



Environmental Communication >

Volume 11, 2017 - Issue 5

646 | 7  
Views | CrossRef citations to date | Altmetric

Research Articles

# Fort McMurray and the Canadian Oil Sands: Local Coverage of National Importance

Jacob W. Papineau & Leith Deacon

Pages 593-608 | Received 30 Nov 2015, Accepted 20 Dec 2016, Published online: 02 Mar 2017

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2017.1289107>

Sample our  
Urban Studies  
Journals  
**>> Sign in here to start your access  
to the latest two volumes for 14 days**

Full Article

Figures & data

References

Citations

Metrics

Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

Share

## ABSTRACT

Understanding resource-based communities (RBCs) as potential casualties of Canada's economic proclivity towards resource extraction projects may help us to generate political support for these communities at both local and national scales. The media has a critical role to play in promoting the development of this type of political discourse. This study examines how traditional print media coverage affects Canadians' perceptions of the Athabasca oil sands. A quantitative media analysis examines scope and thematic content of articles appearing in major Canadian newspapers between 2003 and 2013. We find that most coverage concerning the Athabasca oil sands over this period appears predominantly in western Canadian newspapers, with coverage primarily focusing on specific events. We argue that this geographic disparity in coverage does not provide Canadians with the adequate coverage necessary to

develop an informed opinion on what the implications of ongoing oil sands development are at both a local and a national scale.

## KEYWORDS:

Media analysis   newspapers   content analysis   agenda setting   oil sands   Canada   Fort McMurray

---

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

---

## ORCID

Jacob W. Papineau <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6344-8118>

---

## Notes

1. We use the more benign term “oil sands” rather than the politically charged “tar sands.”
2. Tailings ponds consist of a layer of toxic top water overlying a viscous layer of sludge containing toxic interstitial water as well as particles of unprocessed bitumen and clay fines (Nix & Martin, [1992](#)).

---

## Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by

7

Planning for growth in a natural resource boomtown: challenges for urban planners in Fort McMurray, Alberta >

## Information for

Authors

R&D professionals

Editors

Librarians

Societies

## Opportunities

Reprints and e-prints

Advertising solutions

Accelerated publication

Corporate access solutions

## Open access

Overview

Open journals

Open Select

Dove Medical Press

F1000Research

## Help and information

Help and contact

Newsroom

All journals

Books

## Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources  
by email

 Sign me up

  

  

Copyright © 2026 Informa UK Limited

[Privacy policy](#)

[Cookies](#)

[Terms & conditions](#)

[Accessibility](#)

 Taylor and  
Francis Group

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954  
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG