but not until the very late stages of that conflict, and they lost.

This explanatory framework is not intended to suggest that these four factors, singly or in combination, somehow determine the fate of a pipeline. What they do is shift the odds either for or against pipeline advocates or opponents. Keystone XL has confronted enormous barriers but could have been approved if it withstood judicial challenges and Biden hadn't won the 2020 election. Trans Mountain has restarted construction but could still be thwarted by on-the-ground opposition.

### Climate Impacts of Place-Based Resistance

How effective has the strategy of place-based resistance to fossil fuel development been at promoting climate action and the reduction of global warming emissions? Prior to the anti-pipeline campaign, place-based resistance against fossil fuel infrastructure in North America was focused on coal. The anti-coal campaign was built on the same core strategy as the anti-pipeline movement: environmental groups committed to climate action allied themselves with place-based groups focused on local risks. In some cases, this was air pollution and related health impacts caused by coal-fired power plants. In others, it was the impacts on land and water of mountain-top removal mining (Cheon and Urpelainen 2018, chapter 6).

Between 2005 and 2017, coal use for electricity generation in the United States declined by 40%, leading to a reduction of 600 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions (Gruenspecht 2019). Place-based resistance is not the only reason why coal has been in such steep decline in the United States. The most influential factor has been the shale gas revolution that undermined the relative competitiveness of coal as a power source. But according to Cheon and Urpelainen, "it is indisputable that the vibrant opposition to coal power plants makes investments in coal riskier and less profitable" (Cheon and Urpelainen 2018, 148). The most direct impact of the anti-coal campaign was the prevention of construction of new coal plants, contributing to the cancellation of 132 coal plant proposals by 2010 (132). The social mobilization against coal also contributed to the Obama administration's mercury regulations and Clean Power Plans, which further undermined the viability of coal.

The choice by North American environmentalists to focus on oil sands pipelines was more contested. When Keystone XL was targeted, some climate policy analysts were highly skeptical of the strategy (e.g., Leach 2011; Revkin 2011; Levi 2013, chapter 4). When Energy East and Trans Mountain

became nationally divisive issues in Canadian politics, the University of Calgary's Trevor Tombe was harshly critical of the cost-effectiveness of choosing to block pipelines rather than working through carbon pricing, saying, "Climate change is a problem, but blocking pipelines is not the solution. Such efforts may distract from good policy at best, and jeopardize it at worst" (Tombe 2016).

But there's a fundamental difference between the logic of the climate policy analyst and that of the climate policy advocate. The analyst focuses on the cost-effectiveness of different policy tools but overlooks the prime justification that climate advocates see in blocking infrastructure. By allying with place-based interests, advocates were able to mobilize a resistance movement that abstract support for economy-wide policies simply could not. As one campaigner in British Columbia who wished to remain anonymous explained, "Try going door to door campaigning on carbon pricing." And while blocking individual projects was a vital part of the strategy, the higher-level objective was to motivate governments to adopt more ambitious climate policies. By that criterion, the anti-pipeline movement has unquestionably been successful.

The pathway to success was from the environmental campaigns in the media and on the ground, to climate policy reform in Alberta, to climate policy reform by the government of Canada. The unbridled expansionism of the oil sands met with growing environmental resistance starting in 2005. Environmentalists launched a coordinated, multipronged campaign to undermine the economic and political rationale for oil sands growth. First, they adopted an ambitious framing campaign to shift the discourse about the oil sands, labeling them "dirty oil" (Nikiforek 2010). Second, building on their successful marketing campaigns in forestry, they targeted foreign buyers in the United States and Europe. Third, and ultimately most importantly, they sought to contain expansion by blocking the approval of new pipelines to get product to market.

Greenhouse gas emissions from the oil sands have been affected by these cancellations and delays. Oil sands production has increased faster than pipeline takeaway capacity and created a gap in prices between oil sands crude and North American and global oil prices. Chapter 2 described these market dynamics. Pipeline constraints lead producers to rely on more expansive rail and create higher price differentials—both of which mean lower profits and revenues for producers and therefore less money to invest

in new production. This has the effect of reducing industry growth and the emissions that accompany it.

The National Energy Board estimated in 2016 that by 2025 oil sands production would be 450,000 tonnes per day lower than if production were unconstrained by pipelines (National Energy Board 2016c, chapter 10). This amount of forgone production is equivalent to about 10 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year (Tombe 2016), compared to 67 million tonnes from the oil sands in 2014. Even without new pipelines, emissions would grow, but they would be substantially lower a decade from now than they would have been without pipeline cancellations and delays.

In addition to slowing or stopping pipelines, constraining oil production and consequently GHG emissions, the anti-pipeline movement also contributed to notable advancements for climate policy in Canada. The year 2015 was a watershed year in Canadian energy and climate policy, first with the stunning election of the NDP in Alberta in May (Bratt et al. 2019; Sharpe and Braid 2016) and then the Trudeau Liberals' defeat of Harper's Conservative government in October (Pammett and Dornan 2016). Perhaps the most direct indicator of success of the place-based resistance campaign was the express motivations for Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan. For the previous decade, the response by the Conservative Party in Alberta to the environmental campaign was to make modest policy reforms and substantial investments in public relations and lobbying in foreign capitals (Hoberg and Phillips 2011; Urquhart 2018). The Alberta NDP adopted a strategic approach that differed from that of their Conservative predecessors and embarked on developing a climate plan they believed would give them greater market and political credibility in international markets and the rest of Canada. According to Andrew Leach, the University of Alberta professor Notley tapped to chair the Climate Leadership Panel, the motivation of his panel was not exclusively pipeline approval but more about addressing the image problems of the oil sands: "This was more than just about pipelines. It was about having a policy in Alberta where you could credibly say, 'We have a policy that stands up well to everybody else's so there shouldn't be discriminatory policies over and above those that are aimed at industries. . . . It was really about carving out an equitable treatment of Alberta and primarily the oil sands, but its industry and growing population as a whole. . . . But it wasn't 'what's the policy that gets us a pipeline?' Not by any stretch" (Leach 2017).

But Leach believes that the direct link between pipelines and the climate plan “was certainly much more in the premier’s take.” As he explains, “To me it is pretty obvious that by the time we got to the end of our process you weren’t going to have federal government support for a pipeline if Rachel Notley stood up and said ‘it’s not our time to act on climate change.’ You’re going to make it really easy for other provincial governments to oppose pipelines, if that is your approach. . . . So there were a lot of things that by taking on good policy you could probably change the probability of a pipeline approval and construction” (Leach 2017).

Well before Notley’s stunning election, a group of environmentalists began having facilitated discussions with a group of oil sands executives in an effort to broker a compromise on oil sands growth and pipelines. This process was separate from the work of the Climate Leadership Team led by Leach. The link between pipeline opposition and climate policy was central to this process. In fact, oil sands companies agreed to a 100 million tonne cap on oil emissions in exchange for the environmental groups’ apparent agreement to stand down their opposition to new pipelines (Urquhart 2018, 281). The companies were represented not by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers but by four companies in the sector—Suncor, Cenovus, CNRL, and Shell—who believed that a more proactive approach to climate policy was necessary to improve the sector’s political legitimacy at home and in foreign markets. These companies and the group of environmental leaders came to an agreement and reported the results to the Notley government, which decided to add the emission cap proposal to the recommendations coming from the Climate Leadership Team (Leach 2017).

Alberta’s Climate Leadership Plan was released on November 22, 2015, on the eve of the first conference of first ministers in a decade and just before the Paris summit. In addition to capping oil sands emissions at 100 million tonnes, the plan committed to phasing out coal by 2030, increasing renewable electricity production to 30% of the total by 2030, implementing carbon pricing, and regulating methane (Government of Alberta 2015). When Premier Notley made the announcement, she made explicit reference to how the environmental campaign against the oil sands had damaged the province’s international reputation and, as a result, market access. Fresh in her mind was President Obama’s November 6 announcement rejecting the Keystone XL pipeline:

In our role as Canada's principal energy producer we need to step up to the climate change issues. Thoughtful people in the energy industry, including the industry leaders standing with me here today, have been saying for a long time that we can and must do a better job. We got a major wakeup call on this a few weeks ago in the form of a kick in the teeth. Unfairly, in my view, the President of the United States claimed that our production is some of the dirtiest oil in the world. That is the reputation that mistaken government policies in the past have earned for us. We are a landlocked energy producer with a single market. A single market that just took a very hard run at us. So we need to do better. And we are going to do better. (Notley 2015)

After describing the main components of the plan, including the 100 million tonne emission cap on the oil sands, she continued, "I'm hopeful that these policies, taken overall, will lead to a new collaborative conversation about Canada's infrastructure on its merits. And to a significant de-escalation of conflict worldwide about the Alberta oil sands."

