Corporate Power and Changes to Provincial Environmental Regulation During the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic

by

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A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Political Science

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2024

Author’s Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

How have Canada's largest oil producing provinces altered key environmental policies since the onset of COVID-19, in response to the dual pressures of an oil sector in distress and the imperative to reduce emissions? While regulatory changes have been reported in the media, they have not yet been systemically reviewed or explained; this project aims to fill that gap.

Oil markets went into crisis in early 2020 as oil prices plummeted following an oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia and the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the global community has entered into a critical decade in climate history: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that a sharp reduction in emissions over the next decade is needed to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. Government policy interventions in this moment are both determining the future of the oil sector and defining possibilities for climate change mitigation.

This thesis analyzes changes to regulations made by the oil-producing provinces of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador at this critical moment. Conducting a full review of provincial regulatory changes during the pandemic, I find that in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic Canada's oil provinces demonstrated a clear pattern of supporting the oil sector by weakening provincial environmental regulation surrounding the sector. Regulatory changes observed in 2020 can be explained in part by considering corporate power, and strategies used by oil corporations to influence government, in each province. These changes to provincial regulatory frameworks shape Canada's response to the ongoing economic and climate crises, and further expose Canadians to both the risks of climate change and the economic risk of an oil sector in long-term decline.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep appreciation for Dr. Jennifer Clapp and Dr. Angela Carter for their incredible guidance and mentorship over the past few years. I could not have asked for more knowledgeable or supportive supervision for this thesis project.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Daniel Henstra, both for his helpful questions and contributions, and for joining this project on such short notice.

A special thank you to Dr. Stephanie White, who introduced me to the world of writing studies and taught me to think differently about writing.

Dedication

Ce mémoire est dédié à mon mari, Xavier. Il a été une source constante de soutien, d'encouragement, et d'inspiration face aux défis des études supérieures et de la vie.

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Xavier. He has been a constant source of support, encouragement, and inspiration through the challenges of graduate school and life.

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List of Abbreviations

Atlantic Accord	Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord
CAPP	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
CEPA	Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999
CER	Canada Energy Regulator
C-NLOPB	Canadian-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board
CNRL	Canadian Natural Resources Limited
CO_2	Carbon Dioxide, a greenhouse gas
COP28	The 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also known as the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EMB	Electoral Management Body
ENGO	Environmental non-governmental organization
ER Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources
Federal methane regulations	*Regulations Respecting Reduction in the Release of Methane and Certain Volatile Organic Compounds (Upstream Oil and Gas Sector)*
FPSO	Floating production, storage, and off-loading vessel
G20	Group of 20, an intergovernmental forum of the world's largest economies, including 19 independent states and the European Union
GBS	Gravity Based Structure
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas

Husky	Husky Energy Inc.
IAAC	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRIS	Integrated Resource Information System
M&As	Mergers and Acquisitions
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly, used for members of the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly, used for members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly
MMb/d	Million barrels per day
NL Liberal	Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador
NL NDP	Newfoundland and Labrador New Democrat Party
OPEC+	The expanded Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries,
PC NL	Progressive Conservative of Newfoundland and Labrador
PERT	Newfoundland Premier's Economic Recovery Team's
Sask Party	Saskatchewan Party
SK NDP	Saskatchewan New Democratic Party
TSX	Toronto Stock Exchange
TSX60	The top 60 Canadian-based corporations trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX)
UN	United Nations
WCS	Western Canadian Select, a benchmark oil for crude oil from Western Canada
WHO	World Health Organization

WTI	West Texas Intermediate, the most common benchmark for North American crude oil

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Research Questions and Objectives

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the global economic turmoil unleashed by measures to contain it, have had enormous consequences for a number of policy areas, including the environment. The intensity, scope, and abruptness of the international crises in early 2020 caused unprecedented change and realignment within global oil markets (Hanieh 2020). As a result, it is likely that the events of 2020 will shape the politics of oil, and therefore opportunities for climate change mitigation, for several decades. As the pandemic unfolded in early 2020, analysts expressed concern that, in the urgency of responding to the global pandemic and economic turmoil, measures to address climate change would be deprioritized. Analysts also worried that, as governments attempted to promote economic growth through resource extraction, the global recession would trigger a wave of oil industry deregulation (Barbier and Burgess 2020; Pittis 2020; Solis 2020). While financial support from governments has been reported on, and environmental deregulation of this sector is known to have occurred during the pandemic, changes to regulation of the oil sector have not previously been fully examined in the literature (Energy Policy Tracker 2022; Corkal and Beedell 2021; CBC News 2020e; Vigliotti 2020b).

