

Interview with Cheryl McNamara, volunteer with the
Citizens' Climate Lobby

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1 | Background and method

Cheryl McNamara is a prominent organizer with the Toronto chapter of the Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) — a climate-focused environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 2007 in California, and established in Canada in 2010.¹ The CCL focuses on 'fee and dividend' as a means of putting a price on CO₂ emissions, and concentrates its efforts on building trusting, non-confrontational relationships with decision-makers and the media. Under such a policy, a steadily-rising fee would be imposed for each tonne of CO₂ emitted, but all revenues from the system would be re-distributed on a per-capita basis. The result would be that those with lower-than-average CO₂ emissions would get back more in dividends than they paid in fees, while those with higher-than-average emissions would experience the opposite effect. The aim of the approach is to provide an economic incentive for cost-efficient mitigation of emissions, and to do so in a way that is more politically acceptable than a standard carbon tax.

The subject was friendly (she hugged me at her own initiation when we met and parted) and is someone who has been known to me through Toronto climate change activist circles. I once visited her home for a CCL meeting, and have subsequently seen her at local climate-related events. The interview was arranged through email. I asked the subject if she would be willing to discuss an action or campaign her group has undertaken, and she was willing to do so. In the course of trying to find an interview subject, I contacted two other organizers with environmentally-related groups (both of whom I had met at previous activist events). One declined to be interviewed without explanation, and the other never responded to my email.

This was a semi-structured interview.² I prepared a list of 16 questions beforehand, which generally correspond to the questions asked in the actual interview. The questions were designed to "maximize neutrality and to minimize leading questions".³ They were focused on the actual actions undertaken by the subject and CCL, the outcomes that arose from them, and the thinking that motivated them. In a few cases, I modified questions to take into account information the subject had already provided, or to seek additional information on matters she had raised. Since this interview was intended to be one-off and not part of a series, it was not

¹See: <http://citizensclimatelobby.ca/>

²See: Bleich and Pekkanen, "How to Report Interview Data", p. 97–8.

³Martin, "Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect", p. 117–24.

necessary to consider ways of getting comparable data from multiple subjects. The interview was recorded using my laptop, with the subject's consent. I took extremely minimal written notes during the interview, in part because I was concentrating on engaging with the subject.

Below is a transcript of questions and responses as delivered, with only pregnant pauses (like 'um') omitted. Where possible, I have verified the spellings of the names of individuals, events, and organizations by searching online.

2 | Transcript

Interviewer: Milan Ilnyckyj

Interviewee: Cheryl McNamara, Communications, Citizens' Climate Lobby

Interview setting: Interview conducted in a group study room at Robarts Library at the University of Toronto at 4:30pm on Tuesday, March 18th 2014

(Start of interview)

Milan Ilnyckyj: Thank you again for agreeing to meet with me.

Cheryl McNamara: Yes, of course.

MI: As I mentioned, this is for my qualitative methods training and it will be used just for the purpose of the course.

CM: OK

MI: I was hoping to ask you a few questions that will last maybe 30 to 45 minutes.

CM: Sure

MI: About Citizens' Climate Lobby and, in particular, your efforts to meet with editorial boards of newspapers. So, I was hoping you could start by briefly introducing yourself and the Citizens' Climate Lobby and explain how you became involved with the group.

CM: Sure. So, I became involved in Citizens' Climate Lobby in the fall of 2010. I, up until then, wasn't actively looking for a group to become involved with but I had come to a point in my activism where I knew

that government interaction was incredibly important to try and advance the interests of the transition to a clean energy economy. Up until then, I was very much focused on myself — reducing my own footprint — and I blogged about it so I could inform my network of my efforts and hopefully inspire them. I became quite involved with a movement, not a movement but an event in Ottawa in 2009 to try to fill up Parliament Hill with people who wanted the government to do something about climate change. It was right before Copenhagen and that was a real opportune time.⁴ I had realized while I was there: “We’re making a lot of noise here, but what is stopping us from actually going in and talking to politicians?” So, I found out about Citizens’ Climate Lobby through another activist based in Sudbury named Kathra Lando and she was trained by Al Gore for the Climate Reality Project.⁵ While there — while in the States — part of one of her conferences, she met this guy named Marshall Saunders who a member of RESULTS.⁶ Sorry, there’s a lot of organizations I’m kind of throwing around but he was trained by Al Gore too. He was very much interested prior to becoming a climate activist to eradicate poverty worldwide and he focused on microcredit loans, particularly for women in Mexico. But in watching Al Gore’s film *An Inconvenient Truth* he realized: “My Lord, all the work that we’re doing to try and, you know, bring people out of poverty is going to be for nothing because of climate change”. So, he was also involved with a citizens-based group, RESULTS, to try and engage in the political process to mitigate poverty and had great results. So he decided to apply that method to Citizens’ Climate Lobby and he actually called Kathy to get involved in Canada and I found out about it through her and that’s how I got involved. And basically Citizens’ Climate Lobby is a growing movement of chapter-based organizations that are meeting with their political representatives to try and put a rising fee on carbon.⁷ We’re active in the United States and Canada. We’re about 140 chapters so far, growing in leaps and bounds. So we develop relationships with our political representatives but we also develop relationships with the media because we want to build political will for a stable climate. So that is in a nutshell what Citizens’ Climate Lobby is and how I got involved.

MI: Thank you. What composition does your chapter of the CCL have? About how many people are involved,

⁴See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_United_Nations_Climate_Change_Conference

⁵I was not able to confirm the spelling of this name online.

⁶See: <https://www.results.org/>

⁷See: <http://citizensclimatelobby.ca/>

and to what degree? What characteristics do they have in common? And are there any systematic ways in which they differ from the general public?