Justin Trudeau won the Liberal leadership in April 2013. His first major speech on energy and climate issues was in October of that year, at the Calgary Petroleum Club. Castigating Harper for needlessly antagonizing domestic opponents and the Obama administration, he clearly articulated his belief that stronger climate policy was the means to gain approval of pipelines: "Let me be clear on this. If we had stronger environmental policy in this country: stronger oversight, tougher penalties, and yes, some sort of means to price carbon pollution, then I believe the Keystone XL pipeline would have been approved already" (Liberal Party of Canada 2013).

On March 3, 2016, in a speech to the delegates of the Globe conference of clean energy firms and advocates, Trudeau strengthened the pipeline-climate linkage by introducing the argument that new oil pipelines would help finance the clean energy transition, saying, "The choice between pipelines and wind turbines is a false one. We need both to reach our goal, and as we continue to ensure there is a market for our natural resources, our deepening commitment to a cleaner future will be a valuable advantage" (Smith 2016).

That same day, Trudeau met with premiers to discuss the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. The resulting Vancouver Declaration committed the federal government and provinces to "Implement GHG mitigation policies in support of meeting or exceeding Canada's 2030 target of a 30% reduction below 2005 levels of emissions, including specific provincial and territorial targets and objectives."

The Trudeau approach to climate policy was clearly reflected in its wording: “Transition to a low carbon economy by adopting a broad range of domestic measures, including carbon pricing mechanisms, adapted to each province’s and territory’s specific circumstances, in particular the realities of Canada’s Indigenous peoples and Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. The transition also requires that Canada engage internationally” (Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat 2016a).

The first ministers agreed to establish a series of working groups and meet to finalize the plan in fall 2016. The declaration was less explicit about the pipeline-climate linkage. The only reference to that argument is in the clause stating “Recognizing the economic importance of Canada’s energy and resource sectors, and their sustainable development as Canada transitions to a low carbon economy” (Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat 2016a).

This link between pipeline and climate policy couldn’t have been made more clearly than when Prime Minister Trudeau himself announced his government’s approval of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project in November 2016: “And let me say this definitively: We could not have approved this project without the leadership of Premier Notley, and Alberta’s *Climate Leadership Plan*—a plan that commits to pricing carbon and capping oilsands emissions at 100 megatonnes per year” (Trudeau 2016b). Two years later, he was still making that link explicit: “In order to get the national climate change plan—to get Alberta to be part of it, and we need Alberta to be part of it—we agreed to twin an existing pipeline. Yes, they were linked to each other” (Harper 2018).

When British Columbia’s opposition became a significant threat to the project in 2018, Trudeau lashed out at its premier, John Horgan, for threatening to unravel the grand bargain that made the advance in climate policy possible, saying, “John Horgan is actually trying to scuttle our national plan for fighting climate [change]. By blocking the Kinder Morgan pipeline, he’s putting at risk the entire national climate change plan, because Alberta will not be able to stay on if the Kinder Morgan pipeline doesn’t go through” (McSheffrey 2018).

Given the power of the oil industry and its political allies, the victories of the anti-pipeline coalition are impressive. Place-based resistance was effective at delaying pipeline projects and in some cases leading to their outright cancellation. In concert with the media strategy that damaged the brand of Alberta oil, those actions inflicted economic pain on the oil sands industry. When the Alberta and Canadian governments were run by conservative

parties, they retrenched and defied environmental critics. In 2015, they were occupied by more progressive parties, who believed a more strategic approach was to advance climate policy to increase their legitimacy in politics and markets. They forced the government of Alberta to price carbon, paving the way for the government of Canada to enact nationwide carbon pricing. The resistance strategy reduced oil sands production and emissions below what they would have been and eventually forced Canadian governments to adopt stronger climate policies than they would have absent the effects of that resistance strategy.

These victories represent a significant policy shift resulting from a change in the balance of power between the oil sands coalition and the anti-pipeline coalition. Significant policy changes such as this are considered unlikely without “significant perturbations external to the subsystem” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), but, in this case, it was the climate movement’s shift to embracing “keep it in the ground” supply-side strategies that seemed to be the most important force driving the policy change. The climate movement, remarkably, transformed oil sands pipelines to the south, east, and west into lines in the sand on climate and it worked, producing a shift in power and a corresponding shift in policy.