This thesis examines the impact of these dynamics in the Canadian context using the cases of two oil-producing provinces: Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter Newfoundland). As the extent and nature of changes to provincial environmental regulation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and oil price war have not been previously established, this thesis first asks:

In 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, what changes were made to provincial environmental regulation of the oil sector in the oil-producing provinces of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, and what was the impact of such changes on regulatory effectiveness?

Building upon the initial question, the project aims then to address the following question:

What strategies did the oil sector mobilize in 2020 to influence provincial environmental regulation of the sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland?

Responding to the first question, the initial stage of this project consisted of a systematic review of changes to provincial regulation of the oil sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland that took place during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, considered for the purposes of this project to be January 1st to December 31st, 2020. Public announcements made by the governments of the two provinces in 2020 were then reviewed for statements on environmental regulations and the oil sector, allowing key issues, concerns, and priorities to be identified. Drawing on the findings of both reviews, I then conducted a comparative case analysis to identify key motivations, relationships, decisions, and behaviours in provincial environmental regulation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and linked economic recession.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.2.1 The Oil Sector and Climate Change Mitigation

The international community has arrived at a critical decade for climate action. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is needed over the following decade to keep global warming below 2° C and avoid the worst consequences of climate change (Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change [IPCC] 2023). Fossil fuels are the leading contributor to climate change worldwide, making their use and

extraction a priority target of GHG emission reduction efforts. As United Nations (UN) chief António Guterres pointed out in his closing statement to the 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in late 2023, limiting global heating to 1.5° C "will be impossible without the phase out of all fossil fuels" (United Nations Secretary-General 2023).

Internationally, Canada is lagging in GHG emission reduction. Out of the thirteen Group of 20 (G20) members that committed to emission reductions under the 2010 Cancun Agreement, Canada and South Korea were the only countries not to meet their 2020 emission reduction targets (United Nations Environment Programme 2023, 13). A recent report from the federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, released November 2023, found that Canada is also not on track to meet its 2030 emission reduction target of 40% below 2005 emission levels (Office of the Auditor General of Canada [OAG Canada] 2023). Upon the report's launch, Environment Commissioner Jerry DeMarco noted that "Canada is the only G7 country that has not achieved any emissions reductions since 1990" (Zimonjic 2023).

Canada's failure to achieve GHG emission reductions can be attributed largely to oil and gas sector emissions. While globally both the production and usage of fossil fuels are major contributors to GHG emissions, oil and gas production is the largest source of Canadian emissions, with Canada exporting more oil and gas than it consumes. In 2020, oil and gas production accounted for about 27% of Canadian GHG emissions (Environment and Climate Change Canada [ECCC] 2022b, 7). Unlike other Canadian emissions sources, emissions from the oil sector have continued to grow in recent years (ECCC 2022a). The major oil producing provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland make a disproportionate contribution to total Canadian GHG emissions. The oil sectors of Alberta and Saskatchewan alone produce more emissions than the entire economies of

British Columbia or Quebec (ECCC 2022a; Meyer 2019; Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2021). As of 2020, without the GHG emissions of oil producing provinces, Canada would have been on track to meet its international commitments for GHG reduction (Saxifrage 2019).

Since the outsize impact of oil-producing provinces on national emissions is due almost entirely to upstream oil sector activity, weak regulation of oil sector GHG emissions at the provincial level undermines Canada's ability to achieve its emission reduction targets and meet international commitments for climate change mitigation. Canadian oil sector regulation, including environmental regulation, is unusually decentralized. Canadian provinces hold primary jurisdiction over natural resources, including oil and gas extraction. The federal government further entrenched provincial authority over natural resources in the 1950s, 1970s, 1990s, and in 2014, downloading regulatory authority and placing limitations on its own ability to regulate natural resource extraction (Carter 2020b, 7–8). Oil producing provinces, being the principal regulator, must therefore feature prominently in analysis of environmental regulation of the oil sector. Provincial regulations in oil producing provinces are key to reducing national GHG emissions, and any weakening of provincial regulation of the sector is a serious threat to Canadian climate change mitigation efforts.

