

# Backgrounder

## **Greenpeace launches complaint against Pathways Alliance to the Competition Bureau**

### **Overview:**

The Pathways Alliance is a coalition formed in 2021 by the six largest oil sands producers: Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Cenovus Energy, ConocoPhillips Canada, Imperial, MEG Energy, and Suncor Energy. Collectively, these companies operate about 95 per cent of Canada's oil sands production<sup>1</sup> and are responsible for roughly 2.7 million barrels per day of oil production — about 63 per cent of Canada's total. The Alliance's stated goals are “reduc[ing] annual oil sands emissions to net zero by 2050” and “helping Canada achieve its climate change goals.”<sup>2</sup> In order to do so, they are betting on carbon capture and storage technologies which have been proven to be [inefficient and costly](#).

Greenpeace [is asking](#) the Competition Bureau of Canada to investigate the Pathways Alliance for false and misleading representations to the Canadian public with their “Let's clear the air” advertising campaign. Evidence gathered by Greenpeace and others highlights that the Pathways Alliance is using the ad campaign to influence federal regulation and convince the public to support the continued operation of oil sands into the future.

### **Key Points:**

1. Pathways companies claim to be “making clear strides toward net zero”<sup>3</sup> while they continue to expand their fossil fuel production. In 2022, five of the six companies collectively produced a record average [3.2 million barrels of crude oil per day](#). Last year's record is expected to be [surpassed this year](#). Future oil sands production is projected to grow anywhere from [half a million](#) to [more than 1 million](#) barrels per day over the next decade.
2. The Pathways Alliance justifies their fossil fuel expansion by saying they will invest billions of dollars in carbon capture and storage,<sup>4</sup> despite uncertainty around the [efficacy](#), [reliability](#) and [cost](#) of the technology.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pathwaysalliance.ca/who-we-are/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pathwaysalliance.ca/our-goal/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://pathwaysalliance.ca/cleartheair/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/oilsands-group-pledges-to-spend-16-5b-on-carbon-capture-project-by-2030-1.1832631>

3. The Pathways Alliance spent heavily on its “Let’s clear the air” ad campaign to paint the coalition as a climate leader, yet fails to meet its own climate commitments.
  - a. They ran television ads during the FIFA World Cup<sup>5</sup>, the Australian Open<sup>6</sup>, and the 2023 Super Bowl,<sup>7</sup> and in the 90 days from Oct 27, 2022 to January 2023, they spent \$325,025 on Facebook and Instagram (Meta) advertisements, which was Meta’s third highest ad buy in Canada during that period.<sup>8</sup>
  - b. [More than 80 per cent](#) of their emissions are unaccounted for in their “net-zero” plan. These emissions (Scope 3) come from the use (burning) of their fossil fuel products. But even without a full emissions accounting, their calculations do not result in them achieving net zero. The Canadian government estimates that the oil sands are responsible for 81 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year (scopes 1 and 2).<sup>9</sup> Given that the six member companies together account for 95% of oil sands production,<sup>10</sup> it would require roughly 77 Mt<sup>11</sup> reduction to achieve net zero from scopes 1 and 2 alone.
4. Individually and through industry affiliations, Pathways members have advocated, advertised, and/or spoken against climate action in Canada.
  - a. In 2022, Pathways lobbied the federal government 162 times, or three out of every five working days.<sup>12</sup> CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers of which the Pathways Alliance comprises 75 percent of the core budget,<sup>13</sup> lobbied the federal government more than once every working day that same year.<sup>14</sup>
  - b. At least four of the Pathways companies (Suncor, CNRL, Cenovus, and Imperial) as well as CAPP, have been [opposing](#) emissions regulations and advocating for fossil fuel expansion and subsidies.

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<sup>5</sup> Data compiled from CRTC logs for November 2022, December 2022 and January 2023 for TSN, TSN 1, TSN 2, TSN 3, and TSN 5. Logs accessed at: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/800106c1-0b08-401e-8be2-ac45d62e662e>

<sup>6</sup> Accessed via CRTC logs for January 2023

<sup>7</sup> Note that CRTC data covering February when the Super Bowl aired was not available at the time of writing, but numerous eye witnesses reported seeing the ad.

<sup>8</sup> Meta ad library. Spend in last 90-days. Accessed Jan 27, 2023. They were third following YouTube (#1) and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (#2).

<sup>9</sup> Canada. GHG Inventory. National Inventory Report. 2022 Edition. Part 1. Table 2-12. Page 67.

<sup>10</sup> Pathways Alliance website. Accessed Feb 13, 2023 at <https://pathwaysalliance.ca/>

<sup>11</sup> 95% of 81 Mt, rounded.

<sup>12</sup> Data compiled from the Government of Canada. Lobby Registry. <http://lobbycanada.gc.ca/>

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 5.2 for this calculation.

<sup>14</sup> Data compiled from the Government of Canada. Lobby Registry. <http://lobbycanada.gc.ca/>

**Minimum Proposed Penalties if the Pathways Alliance is found have made false and misleading claims:**

1. Remove all claims of “net zero”, “sustainable”, or related terms from their public communications.
2. Issue a retraction of these claims.
3. Pay a fine that is the greater of \$10 million or 3% of worldwide gross revenues, credited to the Environmental Damages Fund and to be paid to organisations, preferably Indigenous-led, for rehabilitation/clean up of oil sands pollution.

**For more information, please contact:**

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