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U OF OIL:

AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
INTO uOttawa's
CONNECTION TO THE FOSSIL
FUEL INDUSTRY



Land Acknowledgement

This report was researched and written by students of the University of Ottawa, which was built on stolen land of the Algonquin people. The Algonquin are traditional guardians of this land, and we acknowledge the violent colonization, displacement from traditional territories, and genocide disrupting this community and others across Turtle Island.

We affirm the need for decolonization and recognize its intertwinement with the climate justice we aim to bring with this report. This report is being published in a time of precarity for land across Turtle Island, with the funding of pipelines to funnel oil and gas out of the earth, running through Indigenous land and disrupting the environment. This disruption is conducted for the plunder of resources that benefit a minority, and disrupts inherent connections to the land, and as a consequence, ways of life.

We seek to hold the colonial institution that is the University of Ottawa accountable to all students, including Indigenous students, and do our part to ensure present and subsequent generations have a future to look forward to.

Positionality Statements

Grace Jeffries (they/she) is a white-settler, nonbinary person who grew up in Canada, currently writing, researching and living in Algonquin Anishnabee territories. They recently graduated with an Honours Bachelors in Social science, majoring in Political science and Environmental studies from the University of Ottawa. She contributed to this report using her background in environmental politics and as a climate justice advocate. With acknowledgement to the systems that allow their unearned privilege, Grace contributed to this report with a commitment to understanding the roots of decolonized research and centering the importance of considering Indigenist and decolonising perspectives in her work.

Sophia Arellano (she/her) is a second-generation Filipina-Canadian originating from Treaty 13 Land, otherwise known as Toronto. She is an undergraduate studying Environmental and Indigenous Studies who researched and wrote this report while residing on Algonquin and Anishinabe territories. Sophia's educational background and lived experience as a youth hailing from a community affected by climate change inform her commitment to climate justice through her activism. At the time of the writing and publication of this report, she is a staff member at the Sustainable Development Centre.

Adriana Calderon Hernandez is a Latina youth climate activist from Mexico, she currently lives in so-called Canada, and is building a campaign to involve the Latin American diasporas in the climate movement in the country, she was one of the young people who sued Mexican Petroleum

PEMEX. She is currently an undergraduate student working at the intersection of climate and gender in a diverse number of collectives both in Latin America and Canada.

Atiya Jeun (they/any) is a Chinese-Thai, non-binary person residing in the traditional territories of both the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Algonquin Anishnaabe. They are currently an undergraduate student, majoring in Feminist and Gender Studies and Political Science. As a second-generation immigrant raised in the imperial core, Atiya utilizes an intersectional approach to understanding climate justice, decolonial action, and systemic liberation.

Solidarity Statement

This report is one piece of a growing movement in Canada and around the world in support of divestment from oil and gas. Divestment is a climate justice, rights-based issue this report aims to highlight, to expose the consequences of climate change on student and faculty health and wellbeing, not just for present generations but future ones. While the primary audience of this report is students and staff at the University of Ottawa, we also create it in solidarity with students across the various campuses of Turtle Island and around the world fighting the same fight.

Acknowledgements

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The majority of research for this project was conducted by a team of four undergraduate research students. Thank you to the following students for your dedication and work to bring this project to life: Makenze Blackburn, Alicia Breese, Leyla Djevdet, and Piper Maheral.

Executive Summary

Universities in Canada have a longstanding history of collaboration with actors in the fossil fuel industry. As this report will detail, the University of Ottawa has accepted funding from, collaborated with, and done work to promote the fossil fuel industry. This is a competing interest issue, where the industry influences decision-making and policy interests, which has trickle-down effects on students and staff, and repercussions for our planet. This report will identify ties between the University and the fossil fuel industry, and articulate how these violate the University's commitments to sustainability. This work is inspired by the growing national movement of students for fossil fuel divestment.

The findings of this report are separated into 5 key sections. In the section covering Direct Monetary Donations, we break down how over **\$27 million** in funding from fossil fuel extractors, enablers and legitimators has been accepted by the University since 2004. In the Research Funding section, we uncovered that over **243** research articles published by the University of Ottawa between 2004 and 2026 are funded by fossil fuel related organizations and institutions. In sections on Faculty and Leadership Positions in the University administration, we uncovered that **21%** of leadership at the University, and that professorships across over **3** faculties, are implicated with the fossil fuel industry. We explain why this is a gross conflict of interest through key case studies. In sections on Student Recruitment and Enrichment programs, and Events, we explore how greenwashing enables the industry's presence on campus and direct contact with students. It was found that the fossil fuel industry was **present in student clubs, events, leadership programs, alumni programs, and more.**

This information is also organized into chart form when examining how many of the Top 50 extractors, enablers, and legitimizers in Canada have a presence on campus, a Top 50 list designed by the Corporate Mapping Project. Through these projections, it is revealed that **56%** of the Top 50 have a presence on the University of Ottawa campus.

Based on the findings in this report, we recommend that the University administration take immediate action to address the climate crisis and therefore their complicity through association with fossil fuels. We encourage a cutting of ties with various fossil fuel financiers and a public re-evaluation of research funding, faculty and project sponsorships, events, and more to ensure our campus is fossil-free. By documenting the history of the fossil fuel industry's presence on campus, we aim to encourage more transparency, accountability, and commitment to environmental justice within the University of Ottawa.

Introduction

Climate Change

Human induced [climate change](#), or the gradual warming of the planet, is an undeniable, growing force.¹ Since the [1800s](#), human activity has been the documented driver of this warming. Anthropogenic global warming has largely been the result of the burning of fossil fuels including coal, oil, and gas. As a result, health and weather crises have been exacerbated.² Communities across Canada have long suffered and experienced the impacts of climate change, for example the recent heatwaves across Southern Ontario,³ and the [Heatdome catastrophe](#) in British Columbia in 2020.⁴ As the climate crisis worsens, scientific experts expect to see more of these phenomena.⁵

Despite these challenges, systemic usage of fossil fuels is still very common. Fossil fuels are burned to provide energy for transportation, industrial production, to power buildings, agricultural processes, and more. These activities emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, trapping heat from the sun and making Earth's temperature rise. According to the United Nations, the Earth is about [1.44°C](#) warmer than it was in the pre-industrial era. Under the [Paris Agreement in 2015](#), world leaders set a goal to ensure warming does not exceed more than 1.5°C.⁶

Currently, Canada is the [11th](#) highest emitter of CO₂.⁷ The current policies and actions by the Canadian Government are ranked as [highly insufficient](#),⁸ and more action is needed to meet expectations under the Paris Agreement. Canada's largest source of emissions comes from oil and fossil gas production, and the electricity generated from fossil gas has only increased over the last five years.⁹

¹ IPCC. (2022). *Chapter 1: Point of departure and key concepts*. Wwww.ipcc.Ch.
<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/chapter-1/>

² United Nations. (n.d.). *Climate Change*. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/climate-change>

³ Brown, D., & Dayal, P. (2026, June 29). It could feel like 42 C as heatwave blankets southern Ontario this week. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/orange-level-heat-warning-june-29-9.7252333>

⁴ Dickson, C. (2026, June 27). 5 years ago, B.C. was trapped under a heat dome. Here's how it all played out. CBC.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/2021-bc-heat-dome-look-back-five-years-later-9.7246604>

⁵ IPCC. (2022). Chapter 1: Point of departure and key concepts. Wwww.ipcc.Ch.
<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/chapter-1/>

⁶ United Nations. (2025). *Climate change*. United Nations.
<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/climate-change>

⁷ Climate Watch. (2021). Global Historical Emissions.
https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions?end_year=2023&start_year=1990

⁸ Climate Action Tracker. (2025, November 3) Country Summary: Canada.
<https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/canada/>

⁹ Heck, Gonzales-Zuniga., Missirliu, & Hoppe (2026, April 23). Fossil fuel phase-out: How are governments doing? *Climate Action Tracker*.

Extractors, Enablers, and Legitimizers

More recently, climate scientists and policymakers have called for targeted agreements on fossil fuel usage. The fossil fuel phase-out movement is steadily growing, but not without its critics - most notably, the fossil fuel industry itself. In Canada, the fossil fuel industry is a strong lobbyist force to the federal government. Research from the [Canadian Political Science Review](#) revealed that between January of 2011 and 2018, federal MPs met with 11,452 lobbying contacts in the industry, averaging to 6 contacts per workday.¹⁰ In Environmental Defence's overview of Oil and Gas lobbying in 2024, they found that on top of lobbying MPs, public services (including Natural Resources Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Privy Council Office) also took upwards of 986 meetings with fossil fuel [lobbyists](#).¹¹ The industry's influence on the government is clear through recent announcements from Prime Minister Mark Carney, including news of the development of a new pipeline partnership between the Governments of Canada and Alberta, which was met with public outcry and disapproval across Canada.¹²

More relevant to the university setting is the role of banks and other entities that, by funding fossil fuel extraction, enable and legitimise the industry. The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), Toronto Dominion Bank (TD) and Scotiabank are some of the biggest banks in Canada, who are also some of the world's largest backers of new oil and gas projects. RBC is one of the biggest fossil fuel financiers in the world, providing over [\\$173.4 billion](#).¹³ These entities have a large presence on campus through student life, research funding, and more - which this report seeks to expose.

In the face of belligerence by this industry, world leaders, policymakers, and civil society call for climate action specifically targeting fossil fuel divestment. To some, this may look like a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, with goals of phasing out fossil fuel usage, ending expansion of the industry, and adopting a just [transition](#).¹⁴ Cities around the world have signed onto endorsing this treaty, including Ottawa in July of 2022, and Gatineau in October of [2022](#).¹⁵ This shows the

¹⁰ Graham, Carroll & Chen (2020) Carbon Capital's Political Reach. *Canadian Political Science Review* Vol. 14, No. 1

¹¹ Belliveau, E. (2025, March). Big Oil's lobbying playbook: A summary of Big Oil's 2024 federal lobbying. *Environmental Defence*

¹² Canada and Alberta advance west coast pipeline project proposal and Pathways Project Carbon Capture Initiative – to build a stronger, more resilient Canadian economy. (2026). Prime Minister of Canada.

<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2026/07/02/canada-and-alberta-advance-west-coast-pipeline-project-proposal-and>

¹³ Banking on Climate Chaos Coalition. (2026, June). Banking on climate chaos: Fossil fuel finance report 2026

¹⁴ Newell, Asselt, & Daley (2022, December). Building a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty: Key elements. *Earth Systems Governance, Volume 14, 100159*

¹⁵ Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative. (2026). Fossil Fuel Treaty.org. <https://www.fossilfueltreaty.org/endorsements>

importance of this issue on the local level - an importance that this report affirms should be maintained by the University of Ottawa.