1.2.2 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Oil Price War

In early 2020, the global COVID-19 lockdown and an oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia caused sudden, simultaneous, shifts in global oil supply and demand, resulting in historic lows for several benchmark oil prices (International Energy Agency 2020). In the first half of 2020, Canadian oil exports decreased from an all-time high of 4.09 million barrels per day (MMb/d) in February 2020, to 3.34 MMb/d in May 2020, a level not seen since November 2017 (Canada Energy Regulator [CER] 2021). While the oil price war officially ended in April of 2020, international oil prices at the end of 2020 remained around 30-percent lower than oil prices at the

beginning of the year. Responding to low oil prices, international oil corporations made severe cuts to capital investment. In 2020, capital expenditures in Canadian oil and gas extraction dropped by 36% (Wang 2021, 5).

Low oil prices and periods of rapid change are both historically associated with oil sector deregulation (Hanieh 2020). Brownlee (2020, 187–90) argues that heightened competition for corporate capital investment often prompts governments to adopt a "deregulation agenda", stripping away government-imposed controls to foster economic growth. Previous research has also identified active pressure from the oil and gas industry and economic dependence on hydrocarbon extraction—conditions that apply to both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland—as factors that contribute to environmental deregulation in fossil-fuel-dependent subnational jurisdictions (Davis 2012; Cook 2014; Carroll 2021b).

1.3 Regulatory Support for the Provincial Oil Sector

Even in less exceptional circumstances, the Canadian oil producing provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland have demonstrated a pattern of supporting the provincial oil sector by progressively weakening their own provincial environmental regulations and regulatory capacity (Carter, Fraser, and Zalik 2017; Carter 2020b). Notably, in 2019, a survey of oil and gas industry executives ranked Saskatchewan and Newfoundland as the two Canadian jurisdictions with the most favourable regulatory frameworks for investment in oil and gas extraction (Stedman and Aliakbari 2019, 10). As part of their respective responses to the COVID-19 economic crisis, Canadian oil producing provinces further weakened environmental regulations affecting the oil industry, as described below (Corkal 2021; CBC News 2020e; Energy Policy Tracker 2022; Vigliotti 2020b).

Although regulatory accommodations were already being offered to the oil industry prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in both Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, this thesis has found that both provincial governments explicitly connected further regulatory changes in 2020 to the pandemic, oil price crash, and related economic downturn. Regulatory accommodation for the oil industry was framed as government support for the provincial economy, framing which further presented the oil sector as vital for fiscal stability and an economic rebound from pandemic conditions.

From mid-March 2020 onward, changes to the regulatory regime in both provinces fall into three broad categories:

1. Accommodations for pandemic disruption to workplaces;
2. Releases of initiatives already under development; and
3. Streamlining of exploration regulation.

Based on project findings, I argue that the political power of oil corporations was a key factor in the regulatory changes recorded by this review. To operationalize this factor, this project applies Fuchs and Lederer's (2007) three-dimensional framework of corporate power. This framework, discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, supports a multi-faceted analysis of corporate influence over government policy, distinguishing between the instrumental, structural, and discursive power wielded by corporations.

1.4 Project Delimitations

1.4.1 Case Selection

The Canadian oil-producing provinces of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland were selected as the two case provinces for this project. Saskatchewan and Newfoundland share certain historical and economic contexts, explored in Chapter 3, including long running provincial poverty, out-migration,

per capita debt, and a high degree of resource dependency, both historical and current. Ideas of vulnerability, precarity, and dependence linked to the provincial oil sector, both real and rhetorical, are a major theme in government behaviour towards the oil sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. These similarities facilitate comparison on differing factors, such as the relative strength of various forms of corporate power, as well as differences in provincial responses as captured by the regulatory review. The third Canadian oil-producing province, Alberta, was excluded from this project. Alberta greatly exceeds Saskatchewan and Newfoundland in terms of population, economy, and oil production metrics. Additionally, in sharp contrast to the periphery oil-economies of Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, Alberta is considered to be the geographic core of the Canadian oil sector, with oil sector corporate elites being centred in Calgary (Carroll and Huijzer 2021; Carroll 2021a; Hussey et al. 2021). Finally, when compared to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland are both less studied as oil-producing provinces in Canada; this project aims to address this gap in attention.