CM: So just our group in Toronto, in particular?

MI: Yes

CM: OK. This is probably like many CCL groups throughout North America. It's drawn by people who are very, very concerned about climate change and are at a point in their lives where they want to take action. Quite a few of them are active in other organizations, so they're just active people, and they recognize that CCL is an effective organization. There are about 15 active people. We come and go. Some people move abroad and they come back and they're active. Some people are more active than others, but that's a common set of who we are.

MI: And do you think there's anything they have in common that differs from the general population, other than their concern about this specific issue?

CM: They believe strongly that they can have an impact on the political system.

MI: Thank you. What relationship does your group have with other CCL chapters? Does CCL have a central group of organizers that provides direction to local groups? And to what degree do you communicate with and collaborate with the other Canadian chapters?

CM: Yeah, it's interesting, in Canada we are not a not-for-profit yet, although we're working towards that. Our plan is to become incorporated at the end of 2015. I joke we're trying to establish an organization while trying to save the planet. It's hard to try and juggle both. We do have a national organization and a national office, based in Sudbury. We also are very much connected to what's been happening in the United States and certainly, in the beginning, the real real beginning, we basically matched what their actions were. So, every month we have an action. Every month we get together, the first Saturday of every month. I'm one of the founding board members in Canada, so it's kind of like a steering committee to try and get it off the ground but to manage the monthly actions. The first Saturday of every month we all convene — all the chapters convene — and we listen to a teleconference for about an hour, and it's patched through the United States. All the chapters are listening in. We've had people like James Hansen, Lester Brown, who have been keynote

speakers.⁸ And then we talk about our success in the past month and what we're planning to do for the month ahead. Very much in that meeting, we try to do our actions as much as we can, or plan how we're going to execute our actions in the month. So, that's kind of what we do.

MI: Thank you. What are the major objectives of your local group, and what strategies have you been using to advance them?

CM: Right now our major objective is the major objective of CCL in general: in our government, the federal governments of the United States and Canada, to place a rising fee on carbon and to give the dividend back to Canadian and American households. The reason for that is we want to send a price signal to Canadians, to industry, businesses, to try and start to reduce their carbon emissions. So whether they retrofit their buildings, or they start investing in clean energy technologies. That fee needs to rise to a really, really high place to really see the change that we want to see. Because there is a burden — those costs are downloaded on Canadians — we feel it's fairer and it generates political will to give that money back to Canadians. So that's our primary objective. We also lobbied on removing fossil fuel subsidies in the United States and Canada as well. In terms of how we do it, we hone, nurture, relationships with our MPs and MPPs. We don't just meet with them once. We meet with them on an ongoing basis to try and advance our objectives. Whether it's a private member's bill, or if we're also working to create political will within a particular party, to support our policy. And then we also meet with the media as well and we write letters to the editor, but we meet with members of the media, particularly editorial boards, to ensure that or to try and get the voice of the paper, basically, to support our initiatives. Again, to build political will.

MI: You mentioned that both in the United States and Canada people are seeking a federal-level fee and dividend. Is either your chapter or any other chapter you know of trying to do the same thing at a provincial or a state level?

CM: Yes. When we first started it was very much focused on the federal level and in fact we in Canada thought B.C. has legislated a carbon tax and it's doing quite well. Why not try and do that in the provinces? The idea or strategy being: industry is calling for a more harmonized approach. If they have a carbon tax in B.C., a

⁸See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Hansen, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lester_Brown

cap-and-trade system in Ontario, or even a carbon tax in Ontario, here there and everywhere, it's going to drive them crazy. That's one reason. We also found that the provinces seem to be more receptive to this idea of doing something more about climate change than our current federal government. The United States is starting to follow suit as well. In Massachusetts there has been a huge push to try and legislate a carbon tax there by CCL chapter leaders as well as, now I've heard, in California. I believe that either Oregon or Washington is starting or has legislated a carbon tax. It's starting to happen at that level.

MI: Thank you. You mentioned this already. What is your thinking behind the tactic of meeting with newspaper editorial boards? Is the objective more to try to influence public opinion, or more to try to influence decision-makers, or both of those things? And how do these meetings fit in with your general media strategy?

CM: I think it's both, definitely. We are meeting with editorial boards because it's a best practice that has been passed down from us by the organization RESULTS. They found that there has been some really good results when the voice of the paper comes out and supports what they do. That way, RESULTS members and CCL members can take that in to show it to their representatives. An example: we just met with the editorial board of the *Toronto Star* and they asked us not only to write an op-ed, but Carol Goar was so interested and intrigued by the results of this report on clean technology that she had to write about it as well.⁹¹⁰ Once those two pieces were printed in the paper, we could take it along with the actual report — the clean technology report — and we're all sending it to our MPs: "Please read this op-ed. Please read what she said. *The Star* is so interested in this". So immediately they're intrigued. In fact, my own MP just sent me an email today saying: "Shit." Normally, his aide calls me. It's him — Matthew Kellway — and he spoke to me himself, saying: "Cheryl, this is very interesting. This is all in keeping with my white paper that I'm trying to".¹¹ So, definitely it's very much tied into and helps us with our strategy to connect with our political representatives.

MI: Right. Could you please provide a rough timeline for the process leading up to your meetings with the editorial boards of *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*? When did you first begin to reach out to them? And what form of contact or communication ultimately made them willing to meet with you?

⁹See: http://www.thestar.com/authors.goar_carol.html

¹⁰Goar, *Manufacturing rises from the ashes*.