Perspectives on the University of Ottawa

The [University of Ottawa](#) (or the University of Ottawa) is the largest French-English bilingual university in the world.¹⁶ Founded originally as the College of Bytown in 1848 and eventually granted university status in [1866](#).¹⁷ It is located in the heart of downtown Ottawa, the capital of Canada, and overseen by a Board of Governors.¹⁸

The University has made countless promises, signed onto various pledges, and entered into commitments and plans for reducing its impact. In February of 2022 the University announced its plan to divest from all direct equity fossil fuel holdings by 2023, and all indirect equity fossil fuel holdings by 2030. A timeline of these commitments is available below:

- **November 2015:** the University of Ottawa became the first Canadian university to commit to publicly disclosing the carbon footprint of its portfolio after signing the [Montreal Carbon Pledge](#).¹⁹
- **April 2016:** The Board of Governors approved [Addressing Global Warming: The the University of Ottawa Response Strategy](#).²⁰
- **June 2020:** the University of Ottawa joined 15 other universities in signing the [“Investing to Address Climate Change” Charter](#).²¹
- **February 2022:** the University of Ottawa released its [plan](#) to divest direct equity fossil fuel holdings by 2023 and all indirect by 2030.²²
- **May 2023:** the University of Ottawa becomes the first university to sign onto the United Nation’s [Principles for Responsible Investment](#) (PRI).²³
- **2023:** No clear updates regarding their 2022 divestment plan.
- **2024:** Release of the 2024 [President’s Report on Climate Change](#). The report does not document any specific actions taken regarding their commitments to divest from fossil

¹⁶ University of Ottawa. (n.d.). Quick facts.

¹⁷ M. Cameron (1866) Statutes of the Province of Canada passed in the session ... being the fifth session of the eighth Parliament of Canada : 1866. *Library and Archives Canada, Government Publications*

¹⁸ Thériault, S. (2022). *Leadership and governance | About us*. About Us. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/about-us/leadership-governance>

¹⁹ the University of Ottawa becomes first Canadian university to sign global carbon pledge - Media releases and announcements | University of Ottawa. (2015, November 13). the University of Ottawa News. <https://perma.cc/CR7E-ADNC>

²⁰ Addressing Global Warming | About us. (2016). About Us. <https://perma.cc/FE7E-X9L8>

²¹ A Climate Charter for Canadian Universities. (2020). Utoronto.Ca. <https://climatecharter.utoronto.ca/>.

²² *The University of Ottawa Divests from Fossil Fuel Holdings | About us*. (2022). About Us. <https://perma.cc/4XN5-ZJA5>

²³ Responsible Investment Guidelines (Approved by the Finance and Treasury Committee, May 31, 2023). (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://perma.cc/9QTJ-8YE7>

fuels since they were published in 2022. No reports have come out since, marking over four years with no clear action taken.²⁴

As is evident through this timeline, the University of Ottawa has publicly engaged with the climate crisis, voluntarily signing onto internationally recognized climate and responsible investment pledges and making public announcements about their mitigation and adaptation commitments. The University's commitment to divest from all fossil fuels in direct equity holdings by 2023 was a monumental action for climate change on the University of Ottawa campus. However, they have no public accountability process in place that is holding them to these commitments, and as such the University community is left in the dark as to their divestment progress. They created the 2023 deadline on their own accord, and yet have failed to meet this commitment.

The Report

Considering the increasing rate and intensity of climate change-associated problems, and the culpability of the fossil fuel industry in this issue, we, concerned students of the University of Ottawa, wrote this report to expose how ties to the fossil fuel industry violate the University's commitments to sustainability, and endanger the health and wellbeing of students. By documenting the fossil fuel industry's presence on campus, we aim to encourage transparency, accountability, and commitment to environmental justice within the University of Ottawa.

Universities across Canada have a long [history](#) of complacency with fossil fuel funding; through ongoing support for continued extraction, accepting donations, and propagating the industry through academic research.²⁵ But student outcry and demands for divestment are also fruitful across Canada. We are preceded by a number of student-led and faculty campaigns in so-called Canada, including the University of Victoria's Corporate Mapping Project,²⁶ the Divest UBC Campaign,²⁷ and Fossil Fuels Out of Toronto.²⁸ These movements demonstrate the success of collective student power.

As this report will detail, the University of Ottawa has accepted funding from, collaborated with, and done work to promote the fossil fuel industry. This represents a competing interest issue, where the industry influences decision-making, which has trickle-down effects on students and staff, on research and policy developed through university institutions, and repercussions for our planet.

²⁴ *Climate Report*. (n.d.). Retrieved September 3, 2026, from <https://perma.cc/9Q9C-3SRD>.

²⁵ Lowan, E. (2022, January 7). The future of university divestment campaigns: Reflections from inside the movement. CCPA. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/universities-divest/>

²⁶ Corporate Mapping Project. (2016, June 21). Corporate Mapping Project. <https://www.corporatemapping.ca/>

²⁷ UBC DIVEST. (2026, March 4). UBC DIVEST! Ubcdinvest.Org. <https://ubcdinvest.org/>

²⁸ climatejusticeuoft Official: X | Linktree. (2022, September 6). Linktree. <https://tr.ee/t38ZcrFDVA>

It must also be acknowledged that the University of Ottawa holds relationships, distributes funding to, and accepts funding from, other climate-worsening institutions, including mining companies, arms and weapon suppliers and manufacturers; and false solution amplifiers such as nuclear energy, biofuel, and carbon capture. Maintaining a 'business as usual' approach ties academic institutions to fossil fuels, as university boards, endowments, and research projects remain deeply dependent on traditional financial networks.

University of Ottawa's ties to these institutions have profound effects on their student body, with specific intersectional and compounding effects on racialized and Indigenous students. The University's recently released '[Indigenous Action Plan](#)' outlines their commitment to respecting and uplifting Indigenous student needs and voices to recognize the colonial impacts of the University on local Indigenous communities.²⁹ Indigenous peoples in Canada feel the effects of climate change in [significant ways](#) as the changing climate affects their hunting, fishing, ceremonial, and traditional lifestyle practices.³⁰ Indigenous communities also often face more economic and resource barriers, such as access to health and education due to historical and contemporary acts of colonial violence, and as such are likely to be ill-equipped in the face of climate or weather emergencies. Within the Indigenous Action Plan report, the University neglects to mention climatic or environmental impacts on Indigenous students and provides no plan to address the potential needs of students amidst the climate crisis, nor do they accept any responsibility or commit to making changes to alleviate their impact in the crisis.

As students concerned by the impacts of our University, we call on the University to abide by and commit further to implementing adaptation, mitigation and divestment into their internal policy and decision making structures. We believe that any and all systemic and bold contributions count towards the advancement of divestment within university institutions. The [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#)³¹ highlighted university-level fossil fuel campaigns to have transformative potential in the world of environmental advocacy, and it has been reported that fossil fuel institutions have been [closely monitoring these movements](#).³² The University of Ottawa has a unique opportunity to create the knowledge and exemplify the leadership that is needed to initiate the just transition away from fossil fuels.

²⁹ Indigenous action plan. (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://perma.cc/E28U-LMPW>

³⁰ Indigenous Climate Hub. (2024). Effects on Indigenous Communities. Indigenous Climate Hub. <https://indigenousclimatehub.ca/effects-on-indigenous-communities/>

³¹ Lowan, E. (2022, January 7). The future of university divestment campaigns: Reflections from inside the movement. CCPA. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/universities-divest/>

³² Mandel, C. (2016, April 27). How Big Oil seeps into Canadian academia. Canada's National Observer. <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/04/27/news/how-big-oil-seeps-canadian-academia>

We hope that students, faculty and administration members of the University reading this report will take our findings and recommendations, and work towards systemic change and accountability.

List of definitions

Below is a list of key definitions to guide understanding of the report. We encourage readers to come back to this list while reading should there be any confusion about language used.

- **Fossil Fuel Divestment:** Removal of investment capital from stocks, bonds, or funds within the fossil fuel industry. This is a growing movement to terminate all investments in companies that generate revenue from the extraction, transport, or processing of oil, gas, and coal.³³
- **Greenwashing:** Greenwashing gives the false impression of real climate action without meaningful participation. In the context of fossil fuel divestment, greenwashing refers to institutions, universities, or corporations publicly pledging to divest from fossil fuels while using loopholes, vague definitions, or misleading marketing to continue to invest in and support oil, gas, and coal industries. Institutions often participate in greenwashing to signal progressive values while continuing profitable but extractive practices.³⁴
- **Fossil Fuels:** Sources of energy generated from decayed plants and animals in the forms of coal, oil and fracked natural gas. These are mined and burned to produce energy through anthropogenic processes speeding up global warming.³⁵
- **Fossil Fuel Industry:** All of the companies, businesses, lobbying offices and institutions responsible for drilling, mining, burning, transporting, refining and distributing fossil fuels.³⁶
- **False solutions:** Distractors from real climate action such as delayers and too costly “solutions” created to stop global warming. This includes Geoengineering, Industrial Carbon Capture and Sequestration, Biofuels, Hydraulic Fracturing, Carbon Offsets, Solar Radiation, Nuclear Energy, among others. False Solutions maintain our reliance on non-renewable energy, and are used to justify the continued extraction of fossil fuels, working only to enable and offset the effects of the extractive model, maintaining a business as usual model and continuing the reliance on oil and gas exploration and extraction.³⁷

³³ Howard, E. (2015, June 23). A beginner's guide to fossil fuel divestment. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/23/a-beginners-guide-to-fossil-fuel-divestment>

³⁴ United Nations. (2025). Greenwashing – the Deceptive Tactics behind Environmental Claims. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/greenwashing>

³⁵ Smithsonian. (2021). What Are Fossil Fuels? | Smithsonian Ocean. Ocean.Si.Edu; Smithsonian. <https://ocean.si.edu/conservation/gulf-oil-spill/what-are-fossil-fuels>

³⁶ A Beginner's Guide to Fossil Fuels and the Climate Crisis | Seventh Generation. (n.d.).

Www.Seventhgeneration.Com. Retrieved September 14, 2026, from

<https://www.seventhgeneration.com/blog/beginners-guide-fossil-fuels-climate-crisis>

³⁷ False Solutions | One Earth. (2025, November 14). One Earth.

<https://www.oneearth.org/category/false-solutions/>

- **Fossil Fuel Legitimizers:** Organizations that persuade stakeholders that business as usual must continue and that an urgent shift is unfeasible or unnecessary. Includes think tanks, lobby groups, business councils and pro-oil advocacy groups.³⁸
- **Fossil Fuel Extractors:** Corporations directly involved in extracting, processing, emitting, and selling oil, natural gas and/or coal.³⁹
- **Fossil Fuel Enablers:** Organizations that enable fossil fuel production and transportation, such as banks, railways, insurance companies, legal and consulting firms, construction companies, and industry-friendly regulators.⁴⁰
- **Just Transition:** Vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. “Greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.” (International Labor Organization).⁴¹
- **Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors is the governing body responsible for the University's overall governance and management. The Board makes the financial decisions and implements the policies and procedures that the University needs to operate efficiently.⁴²

Methodology

Research Design

The main goal of this research was to find an answer to the question: **Is the University of Ottawa on track to meet its 2022 commitments to divest from fossil fuels, and if not, why?** We used a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research to answer this question and achieve our main research goals, which were to:

1. **Determine** through direct monetary donations, research funding, and event, student, and staff sponsorships, how much money the University of Ottawa accepts from fossil fuel extractors, enablers and legitimizers.
2. **Assess** whether the University of Ottawa is on track to meet their divestment and decarbonization goals according to their climate change plan.⁴³

³⁸ Fossil- Power Top 50. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from https://www.corporatemapping.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Fossil-Power_Top50.pdf

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Climate Justice Alliance. (2018). Just Transition - Climate Justice Alliance. Climate Justice Alliance. <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/>

⁴² Board of Governors | About us. (2026). About Us. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/about-us/leadership-governance/board-governors>

⁴³ Action in the Face of a Climate Crisis. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://perma.cc/YW4N-PETH>

3. **Describe** how false solutions are weaponized by the University of Ottawa to delay fossil fuel divestment and disassociation efforts.
4. **Determine** what the University of Ottawa must do to uphold all agreements and pledges it has signed on to between 2015 and 2026.