1.4.2 Time Period

For the purpose of this project, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada is considered to follow the 2020 calendar year, from January 1st, 2020, to December 31st, 2020. January 1st, 2020, was chosen as the start point for the period under review because attempts to contain the COVID-19 virus, including travel restrictions, significantly decreased global demand for crude oil from early January 2020 (CER 2020), prior to the known arrival of the virus in Canada. This project uses December, 31st 2020, as the end point for the period under study as Canada's first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine arrived in the country on December 13th, 2020 (Jones 2020). Although the vaccine roll-out lasted several months, the availability of a COVID-19 vaccine offered new options

for managing the pandemic and economic crisis, dramatically changing how governments and populations responded to the pandemic.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Following this introduction, Chapter 2, "Conceptual Approach" presents an overview of the theoretical concepts used throughout this thesis, beginning with Fuchs and Lederer's three-dimensional framework of understanding corporate power which is central to this analysis. Other key concepts and theories used to describe or explain corporate power in the oil sector, as well as patterns in policy and regulation of resource extraction, are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 3, "Context", provides salient political, economic, and historical background relevant to this work. The section begins with a timeline and overview of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, including the international oil price war that overlapped with the early months of the virus' spread. This is followed by political and economic background for Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, and an overview of the oil sector's corporate power in the two provinces.

Chapter 4, "Methodology" describes the three stages of the research in depth, including major research limitations and delimitations.

Next, Chapter 5, "Results and Analysis" consists of a description and initial analysis of research findings. This section describes all changes to environmental regulation of the oil sector in 2020 in the case provinces, beginning with Saskatchewan and moving then to Newfoundland. The role of the oil sector's corporate power in regulatory changes and corporate strategies employed to influence regulation of the sector are discussed throughout. Potential consequences of regulatory changes are also noted.

Chapter 6, “Discussion”, aims to identify key influences in changes to oil sector regulation in 2020, beginning with a brief comparison of the historical, economic, and political contexts in each province as they relate to the oil and gas sector. Changes to environmental regulation surrounding the oil sector and corporate strategies exercised by the oil sector to influence policy in each province will then be compared, with this thesis arguing that the oil sector’s corporate power is key to understanding government support for the oil sector.

Closing this work, Chapter 7, “Conclusion” notes public policy concerns raised by this research, followed by potential avenues of future research and a final concluding statement.