### **The Backlash against the Pipeline Resistance: Revisiting the Oil Sands Regime**

The anti-pipeline coalition unquestionably created a formidable shift in political power in North America and especially north of the forty-ninth parallel. Environmentalists knew that to make progress in reducing the stranglehold the oil sector had on politics and policy, they were going to have to cause them economic pain. They set out to do so by blocking infrastructure, and it worked in getting the attention of the industry and its allies. It shifted policy at the provincial and federal levels.

### **The Rise of a Canadian Petro-Populism**

But the oil sands coalition did not sit idly by. Coalitions are made up of strategic actors that are constantly reassessing their strategies in response to their environment (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Hochstetler 2011). The resistance movement’s rise in power elicited a formidable political counterattack by a political giant caught off guard. When the environmental campaign

against the oil sands emerged around 2005, the initial response of the oil sands coalition was, at first, co-optation of adversaries and dramatically increased investment in public relations and government lobbying (Hoberg and Phillips 2011; Urquhart 2018). When pipeline resistance first started to bite, the oil sands coalition doubled down on these tactics but failed to gain much traction.

By 2015, however, the oil sands coalition realized it needed a new strategy, and it chose to emulate the practices of its adversaries. According to Shane Gunster,

The remarkable success of Indigenous, environmental and local community resistance to pipeline projects (especially Northern Gateway) created a lot of anxiety in the C-suite of the oil and gas industry. Industry groups such as the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) worried that their traditional tools of corporate power—back-door lobbying, influence over corporate media, big-budget ad campaigns—were no longer as effective in shaping political discourse and opinion around oil and gas. Instead (and inspired by similar initiatives by the American Petroleum Institute), they needed to aggressively mobilize those constituencies most likely to support their agenda—oil industry workers, resource dependent communities, conservatives. (Gunster 2019)

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers created “Canada’s Energy Citizens” to recruit ideologically sympathetic Canadians to engage in supporting the industry by attending rallies and speaking out on both mainstream and social media (Wood 2018). Energy Citizen was joined by other social media campaigns supportive of the oil sector, including Oil Sands Action, Oil Respect, and Oil Sands Strong (Gunster 2019). While much of this activity has the characteristics of an “astroturf” campaign of corporate manipulation of putatively populist campaign activities, it has tapped into a deep cultural vein in resource-dependent communities (Gunster et al., 2021). The “petro-nationalism” reached a crescendo during February 2019, when a truck convoy set out from Red Deer, Alberta, to Ottawa to protest the Trudeau government’s carbon tax, proposed environmental assessment reforms, and tanker ban on the north coast of British Columbia. Under the banner of United We Roll, the convoy garnered massive attention from the Canadian media (Blewett 2019).

When Jason Kenney’s United Conservatives trounced Rachel Notley’s New Democrats in the 2019 Alberta election, this movement came into the hall of government power. In his election victory speech, Kenney proclaimed the oil sands coalition had had enough:

But we have been targeted by a foreign funded campaign of special interests seeking to landlock Canadian energy.

This means that we Canadians have become captive to the United States as the only market for Canada's largest export product: our energy. . . .

And now I have a message to those foreign funded special interests who have been leading a campaign of economic sabotage against this great province.

To the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Tides Foundation, Lead Now, the David Suzuki Foundation and all of the others:

Your days of pushing around Albertans with impunity just ended.

We Albertans are patient and fair minded, but we have had enough of your campaign of defamation and double standards. Today, we begin to stand up for ourselves, for our jobs, for our future. Today we begin to fight back. (Kenney 2019)

Implementing a campaign promise, Kenney established a C\$30 million "energy war room" to "respond in real time to the lies and myths told about Alberta's energy industry through paid, earned, and social media" (United Conservative Party 2019). It also went so far as to launch a public inquiry into the "well-funded foreign campaign [that] has defamed Alberta's energy industry and sought to land-lock our oil" (Government of Alberta 2019a).

Kenney's victory strengthened an increasingly conservative political landscape across Canada. Trudeau had lost his most important ally, the Ontario government, when Doug Ford's Conservatives defeated the province's long-ruling Liberal Party. Ford immediately abandoned the province's cap and trade regime, withdrew from the Pan-Canadian Framework, and challenged the constitutionality of the federal carbon pricing backstop. Kenney's victory meant Alberta joined Ontario and the two other prairie provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as a Conservative bulwark from the Ottawa River to the Continental Divide. Like Ford, he dismantled his predecessor's climate policies, withdrew from the Pan-Canadian Framework, and joined the legal fight against the federal climate framework. The inevitable result of this changing political landscape is that Trudeau's much-vaunted climate policy, the core achievement of the pipeline resistance campaign, would be front and center in the 2019 federal election battle.