To do this, we focused on quantitative, secondary, numerical, and empirical data from the University of Ottawa through policy reports, publicly available investment information, and donation or grant approvals to determine the amount of funding the University receives and invests in fossil fuels. We also combed through secondary qualitative data using case studies, media reports, government reports and journal articles, to understand the nuances and social justice related aspects of the University's connections to the climate emergency.

Using a mixed method research design was the optimal choice for our research question because the research is focused on a social justice issue that requires secondary socially constructed data like news sources, case studies, and policy documents as well as empirical and numerical data to understand the gravity of the questions being answered. Using both qualitative and quantitative secondary data, we are able to highlight pressing issues and use evidence based scientific data to back up our perspectives.

Data Sample and Collection

We chose to include data from the years 2004 to 2025 based on the data most readily available to us given the reporting strategy of the University, and the availability of internet accessible public information. We found the most consistent data within the timeframe of 2004 to 2025. We excluded data outside of this time frame because the scope of data was insufficient to accurately form conclusions with.

We also made a deliberate choice to collect data with a decolonial framework. Whenever possible, we employed sources from climate justice focused organizations and activists who actively promote social justice principles and stray from colonial-based research activities. That said, given that we researched an institution engaging in colonial activity and research, we were at times forced to use government databases, university websites, and to reference traditional scientific research papers in certain aspects of the report for specific data collection needs.

To collect data, we mined through various sources of secondary data including available University of Ottawa policy reports and funding disclosures; news reports and press releases about and from the University; official government websites and news releases; and research conducted by other climate justice organizations and activists. A specific data set used throughout this project was the Corporate Mapping Project's [Fossil-Power Top 50](#) list, which

highlights companies and institutions in Canada which are heavily connected to the fossil fuel industry.⁴⁴

We also used two research database platforms, the Web of Science research Database²⁴ and the National Science and Engineering Research Council Research Awards Database.²⁵ We used various search strings within these databases to uncover connections between research funding from fossil fuel companies and research projects supported by the University of Ottawa (Tables 1 & 2). For the NSERC research database,²⁵ specific core words and subtopics were used within the search string to additionally identify any false solutions research that the University engaged with. Using the Web of Science research database, we cross-referenced the University of Ottawa as the affiliated researcher with the [Fossil-Power Top 50](#) list to identify research funding connections between top Canadian fossil fuel related companies and the University of Ottawa.⁴⁵

Table 1: Search String Method for Web of Science database

Affiliation	Year Published	Funding Agency		
University of Ottawa	2002-2025	Cenovus	TD Bank	Scotiabank
		CNOOC	Toronto-Dominion Bank Canadian	University of Calgary
		Enbridge	RBC	Canadian Gas Association
		Encana	Royal Bank of Canada	Canadian Energy Pipeline Association
		Husky Energy	Imperial Bank of Commerce	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
		TransCanada	CIBC	Canada West Foundation
		Teck Resources	BC Oil and Gas Commission	Bank of Montreal
		Shell	Imperial Oil	Alberta Energy Regulator

⁴⁴ Fossil- Power Top 50. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from https://www.corporatemapping.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Fossil-Power_Top50.pdf

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Note: Web of Science (n.d.) Scientific Research Database <https://access.clarivate.com/>

Table 2: Search String Method for NSERC database

Key Syntax	Date Range	Core Words	Sub Topics
Institution Type <i>Universities > University of Ottawa</i>	2004-2025	Atmospheric Chemistry	Atmospheric Science
		Chemical Engineering	- Combustion - Heat Transfer - Reaction fundamentals and Reaction Design
		Earth Science	- Economic Geology - Environmental Geology - Petroleum Geology - Petrology, igneous, and metamorphic geology - Sedimentary petrology, diagnosis
		Environmental Engineering	- Air and noise pollution - Environmental Engineering - Solid Waste Management
		Fuel and Energy Technology	- Fuel and energy technology - Other sources of energy - Petroleum engineering, oil and gas recovery - Petroleum based fossil fuels
		Mining and mineral processing	- Mineral processing - Mining and mineral processing - Mining engineering
		Nuclear engineering	- Nuclear engineering - Radioactive materials - Reactor design and operation

Note: Government of Canada. (n.d). NSERC's Awards Database.
<https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/awards-database>

Data Analysis

This research was approached through a re-analysis framework using pre-existing secondary data (such as the University's climate commitments) and comparing them to existing relevant research and facts (such as the University's accepted research donations). After gathering all data from our chosen secondary sources, we analyzed financial aspects, adding up all investment ties we could find between the University and fossil fuel companies. We employed cross-validation efforts using data from multiple sources to determine how robust the University's financial ties were to the fossil fuel industry.

Additionally, we used a set of definitions derived from the University of Toronto's [Bound to Big Oil Report](#)⁴⁶ and the Corporate Mapping Project's [Fossil-Power Top 50 List](#)⁴⁷, to identify three categories of ties to the fossil fuel industry to guide our report. These categories are: Extractor, Enabler, and Legitimator, and used throughout our analysis to determine the profundity of connection with each set of data, and levels of connection one may have to the fossil fuel industry outside of oil and gas extraction.

Limitations

The biggest limitation to this research was the lack of publicly available investment information provided by the University of Ottawa. We consistently struggled to identify which fossil fuel companies the University of Ottawa is invested in, and outside of a freedom of information request, it appears this data is not available to the public. As such, the estimates, numbers, and data we present in this report are calculations based solely on secondary data sources we retrieved through public internet searches and databases. It is likely that the University has many more financial and institutional ties to the fossil fuel industry.

Findings

(1) Direct Monetary Donations

The University of Ottawa engages with fossil fuel extractors, enablers, and legitimators by accepting donations and direct investments for University services, research, and infrastructures. These donations are powerful tools for the fossil fuel industry to push their agendas and projects to University executives, boards, and researchers. This section focuses on specific donations that were given to the University of Ottawa between 2004 and 2025. The total amount of direct

⁴⁶ University of Toronto Bound to Big Oil Report (2024).

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tHaYgQualOoE9z6yNcMxASwQJlhhEqDX/view?usp=sharing>

⁴⁷ Fossil- Power Top 50. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from

https://www.corporatemapping.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Fossil-Power_Top50.pdf

monetary donations from fossil fuel enablers, legitimators and extractors, is **\$27,475,592 CAD** (Table 3).

Because the University of Ottawa does not publicly disclose funding or donation amounts, these findings likely do not represent the entirety of donations given to the University. While we do not have access to direct funding numbers, there is evidence tying non-specific funding amounts from fossil fuel companies to research grants, fellowships, professorships, scholarships, event sponsorships, and faculty endowments across our campus (as highlighted in the sections to follow).

The Big 5 Banks - Enablers

Canada's Big 5 Banks⁴⁸ (RBC, TD, Scotia Bank, CIBC, and BMO) account for over 60% of donations made to the University between 2004-2025. They are fossil fuel enablers both providing funding for and investing in oil and gas production nationally and internationally. These banks have contributed to over [\\$1 trillion](#)⁴⁹ in fossil financing since the signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

RBC has specifically been flagged as the number one financier of fossil fuels in Canada, and thus their 40 year financial partnership with the University warrants concern. Since 2004, RBC has publicly invested \$4 million in the University through various initiatives (Table 3) including investments in the University's Career Corner, events such as Career Week. The most recent donation was given to Telfer's Green Academy, a [\\$2 million donation](#) to help fund "green innovation" within the University of Ottawa business school community.⁵⁰ The donation was heavily contested by students, including Climate Justice Climatique University of Ottawa, who highlighted the donation as greenwashing.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Rijk et al. (2021, July). Fossil fuel financing in Canada. Greenpeace Canada.

<https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-canada-stateless/2021/08/a0d71ee1-canadian-banks-fossil-fuel-financing-greenpeace-canada-july-2021.pdf>

⁴⁹ Greenpeace. (n.d). Canadian Banks need to stop funding fossil fuel.

<https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/act/fossil-banks/>

⁵⁰ University of Ottawa. (2025, October). The Green Academy at Telfer: Deep roots, new beginnings.

TELFER. <https://perma.cc/L485-JLVW>

⁵¹ Perry, K. (2025, October 9). BREAKING: RBC pledges 2 million dollar investment, for new Telfer 'Green Academy'. The Fulcrum.

<https://thefulcrum.ca/news/breaking-rbc-pledges-2-million-dollar-investment-for-new-telfer-green-academy/>

RBC funds the Coastal Gaslink (CGL) Pipeline⁵²-- a major fossil fuel project backed by many high level oil and gas corporations⁵³ as well as the Government of Canada. The CGL pipeline is a major extractor and perpetuates colonial violence by dredging across Wet'suwet'en territories⁵⁴ without adequate free, prior and informed consent. The University of Ottawa's commitments to Fossil Fuel divestment¹⁸ and Indigenous Action²⁰ both contrast to their longheld connection to RBC in light of their connections with the fossil fuel industry and Indigenous colonial violence.

TD, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Scotiabank and Bank of Montreal (BMO) have also funneled large amounts of funding into the University, totalling \$6.85 million (Table 3). For example, BMO dedicated \$2.5 million⁵⁵ dollars to the reIMAGINE Report for health sciences infrastructure which helped to establish the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Health. While this position is monumental for Indigenous health care practices in Canada, it's important to recognize that BMO as a fossil fuel enabler has contributed over [\\$200 billion](#)⁵⁶ to fossil fuels since the Paris Agreement; this includes involvement in the financing of the CGL Pipeline. These publicly shared donations from the Big 5 banks are relatively large and actively promoted by the University.

Extractors and Legitimizers

Of the publicly available donations and funding information, a few fossil fuel extractors are identifiable as major contributors to the University of Ottawa. The earliest example is [Husky Energy](#), now known as Cenovus Energy, an oil and natural gas company from Calgary, Alberta, who own major oil sands and refineries, and are a major international fuel exporter. In 2004, Cenovus donated \$500k to the Faculty of Science at the University for the creation of a “living classroom”, which exists now in the courtyard of the Biosciences building (Table 3). In 2007 they followed up with a public donation of \$1 million for Husky Energy fellowships to the Faculty of Science promoting energy-related research projects (Table 3).

The University of Ottawa is also connected to Actua as a network member through the Faculty of Engineering. Actua advertises itself as a youth outreach organization that aims to help students in

⁵² Indigenous Climate Action. (n.d). No More Dirty Banks: RBC is Financing Violations of Indigenous Rights. <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/entries/no-more-dirty-banks-rbc-is-financing-violations-of-indigenous-rights>

⁵³ Wolfgang Depner. (2026, March). LNG Canada, Coastal GasLink sign pipeline deal, bringing projects closer to reality. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/lng-coastal-gaslink-pipeline-projects-9.7144951>

⁵⁴ STAND.earth (n.d). Coastal GasLink: Indigenous Rights Violations Funded by RBC. <https://fossilfreerbc.org/resources/coastalgaslink/>

⁵⁵ University of Ottawa (n.d). From Imagination to Impact: the University of Ottawa 's \$541M reIMAGINE Campaign. <https://perma.cc/RC4K-HBSX>

⁵⁶ STAND.earth, (n.d). It's Time for BMO to Boldly Grow the Good on Climate. https://stand.earth/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Letter_Time-for-BMO-to-Boldly-Grow-the-Good-on-Climate.pdf

STEM to build “[critical skills and confidence](#).”⁵⁷ The network is funded by some major fossil fuel extractors including Cenovus, Suncore, Enbridge, Imperial Oil, and enablers like TD and Scotiabank.⁵⁸

Through public records we traced about \$8.9 million (Table 3) worth of donations from Actua to the University over several years. We discovered two specific funding amounts for major projects aimed at environmental sustainability: Positive Energy and ACO₂RDS (Absorptive CO₂ Removal from Dilute Sources) (Table 3). The University advertised that the Positive Energy Project expects to receive [\\$3 million](#) from respective donors, including 50% from corporations, 25% from governments, and the remainder from associations and regulatory agencies. Among these funders are extractors like Cenovus, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, and more (Table 3). The ACO₂RDS Project has similarly received \$3 million in funding from Total Energies, a French oil and gas extraction company (Table 3). More information regarding the content of these research projects is outlined in the ‘Research Funding’ section to follow.

Table 3: Financial Donations to the University of Ottawa from fossil fuel enablers, legitimators and extractors (2004-2025)

Company	Name of Donation	Donation Amount (CAD)	Year
CIBC	Scholarships for SASS mentors ^e	\$1 million	2004
BMO	Support for graduate students ^e	\$1.1 million	2004
Husky Energy	Creation of outdoor living classroom for faculty of Science ^e	\$500k	2004
Husky Energy	Husky energy Fellowships ^e	\$1 million	2007
RBC	Donation part of RBC Launch to support uOExperience ^e	\$500K	2020

⁵⁷ About Engineering Outreach | Faculty of Engineering. (2016). Faculty of Engineering. <https://perma.cc/5GN9-GUFC>

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

Scotiabank	Scotiabank Fund for the AI & Society Initiative ^d	\$750k	2020
RBC	RBC Launch Program ^a	\$750K	2022
Total Energies	ACO2RDS (Adsorptive CO₂ Removal from Dilute Sources ^g	\$3 million	2022
BMO	Donation for health science infrastructure–helped establish Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Health ^a	\$2.5 million	2025
RBC Foundation	Donation to propel the Green Academy’s vision ^b	\$2 million	2025
RBC	Professorship sponsoring ^e	\$750k	2004-2007
Scotiabank	Scotiabank international scholarships	\$750k	2004-2007
Shell, Phoenix Oil Company Ltd., Suncor Canada, and Northwest Redwater Sturgeon Refinery	NSERC Research Funding ⁱ	\$195,100	2010-2023
TD	Fund for Scholarships and Support ^d	\$750K	2013-2023
Commissions Alberta Energy, British Columbia Utilities Commission, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, The Canadian Gas Association, Cenovus, Clean Resource Innovation Network,	Positive Energy Project ^h	\$3 million (expected)	2021-2027

Electricity Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Ovintiv (encana) and Petronas			
Actua	Unknown^f	\$8,930,492	
Total amount			\$ 27,475,592

Note: (a) University of Ottawa . (n.d.). *From Imagination to Impact: the University of Ottawa 's \$541M reIMAGINE Campaign*. <https://perma.cc/CFH6-UVLJ>. (b) University of Ottawa . (2020, March). *Hands-on learning for the University of Ottawa students will get a boost, thanks to RBC Foundation*. <https://perma.cc/TY6P-M4V7>. (c) Telfer. (2025, September). *The Green Academy at Telfer: Deep roots, new beginnings*. <https://perma.cc/DJF6-GECS>. (d) Milliard, Carolina. (2013, September). TD Bank Group makes \$750,000 donation to the University of Ottawa . <https://perma.cc/22SJ-SPDU>. (e) *Backgrounder*. (2007, May). University of Ottawa, <https://perma.cc/3RQK-4DJT> (f) Investigative Journalism Foundation. (N.d.) *Gifts Received By Charities*. <https://theijf.org/grants?q=recipient%3AUniversity+of+Ottawa&searchField=recipient> (g) Carbon capture, utilization, and storage – one step closer to decarbonization | About us. (2022). About Us. <https://perma.cc/G72W-3V2P> (h) Gattinger, M. (2021). Public Confidence on the Road to Net-Zero. In the University of Ottawa . Positive Energy. <https://perma.cc/F9C6-HEU3>. (i) Government of Canada, (2024). *NSERC Awards Database*. Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. <https://perma.cc/937S-JQUA>

(2) Research Funding

The University of Ottawa has engaged in multitudes of fossil fuel-related research and false solutions-related research dating back to 2004. The University of Ottawa highlights that emissions come from many sources, including research,⁵⁹ and boast that they have committed \$1.5 million dollars into a [Clean Innovation Research Fund](#) “designed to take international actions in the global fight against climate change.”⁶⁰ This recognition of the impact of climate research gives insight into the calculated greenwashing efforts of the University administration. As highlighted in the previous section, \$1.5 million is a fraction of the funding the University receives for research related projects. While they are willing to recognize the importance of clean energy research, they also ignore the harms of collaborating with fossil fuel extractors, enablers and legitimators in all types of research projects. **By allowing research funding from these**

⁵⁹ Emissions and climate change | Campus life. (2023). Campus Life. <https://perma.cc/W3QE-NZVX>

⁶⁰ *ibid*.

sources, the University of Ottawa gives interested parties leverage points to produce data that supports their industry needs and agendas.

Using the Corporate Mapping Project's [Fossil-Power Top 50](#) list and the [Web of Science](#) Research Database, we found over 243 articles connected directly to the fossil fuel industry. Table 4 highlights all connections found and includes links to the search strings used to find them. Of note is the University's research funding connections with Shell (Extractor), RBC (Enabler), and the University of Calgary (Legitimitor). Shell has been listed as a funding partner on 13 research projects from the University of Ottawa between 2004 and 2025. Shell is a major fossil fuel extractor, listed on the Fossil-Power Top 50 list due to their continued ties with oil refineries and fracked shale gas companies.⁶¹ Most research articles (Table 4) deal with vetting, detonation, and deflagration— all important operational considerations for oil and gas refineries and sands. These industry-funded papers propagate and justify information that actively detracts from the clean energy transition.

RBC is also listed as having contributed funding to 37 research papers with the University of Ottawa. RBC is a well documented major fossil fuel enabler, so while all research papers uncovered through Web of Science do not specifically discuss greenwashing, false solutions, or fossil fuel related topics, the funding connection to the University raises concerns on the legitimacy of the University's commitment to sustainable research.

The University of Calgary has 144 research funding connections to the University of Ottawa. Two articles were related to [carbon capture research](#), a false solution widely used by fossil fuel companies as a scapegoat to meet federal emissions quotas.⁶² Carbon capture is a refusal to phase out fossil fuels in the energy transition, and shows a desire to continue reliance on the oil and gas industry for financial gain. The research funding connections between the University of Ottawa and the University of Calgary are concerning, given Calgary's position on the Fossil-Power Top 50 list and [role as a legitimitor](#) in tailoring to pro-oil industry needs.⁶³ By engaging with University of Calgary on false solutions research, the University of Ottawa engages in greenwashing. They are collecting funding from an organization heavily tied to [Big Oil](#),⁶⁴ for research that will delay impactful climate change solutions.

⁶¹ Fossil- Power Top 50. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from https://www.corporatemapping.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Fossil-Power_Top50.pdf

⁶² Gentile, G., & Gupta, J. (2025). Orchestrating the Narrative: the Role of Fossil Fuel Companies in Delaying the Energy Transition. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 212, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2025.115359>

⁶³ Mears, E. (2019, June 19). Fossil-Power Top 50. Corporate Mapping Project. <https://www.corporatemapping.ca/database/fossil-power-top-50/>

⁶⁴ Oreskes, O & Nesbitt J. (2021, December 10) "How "Big Oil" works the system and keeps winning?". Yale Climate Connections, <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2021/12/how-big-oil-works-the-system-and-keeps-winning/>

It is important to note that these are only fossil fuel enablers, extractors or legitimators on the Corporate Mapping Project's Fossil-Power Top 50 list, and thus does not provide a full picture of the fossil fuel ties to research at the University of Ottawa, just the most visible ones.

Positive Energy and ACO₂RDS

The University of Ottawa is connected to two major research projects that we have identified as false solutions and greenwashing: the [Positive Energy Project](#)⁶⁵ and the [ACO₂RDS Project](#).⁶⁶

The Positive Energy Project, beginning in [2015](#), is dedicated to producing research publications that promote a clean energy transition and map a road to net-zero emissions across North America.⁶⁷ They seek to connect with communities, Indigenous leaders, industry, government, and institutions to create a general understanding of how the clean energy transition in North America and Canada can benefit all groups, and what must be done to instill confidence across the population in the transition.⁶⁸

While this is a worthwhile goal, the Positive Energy website publicly lists its funders and partners, outlining only major fossil fuel extraction companies, and energy-related organizations. This includes Commissions Alberta Energy, British Columbia Utilities Commission, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, The Canadian Gas Association, Cenovus, Clean Resource Innovation Network, Electricity Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Ovintiv (Encana) and Petronas.⁶⁹ The Positive Energy program has no community organizations, Indigenous leaders, or government funders listed.

Having a roster of funders tied to the continuation of the fossil fuel industry for research meant to encompass a wide range of political perspectives is greenwashing in its finest form. The data coming from Positive Energy must be considered as a potential conflict of interest for all these organizations.

Similarly, the [ACO₂RDS Project](#), with funding from Total Energies (a French oil and gas company, and fossil fuel extractor) is a University of Ottawa project dedicated to researching carbon capture, utilization and storage methods (CCUS).⁷⁰ This project is a direct greenwashing effort from the University and Total Energies to promote false solutions to the energy transition

⁶⁵ Our research publications | Research and innovation. (2022). Research and Innovation. <https://perma.cc/6PF8-S4B3>

⁶⁶ Carbon capture, utilization, and storage – one step closer to decarbonization | About us. (2022). About Us. <https://perma.cc/G72W-3V2P>

⁶⁷ Positive Energy | Research and innovation. (2018). Research and Innovation. <https://perma.cc/V75M-3NTZ>

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Carbon capture, utilization, and storage – one step closer to decarbonization | About us. (2022). About Us. <https://perma.cc/G72W-3V2P>

associated with [CCUS](#).⁷¹ Such solutions allow fossil fuel companies to continue their extractive practices without taking accountability for their harm, and take time and resources away from researching alternative energy solutions with positive climatic impacts. CCUS only delays the climate crisis, allowing the industry to continue operating as is and distracting from a much needed green alternative energy solution.