¹¹See: <http://matthewkellway.ndp.ca/>

CM: Sure. This is why I'm glad I printed this.¹² In the summer of 2011, this was our infancy, I officially began Toronto chapter in January of 2011. We had one of our members, John Flemming, who has since moved on to Paris, but we decided I was going to take care of *The Globe and Mail* he was going to take care of *The Toronto Star* and I think somebody else was taking care of *The National Post*. We were in the middle of a campaign to try and get the government to get rid of subsidies to fossil fuel industries and John Flemming, with no experience whatsoever with the media. Oh, actually, to back up, in the summer of 2011, he decided he was going to approach the editorial board of the *Toronto Star* about getting together about carbon fee and dividend and sit down and explain what it is to them. Basically he connected with Andrew Phillips, who is the editor of the editorial board, and he said: "Listen, we are a skeleton crew right now, I can't really meet with you".¹³ So we kind of shelved that, and about six months later that's when we wanted to pick up the ball again. We were working with the Climate Action Network about this campaign to get rid of fossil fuel subsidies and John approached them again and said: "Listen. We'd like to meet with you".¹⁴ And Andrew shot back and said: "Whoa, just send me some information on it". And we did. What we do is we develop media packets — around four page document that editorializes what our pitch is, what we want somebody to do, and what have you. It provides information, links to well-resourced places — just to make it easier for journalists to look at and hopefully incorporate into their editorial or their column. That's the purpose of that. So we said: "Sure. We'll send that to you but we want to meet with you". And he said: "I just need the information, you know, this is all I need. It's not worth sitting down for a chat over this". And we were still quite naive. We consulted with Steve Valk, who is our communications director, based in Atlanta, and kept saying: "Try and get a meeting".¹⁵ So John came back and Andrew just snapped back at him. He was really terse with him. He said: "I just need the bloody information." [LAUGHS] So, we all kind of went: "Oh my god. We've just ruining a relationship". So we scale back and send him the information. John had to leave because he was going to Paris, so I took over and I just started to gently nourish the relationship with Andrew. I would write to him

¹²The interview subject provided me with a four-and-a-half page written account of the history of the Toronto chapter of CCL's contact with the *Toronto Star* editorial board.

¹³See: http://www.thestar.com/opinion/2011/06/16/meet_the_stars_editorial_board.html

¹⁴See: <http://climateactionnetwork.ca/>

¹⁵See: <http://citizensclimatelobby.org/resources/working-with-the-mainstream-media-2/write-letters-to-the-editor/>

whenever there was an editorial on something, even if it was not climate related, on something that I liked: “It was really bright. I liked it for this reason”. And he sometimes shot back and said: “Thank you, thank you very much”. So I wanted to really nourish sort of a trusting, lovely — like, no no, loving — but just a trusting relationship, right? In the fall, no the spring, of 2012, our Executive Director Mark Reynolds was coming to town from San Diego.¹⁶ He was going to do a group-start workshop with us and Christian Holz who was then the new ED of the Climate Action Network.¹⁷ He’s based in Ottawa, was coming to Toronto. He was going to take train because he was curious about us. And Mark said: “This might be a good opportunity for me to try and get a meeting with the editorial board of *The Toronto Star*. Just — he’s coming — Christian’s coming, we talk about environmental concerns and, you know, talk about the importance of, you know, putting a tax on carbon”. So I wrote this long email to Andrew kind of explaining everything and I was very nervous. I said to him — and the next day — five o’clock, I was going to have to call him. I recognized that five o’clock — or was told that five o’clock — was a good time to call these people because it’s after their deadlines. You weren’t annoying them. I was nervous all day. I was at work and finally at five o’clock I sat down in a private place, got onto my cell phone, dialed the number. I had never spoken to him before so all I knew was, you know, the experience that John had had and I just thought he was going to bark at me. No, why, why, why would I want to. [LAUGHS] Well he called and I asked him and he said: “Yeah, sure, that shouldn’t be a problem. How’s Thursday?” And I was absolutely, I was not expecting that at all. So I was terribly excited and we were able to meet with him for an hour. So that was a bit of insight to me, going forward, you know. It’s good to bring in experts, especially experts that are coming in from out of town, because it gives them an opportunity. And really the point of these editorial meetings is just to educate themselves on these issues. So we sat down. They gave us an hour and we thought we were going to go in and take control of the meeting, you know, and explain our situation but Andrew, immediately, it was like his show. He just started peppering us with questions, which we were able to answer. We did talk at length about carbon fee and dividend and he did talk about: “Well, you know, look at Stéphane Dion’s experience.” And he brought up, and it wasn’t just him, it was the

¹⁶See: <http://tcktcktck.org/2013/07/partner-spotlight-mark-reynolds-citizens-climate-lobby/54733>

¹⁷See: <http://climateactionnetwork.ca/tag/christian-holz/>

other members. And we were able to counter that. You know, time has gone by after that. That wasn't the only reason, you know, that Stéphane Dion had problems, and we also brought up the B.C. experience that, here is a government that legislated that got re-elected despite the fact that they put in a carbon tax and that it was actually generally supported by the public. It was also, the meeting was good because we established some interesting relationships with some of the other members of the editorial board: Gord Bathos, self-described Progressive Conservative.¹⁸ He was very interested in what we had to say and he was very respectful and he told me point blank: "Please send me your media packages. I actually read them". So that was really good to know. Because you just think: "Oh god, we're sending this into the ether and they're ignoring it" but, no, he assured me that they were definitely reading them. So that was really great. And I do remember — oh, what was her name? — one of the members — her name escapes me — but I remember in parting, there was a look that she was giving us. It felt like it was: "I'm on your side and thank you for what you're doing". She didn't say it in words, but just in the way she looked at us. In her own way, how she was saying goodbye. That was in March, or, it was March, of 2012. And in April the, not in April sorry, August they basically finally weighed in on the issue and encouraged the government to take up, you know, it should actually rethink its approach on carbon taxes, so that was really really reassuring, and a bit of a victory, definitely.

CM: In terms of *The Globe and Mail*, [LAUGHS] I was getting sick and tired of, you know, picking up *The Globe and Mail*. From the editorial board, to the columns, to even just the news, how they were treating the news on the tar sands — that sense that you get, the narrative that they were reiterating and something that the government is certainly pushing is that our economic and energy future is tied in with the tar sands. And I — we both know that it's a future of death, really — we need to change that narrative. So I got in touch with Tom Rand who's a venture capitalist and who I worked with in the past.¹⁹ I said: "Listen, this is what I want to do. I want to change the narrative, can you help me?" And he was all for it. He was skeptical, but he was all, you know, all for it. I said: "What I want to do is get somebody like you in the room but I also want to get a climate scientist so that we're kind of connecting the dots ". So I was able to get Dr. Richard Peltier, who is at the University of Toronto, and he agreed to come meet with us if I was able to actually secure a

¹⁸See: http://www.thestar.com/opinion/2011/06/16/meet_the_stars_editorial_board.

¹⁹See: <http://www.tomrand.net/>

meeting with *The Globe and Mail*.²⁰ But Tom said: “Listen, you should also bring in this woman named Céline Bak [SPELLS OUT NAME]”.²¹ She’s the president of a company called Analytica Advisors, and they’re based in Ottawa, and they’re actually looking at monitoring the clean technology industry in Canada. And she can tell us about trends and all these sorts of things. That sounds fabulous. Let’s get her. So he connected us and then I was able to speak to her and she just opened my mind. She opened my mind to basically where we are economically, where our vulnerabilities are, and the role that clean technology in Canada can play and where it’s at right now. So she basically showed us that, you know, by then it was like a ten-point-something billion dollar industry in Canada — bigger than I think anybody realized — and it was investing about a billion a year in research and development, which is phenomenal. It’s also, and it was made up of about seven hundred small-to-medium-sized businesses, which is why it’s under the RADAR. So this was all, like, fascinating and new information for me, and certainly something that we need *The Globe and Mail* to see. Cause it was right in line to what we are trying to do. Shift that narrative away from fossil fuel to this clean energy economy that we must transition to. So, I tried to get a meeting with John Geiger but found out that he had left so they were in a waiting pattern for a new editor of the editorial board to come in.²² His name is Tony Keller.²³ So I got in touch with the interim editor, but we both decided that let’s wait until Tony gets in. So he got in and I kind of gave it a week or so, so he could get, you know, settled and then I came in with this pitch and I worked with Céline, Tom, and Dick on this. I wrote up the pitch, I gave it to them, they made some edits, fed it back to me, and then I sent it to him and I also created a media packet, just so that they could review it before the meeting. And he agreed, which was fabulous and I think it shocked Tom and Dick. So that was great. We met with him in November and it was him, it was two other people of the board and ultimately I don’t think they really understood what we were trying to tell them, which was shocking to us. At one point Tony looked at us and he said: “I hope you don’t get the wrong idea but are you talking about a climate policy or an industry policy?” I’m saying: “It’s both”. It has to be, right? So I think they sort-of somewhat got it. I asked if they could do an editorial, write an editorial, and he said no. [LAUGHS] I don’t think he said no point blank,

²⁰See: <http://www.atmosp.physics.utoronto.ca/~peltier/>

²¹See: <http://www.analytica-advisors.com/our-team>

²²See: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/john-geiger/article4268200/>

²³See: <http://www.tonykeller.net/p/about.html>

but he just said, he didn't really give me an answer. And we thought: "OK, can we submit an op-ed?" And he said: "Well, that's not really our decision. You're going to have to send it to Natasha [Hassan, Comment Editor]".²⁴ OK. So we did our op-ed, we sent it to her, and she declined. So it was a bit disappointing and what I feel with *The Globe and Mail* it's definitely a work in progress. I wanted to figure out what would be the next opportunity to get in touch with him so that he could actually write an editorial on this and I asked Céline, because Céline through Analytica Advisors, every year they produce the Canadian Clean Technology Industry Report. When is the 2014 report due? And she said: "You know, it's either going to be February or March". And I said: "OK — great. So let's work together on this and we'll do another media packet on it, see if *The Globe and Mail* could write an editorial on it". Then, in the mean time, I thought: "Why don't we just try to get a meeting with *The National Post* and *Toronto Star*?" It turns out that Tom Rand, he was away when Céline could meet, that would be the end of February. The report, we later realized, was going to come out March 6th. We could meet a week before that. That's when Céline could come in. Tom was going to be in California for something else. We really wanted him to be in the *National Post* meeting, so we thought: "Let's forget the *National Post* for now, and we'll set it aside for another month or so later. Let's really focus on the *Toronto Star* because if anybody's going to write an editorial on this or do anything about it it's going to be them." So we, I, again did the pitch thing, gave it to Céline and to Dick. Dick [difficult to transcribe, possibly "could commute as well"] and, you know, they finalized and we sent it to Andrew and we, right away, he emailed and said: "Yes — love to meet with you". So we met with them end of February, in fact I think it was the last day of February. Carol Goar was in the room, Christopher Hume, Leslie [possibly Scrivener]— oh, what's his last name, can't remember his last name — was there, and of course Andrew, and one other woman whose name I forget.²⁵ They were gobsmacked. [LAUGHS] They were, like, Christopher Hume and Carol Goar — I looked over and their mouths were literally gaping open with what Céline had to tell them. They had no idea and they kept asking, especially Carol Goar, she said: "This industry, they gotta get their act together, they need to be telling people about the work that they're doing". And, you know, we were saying