Chapter 2
Conceptual Approach

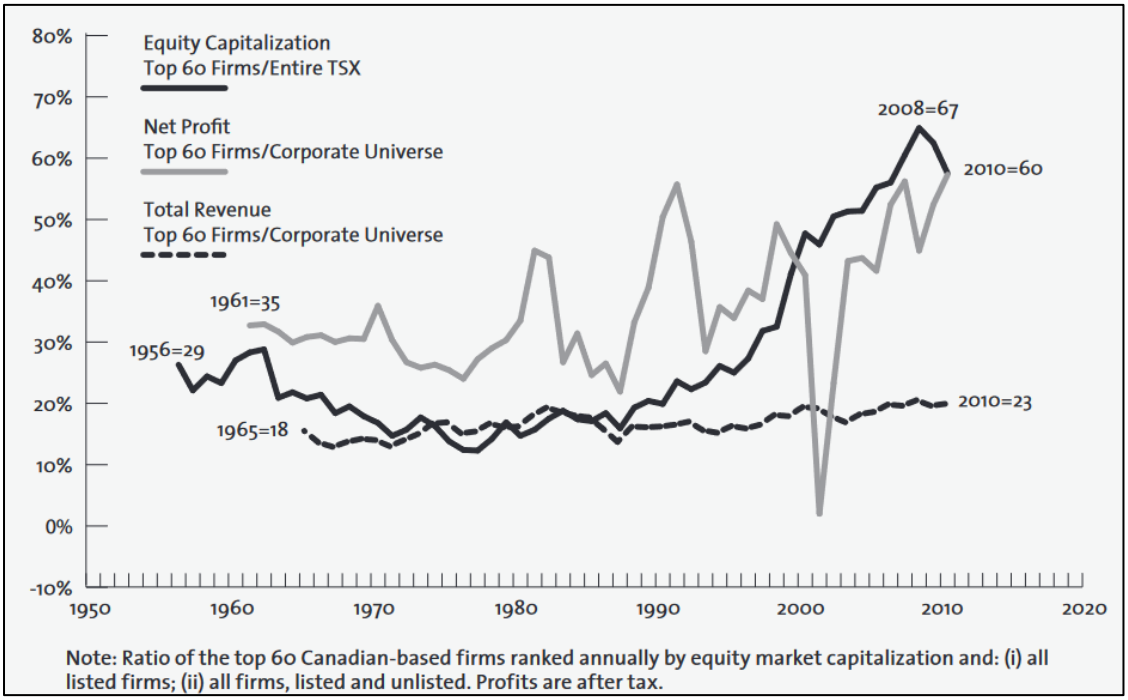
2.1 Corporate Influence

The current scale of corporate power and wealth is unprecedented, both in Canada and around the world (Fuchs and Lederer 2007; Brownlee 2020; Brennan 2012). Rising corporate power across jurisdictions is associated with increasing economic inequality, corporate perpetuated human rights violations, poor working conditions, and accelerating environmental degradation, including climate change (Brownlee 2020). Corporate involvement in politics and policymaking has also been increasing since the 1970s, a trend observed generally across jurisdictions as well as within Canada (Fuchs and Lederer 2007; Peters 2012). As corporations seek to increase their involvement in political processes, growing corporate resources grant them ever greater capacity to dominate and overwhelm political processes, as well as the ability to reach into aspects of society previously outside the sphere of corporate influence, such as the provision of public services. Widening disparities between the resources available to corporate actors and those controlled by state or civil society actors, allow corporate perspectives to dominate policy decisions, even when they run counter to those of the majority (Fuchs and Lederer 2007; Brownlee 2020). With corporations becoming ever more powerful and active political actors, it is ever more important to describe and understand corporate power and its influence over policy. The power of oil and gas corporations merits special attention, given its potential role in influencing or impeding state action on climate change and other environmental issues.

As corporate wealth has grown, so too has the concentration of corporate ownership over that wealth, with the result that a shrinking number of corporations have come to control a dominant portion of Canadian economic activity. Between 1950 and 2010, the largest Canadian corporations

substantially increased the proportion of wealth under their control, even with large increases to both the total number of corporations and overall corporate wealth taking place during the same period.[1] The overwhelming majority of corporate wealth generated between 1960 and 2010 was concentrated among a small number of firms. Whereas in 1961, the top 60 Canadian-based corporations trading on the TSX (TSX60) received 35% of net corporate profits in the Canadian corporate universe, their share had increased to 60% by 2010, a concentration made even more extreme when considering the increase in both total number of corporations and overall corporate wealth mentioned above (see Figure 1) (Brennan 2012, 18–20).

Figure 1. ***Aggregate Corporate Concentration in Canada***



Source: Brennan 2012, 19.

[1] From 1950 to 2010, the number of listed stocks on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) more than doubled while, between 1956 and 2010, the total equity market value of all firms listed on the TSX grew from $354 billion to $2.2 trillion (Brennan 2012, 4).

As a consequence of this high degree of corporate concentration, considered high even when compared to other economies subject to concentrating pressures (Brownlee 2020), the Canadian economy is dominated by a relatively small number of giant corporations. These corporate giants together control the majority of corporate capital. Describing the Canadian corporate landscape, Brennan (2012, 4) asserts that "when we speak about Canadian business or the corporate sector, we are effectively referring to 60 firms [the TSX60] that dominate the Canadian political economy". Corporate concentration has also accelerated due, in part, to corporate growth in recent decades driven largely by mergers and acquisitions (M&As) (Brownlee 2020, 175–76; Brennan 2012). By reducing the number and power of competing interests, heightened corporate concentration enables the formation of a unified Canadian business community, further facilitating the pooling of already vast corporate resources and development of a common corporate agenda. When compared to jurisdictions with more competition among corporate voices and sectors, corporate concentration allows those remaining corporate perspectives to dominate to an even greater extent.

In addition to highly concentrated corporate ownership and revenue, Canadian corporate networks demonstrate an unusually large degree of majority or strong minority control. Canadian corporate networks have relatively few controlling interests. Compared with other states, an unusually large portion of the Canadian private sector under the ultimate control of family-controlled conglomerates (Brownlee 2020, 176; Carroll and Huijzer 2021). In a 2006 study, Gadhoum (2006, 180) found that only 17.79% of publicly listed Canadian corporations did not have an individual, family, or another corporation as a clearly identifiable controlling interest. For all other Canadian corporations, a single or small group of stakeholders held a controlling share. Through tight networks

of corporate ownership, including intercorporate ownership,[2] otherwise competing corporate interests are able to be reconciled and merged to present a common front.