NSERC Connected Research Funding

The National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) has longstanding connections to the University of Ottawa, allotting grant and research funding to projects across many faculties. In their 2023 [report](#) “Bad Cheques: When Fossil Fuels Fund Academic Research”, Greenpeace labels NSERC as a fossil fuel enabler and legitimator.⁷² The report highlights that through grant programs, NSERC works with corporate partners across Canada to fund research for various projects, including fossil fuel and extraction related research. In this sense, the University of Ottawa’s partnership with NSERC is another connection to a fossil fuel enabler and legitimator. Specific projects that have received NSERC partnership grant funding at the University have also come in part directly from fossil fuel extraction companies.

Looking through the [NSERC Research Awards Database](#), we were able to find three specific reports between 2004-2025 related to fossil fuel extraction and funded by extracting organizations (Table 5).⁷³ Such companies include Shell, Phoenix Oil Company Limited, Suncor Canada, and Northwest Redwater Sturgeon Refinery. While these 3 projects are important to note, it is equally pressing to identify that there are many connections we may have missed that did not come through our search string (Table 5).

Additionally, we uncovered a long list of connections between NSERC funded projects and companies engaging in false solutions work. For instance, [Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Limited](#) engaged in a number of projects with the University of Ottawa during the researched time frame (2004-2025).⁷⁴ Nuclear energy as a false solution is a highly controversial topic. In Ontario the provincial government is a proud supporter of nuclear energy, claiming a plan to strengthen Ontario's energy prospects by making the province a nuclear “[superpower](#)”.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Levien, M., & Paprocki, K. (2026). Against the planetary: carbon fetishism and the politics of false solutions. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 53(2), 443–473.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2026.2616321>

⁷² CHEQUES When fossil fuels fund academic research B A D. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-canada-stateless/2024/01/fbbd942d-bad-cheques-en.pdf>

⁷³ Government of Canada, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. (2024). NSERC's Awards Database. Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.
<https://perma.cc/937S-JQUA>

⁷⁴ Enabling Canada's clean energy future. (n.d.). Canadian Nuclear Laboratories. Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://www.cnl.ca/clean-energy/clean-energy-canada/>

⁷⁵ Powering Ontario. (2025, December 23). Ontario.Ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/powering-ontario>

From a climate justice perspective, nuclear energy in Ontario and across Canada has significant environmental and health impacts on vulnerable Indigenous communities. The process of creating nuclear energy -- from the uranium mining, to waste storage and power plant production -- all create [high levels of CO₂ emissions](#), and the waste it produces requires millenia of storage before safe handling or disposal is possible.⁷⁶ Many Indigenous communities oppose nuclear energy, and the government's tendency to develop [nuclear waste sites](#) on their stolen lands.⁷⁷ The stark opposition to nuclear sites in Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows) First Nation, serve as a prime example.⁷⁸ The Government of Canada recently proposed that the nuclear waste coming from southern Ontario nuclear reactors be transported to and buried in [northern Ontario](#).⁷⁹ Grassy Narrows First Nation residents in the proposed area of the waste burial sites opposed this decision.⁸⁰

The University of Ottawa's decision to partner with nuclear research entities and accept funding for this research from NSERC promotes the false solution of nuclear energy. Their engagement with false solutions research shows the University’s lack of commitment to addressing the climate crisis, and their willingness to accept money from and collaborate with organizations actively interfering with justice-based climate solutions.

Table 4: Research Papers connected to Fossil-Power Top 50, found using the Web of Science Research Database (2004-2026)

Extractors		Enablers		Legitimizers	
Company Name	# of Articles	Company Name	# of Articles	Company Name	# of Articles
Cenovus	10	TD Bank	1	University of Calgary	190

⁷⁶ Nuclear’s False Promise — Covering Climate Now. (2025, May 29). Covering Climate Now. <https://coveringclimatenow.org/from-us-story/nuclears-false-promise/>

⁷⁷ Bartlett, A., Atwin, R., & O’donnell, S. (n.d.). INDIGENOUS VIEWS ON NUCLEAR ENERGY AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE. Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://cedar-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024-Indigenous-views-on-nuclear-energy-and-waste.pdf>

⁷⁸ Robinson, P. (2026, June 6). “This poison is coming”: First Nations warn against nuclear waste. TBNewsWatch.Com. <https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/this-poison-is-coming-first-nations-warn-against-nuclear-waste-12386404>

⁷⁹ Turtle, C. (2025, July 30). Grassy Narrows leads opposition to nuclear waste dumping. Community Peacemaker Teams. <https://cpt.org/2025/07/30/grassy-narrows-leads-opposition-to-nuclear-waste-dumping>

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

CNOOC	1	Toronto-Dominion Bank Canadian	2	Canadian Gas Association	1
Enbridge	7	RBC	30	Canadian Energy Pipeline Association	1
Encana	1	Royal Bank of Canada	25	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers	1
Husky Energy	20	Imperial Bank of Commerce	6	Canada West Foundation	1
TransCanada	1	CIBC	5		
Teck Resources	2	BC Oil and Gas Commission	1		
Shell	12	Bank of Montreal	6		
Imperial Oil	4	Alberta Energy Regulator	1		
		Scotiabank	6		

Note: Web of Science (n.d.) Scientific Research Database

<https://access.clarivate.com/>

Table 5: NSERC Funded Projects with Direct Connections to Fossil Fuel Extractors (2004-2025)

Name of Project	Partnership & Connection to fossil fuels	Donation amount (CAD)	Year
Propensity for H ₂ flame wrinkling, acceleration and transition to detonation from side venting, rear venting and interaction with	Shell	\$35,500	2021

expansion waves ^a			
Development of a process for manufacturing synthetic hydrocarbon fuel from captured carbon dioxide ^b	Phoenix Oil Company Limited	\$23,600	2010
Fluid Dynamics Model of a LC-Fining Heavy Oil Hydroprocessor ^c	Suncor Canada and Northwest Redwater Sturgeon refinery	\$136,000	2023

Notes: (a) National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada. (2021). *Propensity for H2 flame wrinkling, acceleration and transition to detonation from side venting, rear venting and interaction with expansion waves* <https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/awards-database/790102>. (b) National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada (2010). *Development of a process for manufacturing synthetic hydrocarbon fuel from captured carbon dioxide*. <https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/awards-database/471813> (c) National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada. (2023). *Fluid Dynamics Model of a LC-Fining Heavy Oil Hydroprocessor*. <https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/awards-database/793265>

(3) Faculty and Administrative Positions:

This section will examine the wealth of staff who conduct research, as well as administrative and leadership personnel. When examining academics at the University, we specifically examined Endowed and Sponsored research faculty positions; those who facilitate and support the research activities of faculty members within different strategic areas of research. Many faculties are currently home to such chairs dictating research priorities, which are supported by a variety of sources, including private donations, the private sector, government, and not-for-profit organizations. This section analyses the ties that such positions have with fossil fuel extractors, legitimators, enablers and false solutions.

Faculty of Telfer School of Management

The Faculty of Telfer has various sponsored professorships that enable greenwashing. RBC currently funds 4 professorships: the RBC Financial Group Professorships in Entrepreneurship,

Financial Risk Analytics, Finance, and Health Care Systems.⁸¹ This makes RBC the biggest corporate sponsor for the faculty.

While these professors do not explicitly research fossil fuels or climate change, RBC is, as mentioned before, Canada's largest financier of fossil fuel projects. These endowed chairs allow RBC to have influence on the teachings and course planings for the different sponsored positions. At the same time, these positions also help the bank build a good reputation, name, symbolic capital and attract students for future employability.

Faculty of Engineering

The Faculty of Engineering currently hosts the [Faculty of Engineering Outreach Office](#), which is presented and funded by fossil fuel companies Enbridge Fueling, Suncor Energy Foundation, and Cenovus Energy.⁸² The Faculty however does not host any endowed research chairs apart from the CIHR Applied Public Health Chair in Environment, Climate Change. While there are no current endowed chairs, there is an existing partnership and [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, The Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and The University of Ottawa.⁸³ As mentioned before, nuclear energy is a controversial false solution.

Faculty of Social Sciences - Positive Energy

The University of Ottawa's [Positive Energy](#) program, as described in the 'Research Funding' section is housed by the Institute for Science, Society and Policy, under the Faculty of Social Science at the University of Ottawa.⁸⁴ The program contains an [advisory board](#)⁸⁵ who have significant ties to the fossil fuel industry and energy industry, including members associated with Cenovus Energy, the Canadian Gas Association, Petronas Energy, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Natural Resources Canada, Lumos Energy, Alberta Energy and Minerals and more.

The advisory board contains members of major funders (see 'Research Funding') of the project, many of whom are fossil fuel enablers and extractors, and thus benefit from the continuation of the oil and gas industry. In fact about 43% of the current advisory board work for oil and gas extraction companies, or enabling and legitimating companies. In comparison 9% of the board are engaged for Indigenous interests, 19% for clean energy research and the remaining 29% work for energy related business and industry, as well as law firms across Canada and the US.

⁸¹ Fellowships, Professorships and Chairs. (2026). Telfer, University of Ottawa . <https://perma.cc/EF6X-YUAN>

⁸² About Engineering Outreach | Faculty of Engineering. (2016). Faculty of Engineering. <https://perma.cc/62SL-VQ8L>

⁸³ Building on over 15 years of collaboration | University of Ottawa. (2022). University of Ottawa. <https://perma.cc/KT6Y-4K8A>

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Advisory Council: The Positive Energy Advisory Board. (N.d.) University of Ottawa. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/research-innovation/positive-energy/advisory-council>

Combined with their funding, oil and gas industry appear to have a large sway on the Positive Energy project in their roles on the advisory board, which displays a conflict of interest given the project's mission to encourage Canadian understanding of emissions reduction.

Honorary Degrees

Through the awarding of honorary degrees, some institutions confer public prestige to specific people in different sectors and industries, ratifying and validating their work and experience. In turn, these honorary degrees create an avenue for the fossil fuel industry to influence the University's priorities.

The University of Ottawa has awarded honorary degrees to senior leadership of [Husky Energy](#)⁸⁶, [Goldcorp and Wheaton River Minerals](#),⁸⁷ and [Kingsdale Advisors](#), a fossil fuel lobbying company.⁸⁸

Elected and Appointed Positions

By occupying elected positions of the Board of Governors, Board members must adhere to the Code of Ethical Conduct and Responsibilities of Members of the Board of Governors.⁸⁹ According to Section 1, the purpose of this code is to uphold the moral integrity of the Board to the highest standard, ensuring conflicts of interests are avoided, managed, or resolved. Through this manner, the Board of Governors aims to maintain objectivity and credibility; decisions must be made through evidenced thinking rather than personal leanings or motivations.

The Code defines a conflict of interest as a situation where financial, professional or personal circumstances may jeopardize or appear to jeopardize a Board member's judgment in carrying out their duties and fiduciary responsibilities. Furthermore, according to Section 9, Board members "have an obligation to act fairly, in good faith and in the best interests of the University in the conduct of his or her duties;...[and] not be influenced by self-interest, outside pressure, political considerations or fear of criticism."⁹⁰

With these definitions in mind, board members aligned with extractors or enablers of the fossil fuel industry can be reasonably described as having a conflict of interest — their professional considerations hinder their ability to act fairly, in good faith, and in the best interests of the University.

⁸⁶ Lau, John | About us. (2026). About Us. <https://perma.cc/DC32-32YF>

⁸⁷ About Ian Telfer. (2026). Telfer_ the University of Ottawa . <https://perma.cc/8SC9-FXJZ>

⁸⁸ Hall, Wes | About us. (2021). About Us. <https://perma.cc/XRP8-PSW4>

⁸⁹ the University of Ottawa . (2005). *Code of Ethical Conduct and Responsibilities of Members of the Board of Governors*. <https://perma.cc/AY4V-4LA5>.

⁹⁰ *ibid*.

As concluded by the University of Ottawa's decision to fully divest from all equity fossil fuel holdings by 2030, it is not in the University's best interests to support fossil fuels. The Board of Governors, as an entity of the University of Ottawa, has the responsibility to uphold this standard among its members; their occupations as extractors and enablers hampers judgement, decimating their ability to make decisions that are rooted in the best interests of the University of Ottawa, rather than the interests of fossil fuel organizations and their enablers.

At least 7 of the 33 current Board members have or have had ties to the fossil fuel industry, making up 21% of the Board. This is through connections to companies including RBC,⁹¹ BMO,⁹² the Canadian Commercial Corporation,⁹³ and more. These relationships actively undermine the efforts of the Board of the Governors and of the University of Ottawa in keeping to their sustainability promises and upholding the best interest of students in their decision-making.

(4) Student Recruitment and Enrichment

Fossil fuel enablers are deeply entrenched in the University of Ottawa's student recruitment and enrichment activities. The following is an overview of key instances of this we have been able to identify. Recruitment involves programs intended to hire students. Enrichment involves contributions to student life other than on-campus events - from field trips, to innovation challenges, to student discounts, and more.

Clubs

The [Telfer Finance Society](#), a club on campus under the Telfer Business school, has TD and CIBC as sponsors.⁹⁴ UOE Racing, an engineering club where students develop their own electric cars for racing, competes annually in a competition called the [Shell Eco-Marathon](#).⁹⁵ Another club, the University of Ottawa Super Mileage, is featured on the official Shell YouTube page talking about the importance of sustainability and [engineering](#).⁹⁶ Shell is listed as one of the club's sponsors on their [website](#), which appears to last be updated in 2024.⁹⁷ Additionally, the Canadian Society for Chemical Engineering ([CSCChE](#)) the University of Ottawa chapter out of

⁹¹ Justine Hendricks. (n.d.). *Home* [LinkedIn page]. LinkedIn. Retrieved July 10, 2026, from <https://www.linkedin.com/in/justine-hendricks/>.

⁹² University of Ottawa. (2018). *Omar Abouzaher*. About Us. <https://perma.cc/9ZMD-PRD5>.

⁹³ University of Ottawa. (2026). *Nancy Rhéaume*. About Us. <https://perma.cc/W63P-T93K>.

⁹⁴ de Telfer, A. U. S. F. (2025). Société Financière de Telfer. Société Financière de Telfer. <https://perma.cc/NK8Y-V8BY>

⁹⁵ UOE Racing | Ottawa ON. (2026). Facebookapp. <https://www.facebook.com/UOERacing/>

⁹⁶ Shell. (2022). the University of Ottawa Supermileage - Stories from the Track | Shell Eco-marathon [Video]. YouTube. <https://perma.cc/49KJ-59AP>

⁹⁷ Sponsors - UO Supermileage. (2026). [Uosupermileage.Ca](https://uosupermileage.ca/sponsors.html). <https://uosupermileage.ca/sponsors.html>

the Faculty of Engineering is documented to have taken to a Shell plant in Brockville, bringing 40 students over for a tour and networking session with Shell employees in 2017.⁹⁸

By engaging students in finance, engineering, and entrepreneurship, these clubs foster leadership qualities and give students sought-after hands-on experience in their fields. Groups like Shell, TD, and CIBC who fund these projects use them as a way to take attention away from their involvement in fossil fuels and to wash their image as youth-supporting, engaged with different causes, and present themselves as valuable future employers.

Student Projects

Beyond involvement in clubs, fossil fuel legitimators and financiers are involved in student projects, especially those engaging in climate science and climate change. TD is one main example of this. From 2013 to 2023, they funded the TD Environmental Leaders Program, which gave \$750,000 to support student initiatives dedicated to sustainability. TD also regularly gives out various Green Bursaries to students, individual scholarships for students doing environmental work or taking environmental classes. Through the TD Ready Challenge, the bank gave \$1 million to a student project about mitigating climate change through monitoring.⁹⁹ TD claimed that funding work like this was their way of investing in climate solutions - but in a statement made by various banks and fossil fuel financiers in 2024, TD admitted “green financing efforts may not necessarily curtail emissions [growth](#).”¹⁰⁰ Funding projects like this is a direct form of greenwashing meant to take away attention from TD’s complicity in the fossil fuel crisis through investment in the oil and gas industry.

Banking Help? Or Financial Entrapment?

While many banks engage in solutions financing, it is necessary to note that they have a strong presence on campus through actual banking initiatives. RBC is a notable case, through their Banks on Campus campaign that allowed the bank to have a physical space on campus, located beside the dining hall. As of the 2025-2026 school year, RBC’s lease ended and was not renewed. This happened following years of protracted protests and sit-ins by the RBC Off Campus coalition, consisting of groups such as the Indigenous Students Association, and [Climate Justice the University of Ottawa](#).¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ envision. (2017). Ottawa CSChE chapter explores Shell plant. The Chemical Institute of Canada. <https://perma.cc/C7C3-7U64>

⁹⁹ Weathering climate change: uOttawa receives \$1M from TD Ready Challenge for new mitigation initiative to benefit Indigenous communities | Faculty of Engineering. (2023). Faculty of Engineering. <https://perma.cc/L9HR-QTNM>

¹⁰⁰ Balu, N. (2024, March 20). Canada's big banks say sustainable finance pledges may not curtail emission growth. Reuters. <https://perma.cc/2BDD-RAE6/>

¹⁰¹ Perry, K. (2026, February 2). RBC branch set to be removed from campus spring 2026, ending a long-fought battle by Indigenous students. The Fulcrum. <https://perma.cc/QYE3-5RCW>

The RBC Off Campus student movement shows how student power can be utilized to exact change on campus, but it is key to note that Big Bank's presence on campus, and therefore, Big Oil and Gas, is not completely gone.

[CIBC's International Student Pay](#) program is a cornerstone for many international students, who use their streamlined international student route to make tuition payments to the University of Ottawa. [TD](#) has hosted various info sessions on how to bank with them at the University.¹⁰² TD Insurance is also offered at a discounted rate to the University of Ottawa alumni.¹⁰³

Through these programs, the University facilitates relationships between students and alumni and fossil fuel legitimators, normalizing business transactions with these companies. Divestment from banking with major banks like RBC, CIBC, and TD may be daunting to students who have come to rely on these programs and scholarships, or who are still just learning to manage their finances. The inclination for many of these groups to work with and integrate into certain faculties, such as the Faculty of Engineering and Telfer School of Management, may also pose difficulties to students in these faculties. They are in an environment where the fossil fuel industry is normalized, and showcased as a future employer, the best option for banking, and more. But there is no excuse for the University, which has paid staff dedicated to managing finances, budgeting, and ultimately, the wellbeing of the student population.

(5) Event Sponsorship

The University of Ottawa hosts a variety of events with goals of enriching student experience, sharing research, and more. While this is not an exhaustive list, it is clear that fossil fuel enablers played and continue to play various roles in different events across campus, even after the University's promises of divestment were made. This section will highlight a few key events, but is not exhaustive. The intention is not to shame students who have participated, attended, or been involved in organizing these events, but to expose how entrenched enablers are and shed light on this problem.

Better Canada Youth Forum ([2024](#))

In 2024, the University of Ottawa's Telfer School of Business hosted the Better Canada Youth Forum in partnership with AIESEC Canada.¹⁰⁴ The advertised objective of this event was to create a space where youth could share concerns about inequality and discuss their positive

¹⁰² TD Commercial Banking Info Session. (2026). the University of Ottawa . <https://perma.cc/BV7X-KGNL>

¹⁰³ Perks and discounts | Alumni. (2024). Alumni. <https://perma.cc/H633-EDD4>

¹⁰⁴ Better Future, C. T. C. (2025). Coalition for a Better Future. Coalition for a Better Future. <https://perma.cc/8XWG-2U2L>

influence on the future of Canada's economy.¹⁰⁵ The event convened 100 students from over 25 Canadian universities, but its impact is questionable when considering whose money was used to run it. The forum was one of a series of events organized by the [Coalition for a Better Future](#), a coalition sponsored by CIBC, and an event series created with support from Shell.¹⁰⁶ CIBC is considered one of Canada's '[Big Five](#)' banks, making it one of the top 20 fossil fuel financiers in the world, and [Shell](#) is a multinational oil and gas company.¹⁰⁷ ¹⁰⁸ By funding youth-oriented events like this, CIBC and Shell are directly engaging in greenwashing -- asking youth to build a better future while operating in fields that negatively impact.

Scorecard Reporting ([2026](#))

The Coalition for a Better Future's presence at the University of Ottawa continued with their Scorecard Reporting event in March of 2026.¹⁰⁹ Among the presenters at this day-long event was Lisa Raitt, the co-chair of Coalition for a Better Future and Vice-Chair of Global Investment Banking at CIBC.¹¹⁰ This is a continuation of CIBC and Shell's greenwashing efforts, showing that they are long-term, not just through individual events.

