

To challenge our oil economy will,  
to quote [Naomi Klein](#),  
“*change everything*”...

The United Nations states that climate change “*is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment.*” The U.S. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require “*rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.*” And yet, despite the enormous scientific consensus and international climate treaties, carbon emissions are increasing. Where is the collective political will to combat this impending catastrophe?

Politicians get elected on platforms of progressive environmental action and then approve pipelines. Others label climate change “a hoax” and abandon approved treaties. They refuse to think in terms longer than the next election, or they’re afraid to alienate sectors of their electoral base.

And we are complicit in their inaction. In a recent Wall Street Journal survey, a significant majority of North Americans responded that they are not willing to spend more than \$10 per month fighting climate change.

Why don’t we believe the facts? One reason, as Naomi Klein makes clear in her book “*This Changes Everything*”, is that Big Oil has known about the devastating effects of carbon emissions since the 1970’s and has deliberately misled, covered up, and/or refuted the scientific data, as well as spending billions of dollars to influence US legislators. Oil companies are already being sued by states, cities and industries for their role in destroying the environment.

And yet, oil is the engine of the Canadian economy. Our currency rises and falls with the price of crude. Tens of thousands of high paying jobs are at stake, as well as myriad government programs that are supported by oil revenues. What meaningful action can Canada make without committing economic *seppuku*? Is it perhaps more prudent to wait until there is a global consensus led by China and the United States before we take draconian steps that might well spell the demise of our national affluence and privilege?

This debate is at the heart of *Athabasca*, and it implicates every person on the planet. As George Bernard Shaw wrote:

*“Progress is impossible without change,  
and those who cannot change their minds  
cannot change anything.”*

~ David S. Craig & Richard Greenblatt, *Playwrights*