The spread of interlocking directorates, another unifying mechanism, also contributes to the development of a cohesive Canadian corporate perspective (Brownlee 2020, 178; Carroll 2021a). Interlocking directorates, which consist of individuals who sit on multiple corporate boards, act as networks of communication and coordination between corporations. In facilitating corporate networks, both interlocking directorates and intercorporate ownership enable inter-corporate planning, strategizing, and political and ideological coordination (Brownlee 2020; Carroll 2021a). Tight corporate networks promote compromise between sectors with potentially competing interests and enable the clarification and advancement of a cohesive corporate agenda. A cohesive agenda further unites the corporate resources of the largest corporations, increasing the extent to which corporate interests are able to overwhelm the policy development process through actions such as direct lobbying, participation in public consultations, and publicity campaigns to influence public discourse on a policy question.

The Canadian oil and gas industry is one such connected and concentrated corporate sector. Carroll's (2021a) and Carroll and Huijzer's (2021) studies of corporate networks in the Canadian oil and gas industry describe a tight social network, supported by interlocking directorates and intercorporate ownership, of top-level managers and firms dedicated to oil and gas extraction. Centred in Calgary, the network is well integrated, both socially and economically, with major Canadian financial institutions. Corporate ownership in the Canadian oil and gas sector is highly concentrated. Among the 200 highest-revenue Canadian corporations engaged in the extraction, processing, and

[2] Intercorporate ownership refers to situations where the top shareholders in large corporations largely consist of other corporations.

transport of fossil fuels in 2017, 23% were entirely or majority-owned by a single owner (11% and 12% respectively). An additional 51.5% of studied corporations were under minority control, controlled by a shareholder owning a "minority of shares sufficiently large to enable strategic control" (Carroll and Huijzer 2021, 121). Corporate revenue in the sector is also especially concentrated among top-earning corporations. From 2010 to 2015, the three largest corporations in the Canadian oil and gas sector, Enbridge, Suncor, and Imperial Oil, consistently earned more than 30% of total annual corporate revenue in the sector. Revenue concentration continues beyond the top-three corporations: during the same period, the top-ten and top-25 earning corporations claimed, respectively, 60% and 80% of corporate revenue (Carroll and Huijzer 2021, 115–18). Corporate M&As since 2017 have intensified these trends, as in the 2020 merger between Husky Energy (Husky) and Cenovus Energy (Cenovus), respectively the fourth and fifth largest Canadian oil and gas corporations prior to the merger (Cenovus Energy 2021; Seskus 2020).

When considering corporate connections, ownership, and revenue, the Canadian oil and gas sector is dominated by a relatively small number of corporate giants. Corporate revenue and ownership is unusually concentrated in the Canadian corporate landscape overall and, as Brownlee (2020, 175) writes, "concentration of corporate ownership is fundamentally a concentration of corporate power." A well-resourced, united corporate sector, such as the Canadian oil and gas sector, has greater capacity to exert influence over policy through actions such as lobbying or publicity campaigns compared to a more divided and less wealthy sector. How this capacity is wielded by the oil and gas sector, and the forms this corporate power takes, will be explored in the following pages.

2.1.1 A Three-Dimensional Framework for Understanding Corporate Power

Both in Canada and abroad, corporate wealth, cohesion, and concentration is on the rise, resulting in corporate interests that are more coordinated, and which control more resources than ever before.

As corporations also take more interest in policymaking, increased corporate resources and cooperation allow corporate interests to overpower less resourced actors and dominate the policymaking process. But how do changes in corporate status translate to increased corporate influence over policy? Indirect measures of power, such as dollar amounts of corporate revenue or capital investment, convey a sense of scale, but do not explain how this wealth translates into influence over policy outputs. Additionally, even with growing corporate wealth, governments do still act to restrict and regulate corporations—though the same government may rush to accommodate corporate wishes in another context. How can we understand such variation in the influence of corporate power over policy outputs?

To understand how corporate power exerts influence over policy outcomes, we need a theoretical framework that both accounts for and considers interactions between various forms of corporate power. Additionally, a framework for corporate power must look beyond the black box of policymaking to consider the mechanisms through which corporations interact with the political process.