Abound Art Show ([2022](#))

The University of Ottawa Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) Program hosted an art show at the Ottawa Art Gallery (OAG) from February 9 to March 6, 2022 showcasing student work.¹¹¹ The exhibition shows the graduating projects of the masters' candidates research and studio work, which was developed over the course of the two year program. While the collaboration with the OAG was incredibly fruitful to students, it is key to note that this project was funded through The RBC Foundation. Their Emerging Artists Project fund's goal is to support the arts and the role they play in building vibrant communities and strong economies.¹¹² [RBC](#) funds projects like this while financing fossil fuel projects on Indigenous land, yet again greenwashing.¹¹³

ENGAGE Conference ([2016](#))

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Better Future, A. C. (2026). Coalition for a Better Future. Coalition for a Better Future. <https://perma.cc/PU94-59Z7>

¹⁰⁷ Canadian Banks: Stop funding fossil fuel colonialism. (n.d.). Greenpeace Canada. Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/act/fossil-banks/>

¹⁰⁸ Client Earth. (2023). The Greenwashing Files - Shell. [www.Clientearth.Org](http://www.clientearth.org). <https://www.clientearth.org/projects/the-greenwashing-files/shell/>

¹⁰⁹ Coalition for a Better Future - 2026 Scorecard Reporting Event and Better Canada Youth Forum. (2026, March 26). Telfer_ the University of Ottawa . <https://perma.cc/T54H-H5RA>

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ the University of Ottawa MFA graduating class join forces with the Ottawa Art Gallery for a unique exhibition | Ottawa Art Gallery. (2022, February 4). Ottawa Art Gallery |. <https://perma.cc/R9HV-4HRE>

¹¹² Supporting Emerging Artists. (2017). Rbcis.Com. <https://www.rbcis.com/en/citizenship/supporting-emerging-artists.page>

¹¹³ Homepage - Fossil Free RBC. (2024, May 16). Fossil Free RBC. <https://fossilfreerbc.org/>

The ENGAGE Conference from October 5-6, 2016, was a convening of energy leaders from various sectors.¹¹⁴ Organized by the Canada West Foundation and the University of Ottawa , the event boasted speakers including Timothy Egan, (then the President of the Canadian Gas Association), and Dave Collyer (former president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers). The proliferation of parties from these lobbyist groups reveals the encroachment of oil and gas influence in energy discussions that should be focusing on renewable, clean energy.

Career Week

One of the largest events offered by the University for students is the Career Corner’s annual Career Week, typically in mid-March, ahead of the summer job period. Based on public records, we can identify that the 2020 Career Week was funded by RBC.¹¹⁵ The event itself hosts a variety of different employers, and while we could not find a full list, some employers who have attended previous career fairs include [TD](#).¹¹⁶ These events enable and facilitate connections between students and fossil fuel financiers. Groups like RBC also have a documented history of using campus as a space to hire students, as noted by [this](#) webinar found on the campus website.¹¹⁷

Corporate Mapping Project - Top 50

Below is a chart outlining which of the Top 50 corporations in Canada that engage in extracting, enabling, or legitimating fossil fuels has a presence at the University of Ottawa.

Of the Top 50 corporations, 28 have a presence at the University of Ottawa. The highest proportion of corporations come from the extractors category. This means that 56%, more than half, of the biggest fossil fuel corporations in Canada are affecting policy, interacting with students and staff, and influencing research at the University. 12 of the 28 with a presence at the University of Ottawa are extractors, while 9 are enablers, and 7 are legitimators.

Table 6: Fossil-Power Top 50 Extractors, Enablers, and Legitimators with a Documented Presence at the University of Ottawa (2024-2025).

Extractors

Corporation	Relationship to the University of Ottawa
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¹¹⁴ ENGAGE: Conference agenda Canada West Foundation. (2016, September 29). Canada West Foundation. <https://cwf.ca/events/engage-conference-agenda/>

¹¹⁵ Hands-on learning for uOttawa students will get a boost, thanks to RBC Foundation | About us. (2020). About Us. <https://perma.cc/P9CE-96UH>

¹¹⁶ <https://perma.cc/N9S3-MVVY>

¹¹⁷ <https://perma.cc/F5A2-5WEV>

ATCO	Co-op placements
Canadian Natural Resources Limited	Co-op placements
Cenovus Energy	• Funded the Husky Courtyard in BSC building • Faculty of Engineering Outreach office (through Actua) https://perma.cc/CY6K-JSUX • Research funding • Positive Energy board member works for them https://perma.cc/LCL6-5YXD • Credited as a financial supporter of Positive Energy https://perma.cc/J7SF-BF6V
CNOOC (Formerly Nexen Energy)	Research funding
Enbridge	• Faculty of Engineering Outreach office (through Actua) https://perma.cc/CY6K-JSUX • Research funding
Encana	• Former member of Positive Energy worked for Encana https://perma.cc/LCL6-5YXD • Research funding
Husky Energy	• Husky Courtyard funding
Imperial Oil	• Faculty of Engineering Outreach office (through Actua) https://perma.cc/CY6K-JSUX • Research funding
Suncor	• Faculty of Engineering Outreach office (through Actua) https://perma.cc/CY6K-JSUX
Teck Resources	• Research funding
TransAlta	• Telfer event promoting woman who was a former director at TransAlta https://telfer.the University of Ottawa .ca/en/events/202206160800-nerve-lessons-on-leadership-from-two-women-who-went-first-online-event/
TransCanada (TC Energy)	• Telfer event promoting woman who was a former director at TC Energy https://perma.cc/YZP8-FLK4 • Research funding

Enablers

Corporation	Relationship to the University of Ottawa
Alberta Energy Regulator	Research funding
Bank of Montreal	Club events https://perma.cc/4V3S-X9ZT
Bank of Nova Scotia	Potential co-op employer for programs like commerce: e-Business https://perma.cc/L59A-9PPN
BC Oil and Gas Commission	Research funding
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce	- Faculty of Engineering Outreach office (through Actua) https://perma.cc/CY6K-JSUX - Potential co-op employer for programs like commerce: e-Business https://perma.cc/L59A-9PPN
National Energy Board	Connections to Positive Energy program https://perma.cc/4R9A-3SNV
Power Corporation of Canada	Gave the University of Ottawa \$2 million in 2025 to support student mobility and research to combat homelessness https://perma.cc/FLC7-2QF4
Royal Bank of Canada	- Research funding - Potential co-op employer for programs like commerce: e-Business https://perma.cc/L59A-9PPN
Toronto Dominion Bank	- Faculty of Engineering Outreach office (through Actua) https://perma.cc/CY6K-JSUX - the University of Ottawa Long Term Portfolio Public Equity Holdings as of December 31, 2025 https://perma.cc/3LS2-YAZH

Legitimizers

Corporation	Relationship to the University of Ottawa
Canada West Foundation	- Former member of Positive Energy worked for them https://perma.cc/4R9A-3SNV - Research funding
Canadian Association of Petroleum	- Former member of Positive Energy worked for them https://perma.cc/4R9A-3SNV - Credited as a financial supporter of Positive Energy

Producers	https://perma.cc/J7SF-BF6V ● Research funding
Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (CEPA)	● Research funding ● Former member of Positive Energy worked for them https://perma.cc/4R9A-3SNV
Canadian Gas Association	● Former member of Positive Energy worked for them https://perma.cc/4R9A-3SNV ● Credited as a financial supporter of Positive Energy https://perma.cc/J7SF-BF6V ● Research funding
Canadian Oil Sands Innovation Alliance (COSIA)	● Research funding
Energy Council of Canada	● Events on campus, connection to Positive Energy https://perma.cc/HJ9G-6733
University of Calgary	● Research funding

Recommendations

Accountability and Transparency

Our research reveals the University of Ottawa's severe lack of transparency when it comes to disclosing funding and investments. There is no clear public record or centralized database of exact numbers of shares for equity holdings, which they blame on contractual [restrictions](#).¹¹⁸ However, municipal governments and [city](#) institutions consistently make this type of data available to the public as they manage a similar population of people as the University of Ottawa has students, a precedent that, with all its money and resources, the University administration has the power to follow.¹¹⁹

We call on the University of Ottawa to develop a consistently updated, publicly accessible database documenting and disclosing gifts, grants, contracts, and all other external funding agreements. This database could look like a subsection on the University of Ottawa website, a yearly report, or a section of the annual President's report. This public record would keep students and staff aware of the funding ecosystem of the University, and act as a public tool to

¹¹⁸ Climate Report. (n.d.). Retrieved September 3, 2026, from <https://perma.cc/HN8T-ERPZ>.

¹¹⁹ Financial Services and Strategic Communications. (2024). City of Whitehorse, Yukon: 2024 Annual Report. City of Whitehorse.
<https://www.whitehorse.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/COW-2024-AR-Web.pdf>

hold the University accountable to the various commitments they have signed relating to the environment, human health and wellbeing.

This recommendation is already built into the Montreal Carbon Pledge, a pledge that the University signed onto in [2015](#).¹²⁰ The Montreal Carbon Pledge mandates [yearly review](#); signatories have an ongoing duty to act “in the best long-term interests of (their) beneficiaries. In this fiduciary role, we believe that there are long-term investment risks associated with greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and carbon regulation.”¹²¹ In the article announcing the University of Ottawa signing onto this pledge, the hyperlinks provided—meant to bring readers to info pages detailing the University’s investments and investment guidelines—are no longer active, revealing a regression that students and faculty must hold the University accountable for. This recommendation is also rooted in the United Nation’s Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), which the University [claims](#) it is committed to.¹²²

Without these disclosures, by signing onto the Montreal Carbon Pledge and being a signatory to the Principles of Responsible Investment, the University is engaging in greenwashing. Beyond this, their irresponsible approach towards investing allows the University to accept holdings not just consequential to climate, but to human rights.

Full Fossil Fuel Dissociation

While accountability and transparency are key for righting the past wrongs and missteps of the University; the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Ottawa need safeguards in place to ensure fossil fuels are not endorsed or integrated into the inner-workings of our campus. Therefore, we propose [full fossil fuel dissociation](#): the cutting of all financial, reputational, and other ties between the University of Ottawa and the fossil fuel industry.¹²³

According to the findings of this report, we call on the University of Ottawa to:

Direct monetary donations: Outright refuse direct monetary donations from fossil fuel extractors, enablers, and legitimators.

Research funding: Update research funding guidelines to refuse funding from fossil fuel extractors, enablers and legitimators for future projects, and ensure that no research money will

¹²⁰ Communications Directorate, University of Ottawa. (2020). the University of Ottawa becomes first Canadian university to sign global carbon pledge - Media releases and announcements | University of Ottawa. the University of Ottawa .Ca. <https://perma.cc/8BB9-LUR7>.

¹²¹ United Nations. (2024). Unfccc.Int. <https://unfccc.int/news/montreal-carbon-pledge>

¹²² Endowment funds | Giving. (2026). Giving. <https://perma.cc/YV9S-YV6G>.

¹²³ Wilkinson, A., Collet, A., Mackey, E., & McKinney, L. (2024). Bound to Big Oil: The University of Toronto and Its Ties to the Fossil Fuel Industry. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tHaYgQuaLOoE9z6yNcMxASwQJlhhEqDX/view>

be used to legitimize false solutions. Ongoing research projects funded by these groups should not be renewed for funding, and alternative sources of funding should be employed and actively sought out.

Faculty and administrative positions: Reject all future sponsorships and funding from the fossil fuel industry for all staff appointments. When appointing people to these positions going forward, we recommend background checks and self-declarations to be employed, recognizing past and current ties to the fossil fuel industry. Current fossil fuel associated sponsorships should not be renewed at the end of their stipulated terms. The University of Ottawa's governing bodies are beholden to rules outlined in various handbooks. We call on these governing bodies to review the handbook on a yearly basis with members, and expect self-declarations and background checks.

Student recruitment and enrichment: Develop a policy against fossil fuel extractors, enablers, and legitimators participating in job fairs and recruitment-related activities on campus. We also call on the University to explore partnerships for students banking with credit unions and other banks not associated with the fossil fuel industry.