### **Changing Political Economy**

In addition to the climate policy advances described in the previous section, some extraordinary changes in the governance, or political economy, of the Canadian oil sector also resulted. Relentless resistance to Trans Mountain essentially forced the federal government to nationalize the project. When

the government of Pierre Trudeau created Petro-Canada as a state-owned enterprise in 1975 and enlarged the National Energy Program in 1980, the oil coalition erupted in protest. When the government of Justin Trudeau nationalized a major midstream asset, the oil sands coalition simply cheered. When skyrocketing price differentials, caused in part by pipeline resistance, forced Rachel Notley to curtail oil sands production, the oil sands coalition simply went along with the dramatic extension of state power. These changes did not alter the composition of the oil sands coalition, but they did change the relationship of the private and public sector actors within the coalition. The Trudeau government, at first a reluctant participant in the coalition, had become an owner of a major oil sands asset.

### **Shifting Power Resources for the Anti-pipeline Coalition**

The anti-pipeline coalition has won some vital victories beyond the delays and cancellations of pipelines. Helping to defeat the Harper government created the conditions for Canadian progress on climate policy. Helping John Horgan's NDP win the 2017 election in British Columbia brought them a reliable ally outside Quebec. But at the end of the decade, the anti-pipeline coalition faced the growing petro-populist backlash with shifting political resources at their disposal. For social movements, even a modicum of success can undercut momentum if it demobilizes actors or resources. For the anti-pipeline coalition, their success with Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan and Trudeau's Pan-Canadian Framework meant that support for the resistance movement from the US foundations, which had been so maligned by conservatives, was largely withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>

While the movement lost some financial support, it had a tremendous new resource heading into the October 2019 federal election: a renewed salience in public opinion for climate and environmental issues. As noted in chapter 2, environmental issues spiked in salience in 2007 but then got hammered by the Great Recession and didn't recover through 2015. There were multiple indications that the issue reemerged as top of mind among Canadian voters. An Environics poll in April 2019 put environmental and climate issues as the second most important problem for Canadian voters after the economy (Environics Institute 2019). Trudeau's carbon policies were at the center of the 2019 election campaign, as Andrew Scheer, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, made criticism of Trudeau's carbon tax a centerpiece of its campaign.

The election resulted in a minority Liberal government. Although the Liberal Party of Canada lost its majority in Parliament, the election was a strong repudiation of the Conservatives, who received only 32% of the vote compared to the 39% share received by Trudeau's party. When considering the vote shares of the New Democratic Party and the Green Party, both of whom had stronger climate policy platforms than the Liberals, 63% of Canadian voters chose parties pushing for stronger climate policies (Meyer 2019; *Washington Post* Editorial Board 2019). In December 2020, Trudeau seized on this mandate and announced an ambitious new climate plan that, for the first time, contained credible policy commitments that could meet the nation's 2030 target and establish a path to its newly legislated requirement to attain net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (Jaccard 2020; Environment and Climate Change Canada 2020).

## Conclusion

This chapter has built on the previous four pipeline case study chapters to address the first of this book's four core questions: has the strategy of place-based resistance to fossil fuel development been effective at promoting climate action and the reduction of global warming emissions? This chapter has shown that the anti-pipeline resistance has contributed to the adoption of stronger climate policies. The political backlash that began with Doug Ford's election has threatened this progress, but as of June 2020, the major policy advancements remain in place. Trudeau's Liberal government was reduced to minority status in the fall 2019 election, but overall the salience of the climate issue during the campaign, and the resulting distribution of seats across pro-climate political parties, helped protect the policy progress against the backlash from oil sands supporters.

Chapters 9 and 10 turn to the book's second question: does the place-based resistance strategy against fossil fuels risk the unintended consequence of feeding place-based resistance to the clean energy transformation? This is done in two stages. Chapter 9 examines a "clean energy" megaproject, the Site C Dam in northeastern British Columbia. Then chapter 10 takes a broader look at the resistance to renewable energy projects by examining a variety of cases across North America.