²⁴See: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/help/contact-us/>

²⁵See: http://www.thestar.com/authors.hume_christopher.html, http://www.thestar.com/authors.scrivener_leslie.html

part of the problem is that some of them are so small, like are in such infancy stages with their innovations that they just don't have the time to. So they have to form an association. So, you know, we really imparted to her — and it's why it's important for newspapers like the *Star* to communicate the work they're doing. So she really took it upon herself. She actually wrote a column that was printed in the following Monday paper. They asked for an op-ed for us. By the way, they actually printed, they didn't print, they posted, remember that op-ed I told you about that we wrote for *The Globe and Mail*? *The Globe and Mail* didn't want it, so we gave it to the *Star* and they said: "Yeah, we'll". They didn't print it, but they did post it online, which was great. So they asked for another op-ed and we said: "Sure". So, and I asked him: "Would you consider doing an editorial?" And he said: "That's something we will definitely consider". They haven't done it, but I think Carol Goar kind of did it for them through their column, although I imagine in the future they're probably going to bring up the information, the findings, hopefully. But they're very, I mean it was a great great meeting. It was probably one of the most gratifying meetings [LAUGHS] with the media I've had and, of course, it's an ongoing process. This just happened a couple of weeks ago, so.

MI: Great. Very informative.

CM: Yeah. [LAUGHS]

MI: Why did you choose these two newspapers, or three with the *National Post*? And did you approach others who have not yet agreed to meet with you?

CM: Well in Toronto, because we're in Toronto, we've, certainly *The Globe and Mail* is very important. *The Globe and Mail*. *The Toronto Star* is Canada's largest daily paper, so it's very very important, and natural, for us to form a relationship with them and definitely, of all the papers, we suspected that they're most likely to get it and certainly that has proven the case. *National Post* is very important. They're a conservative paper, as you know, widely read certainly by industry players, by government. Highly, highly regarded newspaper. So we definitely need to be working on them to change the narrative. I think that once you change the narrative with *The Globe and Mail*, holy crap, that's going to be significant. I think that that would have a huge impact. *National Post* is another ball of wax, of course. As you know, they're extremely conservative, they have a number of columnists who actually don't believe in the science of global warming. So I did actually have an exchange with

Matt Gurney a couple weeks ago, right before he was going on holiday and, in an email exchange, I called him and he was like: “I’m on deadline right now”.²⁶ But he emailed me at five, after his deadline was passed, and said: “Yeah, I looked at your package but I don’t think there’s anything in here that would interest us”. Something to the effect. And I shot back, and I said: “You know, we’ve had good meetings with *The Globe and Mail* and with *The Toronto Star*. We think it’s really important to meet with *The National Post* as well.” And he shot back and he said: “OK — I’ll see what I can do. I don’t think the editorial board would be interested but there might be a few columnists who would”. And that’s great, so said: “When you get back, I’ll give you a formal pitch and then you can take that to, you know, anybody who’s interested”. “I’ll definitely take that”. But kind of interesting. It’s, we’re inspired by what other CCL chapters have done in the United States, certainly in Canada as well. I know one group, I think it’s in San Diego, that actually changed the voice of a particular newspaper. I can’t remember which one it is but they used to claim that the science was unsettled and then because CCL in San Diego was so on them, so on them, they finally they wrote an editorial saying that the science was settled. So that was a huge victory. So I think we want to, certainly when we go in to *The National Post*, make that economic argument. Continue to make that economic argument, cause that’s what they’re willing to hear. But we’re still going to bring a climate scientist with us as well.

MI: Great. You covered some of this already, but if you have any further comments. Who did you actually meet with in each case, and what was the discussion like? How well-informed were they about climate science and policy beforehand?

CM: I think with Tony Keller, he was very concerned about climate change. Very concerned. Like to the point where it looked like he was almost sick. Like, and at one point he said: “It’s too late, isn’t it?” That was the narrative, it’s like he’s on two narratives. It’s really bizarre. They’re concerned about climate change. They get it, right, but they don’t see, they’re not, they don’t seem to be making the connection between the tar sands and a warming planet. So it’s that disconnect that we’re trying to bridge with him. With *The Toronto Star*, they get it, right. They’re concerned about climate change but it’s the politics of it that they’re more mired in and concerned about. I mean, how do you build political will around that, you know? And our thing

²⁶See: <http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/author/mattgurneynatpost/>

is, well, you help that. [LAUGHS] And in fact, you know, after the meeting, or at the end of the meeting with *The Toronto Star* recently, you know, I reminded them: “Listen, you know, *The Toronto Star* is an important voice in this and you guys are very important players in this conversation”. And it’s important to remind them, you know, I think when I started my feeling was: “Well who am I to approach the editorial board of *The Toronto Star* or *The Globe and Mail*? Who am I to do that?” I mean, the answer is: “Well, who am I not to? I’m concerned enough about climate change”. But it was a reminder, in that meeting with them, as I said that they were all beaming, even like Carol Goar, it put a smile on their face. And I have to remember that they’re human beings too. God only knows, they’re probably they get the most horrid emails from people, from readers. It’s really important to continue to thank them for the work that they’re doing and to remind them the work that they do is really, really important and makes an impact. Which is why we’re there. We wouldn’t be there otherwise.

MI: Were there any notable facts or arguments that members of the editorial boards raised, but which you think are inaccurate?

CM: I’m trying to think specifically. Yeah, I think, and I don’t think, I think we did not a very good job in countering it. We met with *The Toronto Star*, the editorial board. They were saying that the Liberal government in Ontario has done a terrible job with the Green Energy Act. Surely, they’ve made mistakes, but we’ve got to remember that, you know, this is a government that has phased out coal plants for the most part and the FIT program is probably not the most effective policy but it is getting solar power and wind power and jobs online, which is important. Sure there’s been problems, but I think the big inaccuracy is that it’s driving up costs. My understanding the big huge culprits in driving up energy costs are the fact that we have a government that had to re-invest in infrastructure, so that’s expensive, but you also have huge subsidies to, you know, the nuclear industry as well. So, it’s unfortunate, there seems to be a myth that renewable energy, you know, is a big culprit in driving up costs in Ontario. I just didn’t have enough details that I can sit there and counter what they were trying to say and I also wanted us to — I wasn’t the one driving the argument — it was more Céline and Dick. But it’s unfortunate because this is something that Carol Goar brought up in her column, right, again it’s perpetuating that myth.

MI: When you asked them to write editorials, did you ask them specifically to endorse fee and dividend? And,

if so, what response did they give you on that?

CM: Yeah, I think when we met with them the first time — and when I say “they” I mean *The Toronto Star* — we asked if they could write an editorial on this and, in particular, on a carbon tax. And again, they weren’t going to say, they didn’t say yes. It’s not something they were going to immediately do. But the great thing is that we informed them, right? We continue to inform them. It’s not as though we kind of walked away, you know. Whenever there was an opportunity to send them another media packet on climate change. Whenever we do a media packet it’s always about, you know, the dangers of climate change and the solution. You know, putting a fee on carbon. So it was great that, you know, a couple of months later they were able to write.

MI: In addition to the specific articles you’ve mentioned, did you perceive any changes in climate change coverage in either paper after your discussion?

CM: That’s a funny one. The editorial board. I don’t, to be honest with you, I do not know how much the editorial board communicates with the news desk. That’s the thing, right? The editorial board looks, it’s on opinion. I don’t know if it’s made much of an impact. I think the reason why we’re hearing more, probably, about climate change and global warming is because of the extreme weather events that we’re experiencing in Canada. People are starting to connect the dots. So I don’t know if we’ve had a direct impact on that. One of the things that we try and do, though, is if there’s a big climate change study that’s been out there that Reuters or the Canadian Press picks up we contact the news desk and ask them to print that story.

MI: Has anyone from either paper contacted the CCL with questions about climate science or policy since your meetings?

CM: No. [LAUGHS]

MI: In a general sense, what factors do you think influence the contents of news reports about climate change?

CM: Sorry, what?

MI: In a general sense, what factors do you think influence the contents of media reports about climate change?

CM: IPCC happens. Major reports happen that you’re going to see something. Usually it’s buried. Sometimes they’ll do front page news but my remembrance of Warsaw, I don’t think there was hardly any front page

coverage on it.²⁷ I think, I'm afraid sometimes people are tapped out, but I think the big thing right now is extreme weather and I'm very happy to see articles on extreme weather talking about climate change.

MI: To what degree do you think policy-makers and the general public are well-informed about climate change? In what areas is there the least general knowledge?

CM: Hmm. In terms of policy-makers — and this is public officials, politicians — it depends on the party that you're in. When we met with members of the NDP and Liberal Party they are generally well-informed. When we meet with members of the Conservative Party they are not and even people who are, who do acknowledge the science of climate change, they have some interesting ideas in how it needs to be solved. But in terms of the general public, I think that a lot of people are aware of climate change and understand the science of climate change. When you see polls people are expressing concern. And again I think extreme weather events has a lot to do with it. More people are moving up that line between, you know, somewhat informed to a little bit more informed and concerned. But there seems to be a disconnect as well, it's very hard, we live in a world, we live in creature comforts and I look at people in my own world, my parents for example, who have expressed deep concern about climate change, but they're still flying off to Hawaii, right? So it's hard to try and acknowledge or, you know, put the finger on your own cake. [LAUGHS] Which I think is a really important place to start. But I think that there is an appetite out there to actually have policies in place like a carbon tax to help shift things around.

MI: Are there any general lessons from this experience that you think apply to the work of environmental or social justice groups? Did any unexpected difficulties arise during the process?

CM: Yeah, I think the unexpected difficulty was, you know, our rocky beginning. Again, it's like anything. It's a relationship, building a relationship, and we're in it for the long haul. Like meeting with politicians — as in meeting members of the media — this is a long-term relationship that you are honing. You are building a relationship of trust. Often, you know, when we meet politicians for the first time, especially when they don't agree with our point of view, it's a rocky start. It's enough for anybody just to walk away and go: "Oh, what a waste of time". Second meetings, however, are tend to be more cordial and when they realize that, you know,

²⁷See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_United_Nations_Climate_Change_Conference

you're in there as their constituent — certainly when you're talking about politicians — they tend to warm up a little, especially when you understand where they're coming from and speak to that. So, you know, if they're a business person you speak business, from a business point of view. You acknowledge the work that they're doing: "Thank you for what you're doing on this file, blah blah blah". You know? Those sorts of things really open people up because quite often they hear criticism all the time and you want to build a working relationship, a cordial working relationship. And I think with the media as well — the media, especially the print media, they have quite the hit because of advertising dollars. Social media is like, you know, the whole way of media getting revenue streams is, they're on shaky ground. A lot of media have actually crumbled. And they've had to, a lot of media have had to, you know, lay off a lot of workers so this is skeletal staff. So if you realize that, like, how can I be a help to these people, you know? Call them not when they're on deadline for something, you know. Make sure we send them stuff that is really well researched. Make their lives easy for them, right? And get them to like you. [LAUGHS] Then, you know, it's going to be a lot easier because, you know, their voices are important.

MI: Great. All right, last question. How do you see the climate change mitigation movement evolving in the next few years? Do you think the movement as a whole is making smart decisions? In what areas might it do better?

CM: I think that there is momentum building and that's very exciting. I think people are becoming more, as I mentioned before, very concerned about the problem and are at a point where they want to actually take action and feel that they are being effective. So there are amazing organizations like 350.org, certainly the Citizens' Climate Lobby as well, and a few others that are really mobilizing and that is terribly exciting.²⁸ I think that we're starting to do smart things. 350.org is very intelligently focusing on divestment, which is really starting to change the conversation and putting a spot light, as well, on the fact that, you know, our tar sands are vulnerable economically. They are vulnerable. And also on the spotlight that we just have a short, small budget [LAUGHS] left, where we can burn this crap. So I think we're also working better together. I think that more needs to be done in terms of working with our politicians, definitely. It's hard. It's interesting.

²⁸See: <http://350.org/>

It's evolving so quickly.

MI: Thank you very much. This was very instructive.

CM: Good. Thank you.

(End of interview — 45:14 — 7,196 words)

3 | Analysis

My main research objectives were to get more information about the functioning of the CCL, their recent experience reaching out to media sources, and their tactics and motivations. The interview provided good information on all of these, and included material that could not be gleaned from their website or other publicly-available sources. The interview was both directly informative and indirectly useful, insofar as the communication strategies used by the subject during the interview itself provided some of the information I was seeking, along with helpful context.

The subject was articulate and well-prepared to provide answers to my questions — though only the general subject matter of the interview was discussed by email beforehand, and I did not provide her with the questions in advance. The degree of detail provided in the events recounted was significant and notable, down to the level of describing how a particular member of a newspaper editorial board looked at the subject at the end of a meeting, as well as the specific date on which another meeting took place. The contents of the answers provided would probably not be very surprising to anyone acquainted with social movement or climate activism in North America today, as well as with Canada's media landscape, though valuable detail was provided about the strategic thinking, processes, and experiences of the CCL.

The details from the interview could be used to call into question simplistic accounts about the role of non-governmental organizations in influencing the policy process. As described in this interview, the CCL approach is highly strategic and targets multiple audiences simultaneously. They perceive the media as an important intermediary between themselves and politicians, as well as an important tool for influencing the thinking and behaviour of decision-makers. The subject specifically described using newspaper articles they had encouraged

as evidence for a politician that climate change is a matter of general public concern. CCL's interaction with the media involved both persistence and strategic behaviour: ranging from cultivating relationships on the basis of non-climate-related discussions to making telephone calls to journalists after their daily deadlines. The subject also described ways in which experts including climate scientists could be leveraged to gain media attention, both in terms of adding credibility to CCL's arguments and in terms of providing justification for meetings in the first place.

Rhetorically, one aspect of the interview I found interesting was the subject's tendency to paraphrase the speech of others, but express that paraphrasing as though it were observed dialog. For instance, describing a conversation with *Toronto Star* editor Andrew Phillips, the subject said:

And Andrew shot back and said: "Whoa, just send me some information on it."

Since the central purpose of the CCL is to engage constructively with decision-makers and journalists, the communication strategies of their representatives are closely tied to their success. Impressionistically, these incorporated segments of paraphrased dialog add dynamism to the discussion of a series of events. It also puts emphasis on the character of the interaction two people had, rather than simply the outcome that resulted. They represent a certain liberty taken by the interview subject, since it is unlikely that she can quote the people being cited verbatim. This was acknowledged specifically by the subject when attributing speech to Matt Gurney. Taken together, this linguistic device might be interpreted as a tool used by a talented storyteller whose motivation and strategy are based around raising the concern of others about a specific subject and increasing their odds of acting on it. Frequent use of metaphorical language can probably be interpreted in the same way.

The CCL is arguably a notable and unusual interest group, in that the success of their campaign would largely provide benefits to others, since climate change is an intergenerational problem and the worst effects are expected to be felt by future generations. This contrasts with interest groups like industry representatives and unions, where objectives generally arise from the immediate personal demands of members and supporters. The subject repeatedly described how CCL members are volunteers motivated by their concern about climate change, rather than by the hope for material benefits. This is probably consistent with many past social

justice movements. CCL also contrasts with many environmental organizations in its emphasis on building constructive relationships with policy-makers and the media, avoiding the attention-grabbing confrontational tactics employed historically by groups like Greenpeace. The group also exhibits an interesting balance between centralized control and agenda-setting and local implementation through the initiative of volunteers. The subject described receiving support from the original American organization, but also maintaining significant local autonomy in priority-setting and strategy. In addition, it was interesting to learn that the CCL was explicitly patterned on RESULTS — an anti-poverty group that employed similar relationship-building methods. This demonstrates how models of NGO organization that have been perceived as successful in one domain may be transferred into others.

Learning was a consistent theme of the interview, both in terms of purposive efforts to educate the media and decision-makers and in terms of the process of lessons learned through which the subject refined and her group refined their strategies:

So that was a bit of insight to me, going forward, you know. It's good to bring in experts, especially experts that are coming in from out of town, because it gives them an opportunity. And really the point of these editorial meetings is just to educate themselves on these issues.