Event sponsorship: Create a policy barring fossil fuel extractors, enablers, and legitimators from participation and sponsorship of events on campus or affiliated with the University of Ottawa going forward. We also call on the University to refrain from greenwashing, advertisements, and partnerships that promote the fossil fuel industry. The University was able to step away from a partnership with RBC on Campus, and we demand this continued accountability when dealing with other entities.

Centring Environmental Justice

For full fossil fuel dissociation to be both effective and sustainable, the University of Ottawa must do more than end its existing relationships with the fossil fuel industry. It must also develop new partnerships that continue supporting research, student opportunities, and public engagement without compromising commitments to sustainability, reconciliation, and social responsibility. **Divestment should therefore be accompanied by a deliberate effort to redirect University resources and institutional support toward organizations whose work is grounded in principles of social and environmental justice.** The University of Ottawa should demonstrate that renewable energy and environmental research can be conducted through public funding, community partnerships, and joint efforts with Indigenous and clean-energy organizations.

As part of this transition, faculties, departments, institutes, and research centers across the University should adopt a “no fossil fuel money” pledge. Such a commitment would prevent

them from accepting new donations, research funding, sponsorships, or other financial contributions from fossil fuel extractors, supporters, and legitimators. Departments already engaged in environmental studies and research are particularly well-positioned to lead this project. For groups already doing environmental work, such as the [Geography and Environmental Studies Department](#) in the Faculty of Arts,¹²⁴ the [Institute of the Environment](#),¹²⁵ and the [Planetary Health Research Collective](#),¹²⁶ we encourage early adoption of pledges like this. These departments could establish an institutional precedent encouraging other faculties to follow. Their leadership would demonstrate that environmental research should not depend on organizations whose activities contribute to the climate crisis they study.

For research groups like the Positive Energy Program, we recommend an ending of partnerships with the fossil fuel industry, and encourage the program to look into partnerships with clean energy and energy justice groups to continue their research. For example, the [Indigenous Clean Energy Social Enterprise](#) is an Ottawa-based group promoting Indigenous leadership in Canada's energy future through meaningful collaboration with academia and other stakeholders.¹²⁷ They seek to create markets grounded in Indigenous culture and focused on [clean energy capacity-building](#).¹²⁸ Partnerships with this group or similar groups would show that the University of Ottawa is invested in social and environmental justice, upholding the principles of [sustainability](#)¹²⁹ and [reconciliation](#)¹³⁰ the University purports to have.

There are many examples of universities across Canada engaging in environmental research and sustainable enterprising without the involvement of the fossil fuel industry. [Clean Energy Canada](#),¹³¹ hosted at Simon Fraser University, is an energy-related think tank and research group taking no funding from the fossil fuel industry, while engaging in energy work very similar to the Positive Energy program. The University of British Columbia similarly started a [Climate Justice Centre](#)¹³² to produce academic research and publications that advance the University and community's climate justice related initiatives. By engaging in partnerships with fossil fuel

¹²⁴ Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics | Faculty of Arts. (2025). Faculty of Arts. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/faculty-arts/geography-environment-geomatics>

¹²⁵ Institute of the Environment | Research and innovation. (2026). Research and Innovation. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/research-innovation/environment>

¹²⁶ Planetary Health Research Collective- IGHO | Faculty of Medicine. (2026). Faculty of Medicine. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/faculty-medicine/international-global-health-office/planetary-health-research-collaborative>

¹²⁷ Indigenous Clean Energy Network - Clean Energy as a Restorative Force. (n.d.). Indigenous Clean Energy. Retrieved September 3, 2026, from <https://indigenoucleanenergy.com/>

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Emissions and climate change | Campus life. (2023). Campus Life. <https://www.the University of Ottawa .ca/campus-life/campus-sustainability/emissions-climate-change>

¹³⁰ Indigenous Action Plan. (2025). <https://perma.cc/E28U-LMPW>

¹³¹ Clean Energy Canada. (2013). Clean Energy Canada – Realizing solutions. Clean Energy Canada. <https://cleanenergycanada.org/>

¹³² Centre for Climate Justice | University of British Columbia. (2025, December 22). Centre for Climate Justice. <https://climatejustice.ubc.ca/>

enablers, extractors, and legitimators, the University of Ottawa breeds mistrust among students interested in environmental work. Renouncing the fossil fuel industry in all avenues of the University is a show of good faith that will support student wellness into the future. Exploration of funding beyond what is offered by the fossil fuel industry will create research and partnerships that ultimately support the futures of students, and a just transition from fossil fuels.

Conclusion

The University of Ottawa's explicit ties to the fossil fuel industry make them complicit in the climate crisis. As an institution that [claims](#)¹³³ to have a longstanding commitment to environmental sustainability, the connections to the fossil fuel industry outlined in this report beg for accountability. The University has not met their 2022 commitments to divest all direct equity fossil fuel holdings by 2023. Moreover, there are no public accountability measures in place to track their divestment goals, or any significant updates from the University regarding their divestment commitments. The University failed to uphold its commitments to the Montreal Carbon Pledge,¹³⁴ Investing to Address Climate Change Charter,¹³⁵ the UN Principles for Responsible Investment,¹³⁶ and worst of all, their very own Addressing Global Warming: The University of Ottawa Response Strategy.¹³⁷

That being said, we do not offer any of these research results as tools of shame, but rather as tools to build momentum and inspire change. As students, we hope that this report will encourage present and future generations of the University of Ottawa community to advocate for climate justice, recognizing it as an interconnected issue that we can no longer afford to ignore.

We recognize that the current cuts to government spending on post-secondary education in Canada, including cuts to grant funding, international student caps, and Indigenous education funding,¹³⁸ leave the University in a complicated position where once assured sources of income are not readily available. But this does not take away the need for these grants, for international students, for Indigenous education funding, and so much more. The University should be investing in education and the environment, not fossil fuels and other harmful industries like the military. We envision a reality where our tuition dollars fund an institution whose investments and partnerships support a clean future for us, provide us sustainable job opportunities, and are financially supported by governments that prioritize meaningful education. With financial

¹³³ Sustainability plan | Campus life. (2023). Campus Life. <https://perma.cc/SY72-6FQ3>.

¹³⁴ the University of Ottawa becomes first Canadian university to sign global carbon pledge - Media releases and announcements | University of Ottawa. (2015, November 13). the University of Ottawa News. <https://perma.cc/CR7E-ADNC>

¹³⁵ A Climate Charter for Canadian Universities. (2020). Utoronto.Ca. <https://climatecharter.utoronto.ca/>.

¹³⁶ Responsible Investment Guidelines (Approved by the Finance and Treasury Committee, May 31, 2023). (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2026, from <https://perma.cc/9QTJ-8YE7>

¹³⁷ Addressing Global Warming | About us. (2016). About Us. <https://perma.cc/FE7E-X9L8>

¹³⁸ Budget 2025 analysis | CAUT. (2025, November 12). CAUT. <https://www.caut.ca/news/budget-2025-analysis/>

support we can grow communities that care for each other and the earth, that work cyclically and locally to ensure mutual aid and support.

Students are facing an affordability crisis where [housing](#),¹³⁹ [food](#),¹⁴⁰ [mobility](#),¹⁴¹ and other essential services are becoming more costly. Fighting for the climate is about more than fighting for a natural, healthy planet—it involves fighting for our collective wellbeing against the corporatization and financialization of our lives. As it stands, the University of Ottawa is profiting from destruction of the land, ecosystem, and the food and water insecurity caused by conflicts and genocides through their connections to fossil fuel financiers and other groups. This is demonstrated through their numerous ties to RBC, who not only invest in fossil fuels as documented in this report, but also in military, surveillance, and war.¹⁴² The University is directly implicated within the global violence that destroys societies and ecosystems.

Climate justice is an interconnected struggle affecting all students, particularly international and racialized students, and Indigenous students who have been the keepers of these lands for time immemorial. Among these students are those feeling the impacts of increased militarization and military financing in Canada and across the world as genocides continue in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan, the DRC, Myanmar; and [countless](#) conflicts continue and emerge across the globe, funded in part by the University.¹⁴³ Anti-militarization is explicitly connected to climate justice, and our findings in this report therefore further implicate the University in the climate crisis.

Shedding light on the University's ties to the fossil fuel industry is the first step in recognizing the effects of financialization and corporatization of our communities, as well as understanding the need for change centring climate justice principles. Investing in student communities is key, and the University should not wait for the government to provide or mandate funds when there is already a student body clamouring for these investments. Students want financial support for Indigenous clean energy, local climate action partnerships, and partnerships with socially conscious businesses to inform research priorities, events, and academic support systems. Putting student focus on false solutions and oil and gas is to the detriment of the University, and the student body.

¹³⁹ Housing Over Profit | SÉUO - UOSU. (2024). Seuo-Uosu.Com.

<https://www.seuo-uosu.com/advocacy/housing-over-profit>

¹⁴⁰ Karoui, O. (2025, November 11). Graduate Student Food Insecurity on Campus: A Hidden Hurdle. the University of Ottawa .Ca. <https://perma.cc/DAK9-MHJA>.

¹⁴¹ Coady, B. (2024, November 19). Student Experiences with OC Transpo: examining Ottawa's public transit system and calls for improvement - The Fulcrum. The Fulcrum. <https://thefulcrum.ca/news/student-experiences-with-oc-transpo-examining-ottawas-public-transit-system-and-calls-for-improvement/>

¹⁴² Action Network. (2020). RBC investments complicit with war crimes and corporate colonialism. Theactionnet. <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/rbc-complicit-with-war-crimes-and-genocide>

¹⁴³ Hassan, T. (2025, January 17). World Report 2025. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025>

At the outset of this research, our team sought to answer the question: **Is the University of Ottawa on track to meet its 2022 commitments to divest from fossil fuels, and if not, why?**

Based on our findings, we were able to

1. Determine that the University accepts financial aid from the fossil fuel industry through:
 - a. \$27 million in research funding from the fossil fuel industry has been donated to the University of Ottawa since 2004.
 - b. Over 243 research articles published at the University of Ottawa connected to the fossil fuel industry since 2004.

This complicity is hidden from students whose tuition is used to invest in oil and gas.

2. Assess and conclude that with what the University resolutely failed to meet targets set out in their emissions reductions plan, and as a result, their divestment plan as a whole. Specifically, they fail to meet their commitment to divesting from all direct equity fossil fuel holdings by 2023.¹⁴⁴
3. Describe the research bodies that propagate false solutions like Positive Energy, which not only delay divestment but actively justify continued investment in fossil fuels.
4. Determine that full and complete divestment involves active restructuring of research bodies, research funding, investment portfolios, events and services, and hiring processes, while also considering alternatives to oil and gas like clean energy with an environmental justice perspective.

It is our hope that in the future, if further research is done on the University's ties to the fossil fuel industry, it will document significant progress and action taken. Students of the University of Ottawa will be graduating into a world suffering the consequences of global warming rising above 1.5°C, and it is shameful that the University is implicated in this. We welcome change from the University, and also a rise in allyship among students, professors, and more members of the University to push for action. Recalling the success of the RBC Off Campus campaign, we know that our campus cares enough to organize and demand change. We hope that this report can contribute to this change.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*