



PRESS RELEASE
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Canadian doctors call for tobacco-style ban on fossil fuel advertising in Canada
*30+ health organizations, representing over half a million health professionals, urge
federal ban on fossil fuel advertising*

Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, June 8, 2022 – Today, on [Clean Air Day](#), on behalf of 34 Canadian health organizations representing 700,000 health workers across the country, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) releases an [open letter](#) to the Canadian government calling for a ban on fossil fuel advertising. Co-signatories include the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, Pediatric Chairs of Canada, Doctors of BC, Réseau d'action pour la santé durable du Québec, Asthma Canada, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE as well as the Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia public health associations.

In 1988, Canada banned cigarette advertising primarily due to health concerns. The signatories to today's open letter are calling for a ban on fossil fuel ads for similar reasons. "Climate change is a public health crisis. Air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels is already one of the leading causes of premature mortality in Canada," said Dr. Joe Vipond, CAPE President. "Today, fossil fuels threaten the lives of as many people as smoking. To protect the health of people and the planet, we must stop promoting these products and the public must be informed about the dangers to human and environmental health they represent."

Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers, CAPE Board Member, said: "Restricting fossil fuel advertising is a concrete action we can take today to improve the health of people in Canada and address climate change at the same time. Canada already restricts advertising for products, from medication to cannabis to health products. It makes no sense to promote polluting fossil fuels which are damaging people's health and which the world needs to transition away from." The open letter proposes a comprehensive ban on fossil fuel advertising – including ads for gasoline, fossil fuel utilities, and gas-powered vehicles. It also calls for a robust response to tackling misleading environmental claims, and for the disclosure of health risks to the public.

Dr. Melissa Lem, CAPE President-Elect said: “Fossil fuel greenwashing is a massive problem that confuses Canadians and obstructs climate action. Here in British Columbia, where close to 600 people died in the heat dome last year, the gas industry dangles the promise of ‘renewable natural gas’ in ads to convince homeowners to install gas in their homes. However, less than 1% of the fuel mix is ‘renewable’. The rest is fracked gas, which accelerates the climate crisis and harms the health of local communities where it’s extracted. Our health and our planet cannot afford further misinformation.”

The letter endorsed by Canadian health professionals is being released on Clean Air Day, whose theme this year is air quality in a changing climate. A recent [Health Canada report](#) found health impacts from climate change related hazards are already impacting Canadians and the impacts are accelerating. Fossil fuels are also leading sources of both indoor and outdoor air pollution. For example, fossil fuel air pollution kills between [15,000](#) to [34,000](#) Canadians annually. Children who live in homes with gas stoves have a [24-42% increased risk](#) of asthma.

The letter kicks off the [Fossil Fuel Ads Make Us Sick campaign](#) – the first fossil fuel ad-ban campaign in the world led by health professionals. It echoes successful public health campaigns to ban cigarette advertising.

The physician-led campaign is coordinated by CAPE and supported by a broad coalition of health, environmental, parent, and cultural groups. It joins other campaigns around the world targeting fossil fuel ads, which have contributed to successful bans in [Amsterdam](#) and [France](#). Regulators in the [UK](#) and the [Netherlands](#) are addressing [misleading environmental claims](#).

The [Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment \(CAPE\)](#) is a physician-directed non-profit organization working to secure human health by protecting the planet. Since its founding in 1993, CAPE’s work has achieved substantial policy victories in collaboration with many partners in the environmental and health movements. From coast to coast to coast, the organization operates throughout the country with regional committees active in most provinces and all territories.

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Additional quotes:

Vanessa Foran, Asthma Canada President & CEO said: “Canadians with asthma are disproportionately affected by poor air quality. But ALL Canadians deserve to breathe clean air. It is time for a clear-eyed look at the evidence. Fossil fuel advertising fails to disclose known health and environmental hazards. We owe it to the next generation to act on this evidence.”

“Each year, more than [15,000 people in Canada](#) die because of air pollution and thousands more are admitted into hospitals,” said Dr. Francine Lemire, the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). “The College recognizes environmental health is key to the health and well-being of our patients. As such, we are proud to support this initiative and we will work proactively to decrease the harmful effects of fossil fuels on health.”

“Fossil fuels affect those who are least able to protect themselves or have a choice in protecting themselves, including those living in poverty and racialized populations who are most likely to live in areas of increased air pollution related to fossil fuels. It is our collective responsibility to create change at a systemic level, starting with the banning of fossil fuel advertising in Canada.”
– Jacqueline Avanthay-Strus, President, Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment

“Advertising is a powerful medium shaping perceptions and norms. One of the ways we can build a greener, more environmentally friendly future is to promote cleaner energy solutions.”
– Shannon Turner, the Executive Director for the Public Health Association of BC

“Given the availability of safe, clean energy alternatives, there is no longer a need to burn polluting fossil fuels in our homes. We can breathe clean air that doesn't damage our health. We don't believe fossil fuel companies should be able to tell you otherwise. Canadians need the right information to protect their health.”
– Dr. Samantha Green, CAPE Board Member

“As a pediatrician, I am already seeing illness and suffering in children as a direct result of air pollution and climate change. A mother told me that when she spoke to her 14 year old daughter about climate change, her daughter said ‘you grew up being told you could do anything; we are growing up being told the world is on fire.’ The time to write a new and healthier future is now.”
– Dr. Anna Gunz, CAPE-Ontario Pediatrician

“A ban on advertising fuelling climate pollution is an easy win for regulators and an opportunity for Canada to become a global climate leader.”
– Dr. Leah Temper, Director, Fossil Fuel Ad-ban campaign, CAPE

Health and climate change quick facts:

- Fossil fuel air pollution is responsible for **8.7 million deaths** per year worldwide. That's 1 in 5 deaths globally and 1 in 7 premature deaths in Canada.
- According to the Lancet, rapid warming in Canada led to a **58.4% increase** in average annual heat-related mortality for the over 65 population from 2014-2018 compared to 2000-2004.
- **86% of Canadians** live in areas where air pollution exceeds the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization.
- The 2021 “heat dome” caused **569 heat-related deaths** in British Columbia in a single week. Heat-related hospitalization rates are projected to **increase at least 21%** by 2050.
- The incidence of **Lyme disease from warming temperatures has increased 10 times** from 2009-2018, and is projected to rise another 6 times by 2050 in Canada.
- Transportation-related air pollution **increases the risk of COVID-19-related illness and death**.
- **Gas appliances are the main source of NO₂**, a highly reactive gas that causes respiratory tract damage and chronic lung disease. Health Canada has found that most Canadian gas stoves exceed their long-term indoor guidelines for NO₂ exposure and recommends preferentially using back burners only with your fan at a higher setting.