This illustrates how interests in an area like climate change are not necessarily known: people may not have given the subject much consideration, or taken the time to assess the available evidence about it. If so, this may be an area in which people substantially fail to act as effective utility maximizers. The CCL perceives a major part of its task in driving more active climate policies to be overcoming the lack of information that they believe inhibits action in others, and their strategies for convincing people emphasize the importance of positioning themselves as trusted sources of information. Changes in public consciousness are repeatedly described in terms of “shifting the narrative” that associates fossil fuel production with continued economic prosperity.

The subject also noted a stark partisan divide, in terms of the awareness of politicians about climate change issues. To a degree, this points beyond the matter of exposure to information and into the realm of aligning a person's beliefs about climate change with their ideology. For those who begin with the premise that greenhouse gas regulation should be avoided, avoiding cognitive dissonance requires maintaining a perspective on

climate change such as it not being a major problem, or it being a problem that will be remedied effectively through voluntary action.²⁹³⁰ If there is an area in which the approach of the CCL may be criticized, it is in having too much faith in the idea that people will be receptive to new information and willing to change their attitudes and actions in response to it. Research from psychology suggests that when confronted with a disjunct between a person's beliefs and their behaviour, they are often more likely to adjust their belief to justify their continuing behaviour, rather than adjust their behaviour to conform to their belief. A substantial literature within environmental politics and environmental psychology discusses these phenomena, and their implications for climate change policy-making.³¹³² The force of this criticism is somewhat muted, however, by the absence of clear alternative strategies. It may be that people will ignore even highly credible information that stands at odds with existing beliefs, but it doesn't follow that there are effective alternative strategies that can overcome this resistance.

The emphasis the subject placed on extreme weather events as drivers of concern in the media, among the general public, and among policy-makers further highlights the problematic intersection between climate science and human psychology. While the IPCC does offer measured conclusions about observed increases in extreme weather events — and predicts increases in the frequency and severity of some such events under a warmer future climate — there are other dimensions of the IPCC report that are far more confident and irrefutable. That being said, the degree to which matters like observed disjunctures in energy flows between the Earth and space are psychologically and emotionally motivating for most people may explain why they are discounted in favour of concern about hurricanes and extreme wildfire seasons. The general public, media, and decision-makers may all focus on the most emotionally salient aspects of climate change, rather than those where the level of scientific confidence is highest, or even those that are projected to have the largest aggregate impacts on human welfare and natural systems.

One potentially useful follow-up to this interview could be speaking with some of the people who have been targeted by the CCL, including journalists, MPs, and MPPs. It would be interesting to learn about how

²⁹See: Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*.

³⁰Frantz and Mayer, "The Emergency of Climate Change: Why Are We Failing to Take Action?", p. 205–222.

³¹See: Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*.

³²Ilnyckj, "Book review: "Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity".

they perceived the message and strategies of the CCL, and whether they think any of the information provided has altered their behaviour. It may also be useful to ask them about how CCL's tactics compare with those of other groups — both environmental groups and those concerned with other issues — and the extent to which those tactics have altered the reception they received.

3.1 Lessons learned

This was my first research-motivated interview. As a result, one of the most significant results was getting introduced to the experience of approaching potential subjects about participating in an academic interview, formulating questions, undertaking the interview, and analyzing it. I was a bit surprised about the difficulty of finding a subject, though that was probably a product both of how busy climate activists tend to be and the lack of a clear payoff for them for participating.

For the most part, I kept verbatim to the questions I prepared in advance, though I did add some follow-up questions during the discussion. Also, when raising questions that had already been covered to a degree in previous answers, I acknowledged that. With this subject, there was no difficulty in keeping the discussion moving. In retrospect, I think it was fairly effective to begin with introductory questions, proceed to specific questions about the main subject of discussion, and then broaden things at the end to get more context. My broader concluding questions were designed to improve my understanding of how the subject perceived the context in which she was taking strategic action.

My question about the composition of the group, and whether it differed systematically from the population as a whole, didn't get much of an answer. It may have been useful to ask more specific questions about the race, socioeconomic status, education level, and other potentially relevant characteristics of CCL volunteers. One interesting dimension of social movements is their degree of inclusiveness, and it ties to questions about who has the free time and motivation to try to influence policy-makers and the media. It may also have been useful to ask specifically about any contact between Toronto's CCL volunteers and people who are already being disproportionately impacted by climate change. Along with the criticism that environmental groups are often run by the educated and affluent, some people object to the sense that these groups are speaking on

behalf of victims without engaging with them and helping them share their own ideas and experiences. Additional useful questions in a follow-up interview might focus on these controversies and the degree to which the subject considers them present and pertinent.

One challenge was confirming the identity of organizations and individuals mentioned by the subject. Being able to do so in many cases through online research illustrates both the usefulness of the internet for supporting interview research, as well as the usefulness of being able to look up supplemental information soon after the events described. People who have moved on from the positions they occupied at times described by the subject were harder to confirm than those who still occupy those roles. Interviewing someone today about their involvement in a social justice movement 20–30 years ago would involve much greater challenges, in terms of confirming the identities of the other people involved. In future interviews, I may explicitly ask the subject if I can follow up to ask about any references that I wasn't able to track down through my own means.

In terms of major lessons learned (aside from how laborious and time-consuming it is to transcribe recorded speech to text), I will make sure to take some substantive notes during future interviews, as well as immediately afterward. The CCL's 'snowballing' approach of working from one success to another (we spoke with the editorial board of paper X, so don't you think we should speak with you as well?) may also be useful for securing interview subjects. After being told that I have already spoken to specific others, potential subjects may feel more confidence in the value of doing an interview and contributing their own perspective.

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