



Sept. 15, 2022

Attention: Laurey-Anne Roodenburg  
President Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)

We are writing this urgent letter to you as concerned physicians and members of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. We note, with great dismay, that the UBCM has accepted the sponsorship of organizations and corporations whose products and services have known links to the root causes of earth's climate emergency.

This year, more than a thousand people have died in Pakistan due to climate change induced floods. Millions of people in China, Africa and Europe have dramatically suffered from fires and heat waves. Presently, in much of BC, smoke due to wildfires is making breathing difficult for people with asthma and COPD.

These extreme weather disturbances are ravaging human lives, devastating ecosystems, and inflicting billions of dollars of monetary costs to a great extent on those who have contributed the least to global warming.

The severity, rapidity and irreversibility of the climate emergency require an all-hands-on-deck approach. As stated by UN Secretary General António Guterres, it is a path to 'collective suicide'. Surely, we do not need to remind you of the events of 2021 that killed over 600 people in BC, destroyed the town of Lytton and caused billions of dollars in damage due to flooding. The cause was clear – burning fossil fuels.

We know that municipalities are responsible for at least 50% of carbon emissions and fossil fuels are the major contributor. We expect municipalities to play their necessary role in engaging in the fight against climate change.

At the UBCM Convention, where key municipal decision-makers are in attendance, these fossil fuel industry sponsors are engaged: **FortisBC, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Coastal Gas Link, Trans Mountain Expansion Project**. We think that this is an affront to the people who have died due to climate change.

We understand that the title for the convention is "Value of One, Power of Many". We are extremely concerned that the sponsors' "*Power of Money*" will be subtly at work here,



influencing conference attendees, and, by this influence, however subliminal it may be, subverting for their advantage, future municipality policy-making. As physicians we have a code of conduct and there appear here clear conflicts of interest. Imagine a medical conference sponsored by the biggest tobacco companies.

The UBCM has passed resolutions that clearly consider environmental impacts such as the 2020 climate action recommendation for a low carbon future. You have offered a session at the convention to the Youth Climate Corps. Were they aware of the sponsorships? To have a presentation on the “Learnings from the Lytton Fire” and “Preventing Future Wildfire Disasters”, when the conference sponsors are part of the cause, is mind-jarringly inappropriate.

The UBCM Code of Conduct states that you “shall behave and be perceived to behave as an ethical organization” and that you “should avoid situations which could be seen as a conflict of interest.” As fossil fuels are the cause of the climate crisis from which the population of BC has greatly suffered, we cannot agree with the ethics of your choices and the appearance of conflict of interest.

As physicians, we sincerely hope that the UBCM will consider the health of cities and their residents as a priority. We trust that in the future you will select your sponsors more carefully.

Sincerely,

BC branch of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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#### References

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