With these considerations in mind, this project applies Fuchs and Lederer's (2007) three-dimensional framework of power, which differentiates between the instrumental, structural, and discursive power of corporations. This work draws on, extends, and applies to corporate actors a broader body of work on power, including Strange (1988), Lukes (2004), and others. Each form of corporate power is explored in this section. The three-dimensional framework was originally developed for application in international studies, to conceptualize the increasing power wielded by multinational corporations in global governance. However, the framework has been applied to understand corporate power in national and sub-national contexts, including within the field of environmental political economy in Canada (Carroll 2021b). Employing a three-dimensional

framework allows a more thorough consideration of multiple dimensions of corporate power and interactions between them, as well as the historical, social, and economic contexts in which corporate and government actors operate.

2.1.1.1 Instrumental Power

The first dimension of corporate power, instrumental power, refers to the power corporations exercise on policy outputs through actions such as lobbying and campaign financing. Instrumental power, as the investment of corporate resources to exercise influence over the political process, is grounded in and proportional to the vast resources available to corporations (Carroll 2021b, 13). Those corporations with the most resources are, therefore, best able to leverage instrumental power, especially when compared to smaller firms and non-corporate interests (Fuchs and Lederer 2007, 4–5). Along with expansions to corporate wealth and increased concentration of that wealth, corporate use of instrumental power has also expanded in recent decades (Fuchs and Lederer 2007, 5). With the exception of where restrictions on corporate campaign financing have been introduced, which includes in most provinces and at the federal level, corporate lobbying and political financing activities in Canada since the 1970s have increased both qualitatively, such as in depth and detail of input on policy, and quantitatively, such as frequency of contact between lobbyists and government officials (Brownlee 2020; K. Thomas 2015; Peters 2012). This increase in corporate activity, observed also at supra-national forums and in other jurisdictions around the world, is attributed by Fuchs and Lederer (2007, 5) to, "growing incentives for political decision-makers to provide business actors with privileged access arising from the increasing complexity of policy issues, concerns about economic growth, and rising campaign costs."

Corporate political donations are rarely attached to specific requests. Rather, corporations invest in political donations for the access it grants them to political actors. The Canadian political

landscape differs from others, notably the US, in restricting direct political corporations from corporations at the federal level and in most provinces Corporations and unions are not able to make direct contributions to federal campaigns, and most provinces also limit or ban corporate political donations.(Brownlee 2020, 180; K. Thomas 2015, 5–7). In early 2020, and at the time of writing, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland were the only provinces with no restrictions on the source or amount of political donations. However, the value and source of contributions over a certain amount, $250 in Saskatchewan and $100 in Newfoundland, are disclosed and reported publicly by the provincial Electoral Management Body (EMB), and Saskatchewan does prevent political donations from non-citizen individuals residing outside of Canada (Elections Newfoundland and Labrador 2024; Elections Saskatchewan 2023). Where donations are not restricted, oil and gas companies are among the largest corporate donors to Canadian political campaigns at the provincial level. Alberta-based oil and gas companies are typically among the top contributors to political campaigns outside of Alberta (Graham, Carroll, and Chen 2019; Press Progress 2020).

In Canada, influence from corporate lobbying is considered more important than that from corporate political donations, with the value of donations being primarily in helping secure corporate access to political actors for lobbying activity. Corporations engage in political lobbying to develop relationships with political actors, to respond to or propose government policy, and to keep policymakers informed of their concerns and broader industry issues (K. Thomas 2015, 8; Brownlee 2020, 181). Corporations also lobby on specific government projects and provisions that directly support their operations, including lobbying to win government contracts, investment, or regulatory concessions (K. Thomas 2015, 8). Since the 1990s, corporate lobbying expenditures in Canada have increased greatly. Peters (2012, 24–25) estimates that the number of employed corporate lobbyists and the amount of money spent on corporate lobbying at all levels of government doubled in the first

decade of the 2000s. At the federal level, registered lobbying activity has greatly increased since the 2015 election of the Liberal Trudeau government, though the increase is in part attributed to the Liberal government being more stringent than their precedent in the enforcement of existing reporting requirements (Boucher 2021).

However, data on lobbying activity and spending likely underestimates the full extent of corporate lobbying. Canada has no financial disclosure laws for lobbying activity at the federal or provincial level. Not all Canadian jurisdictions require lobbyists registrations, and registration criteria, required information, and enforcement vary greatly among those jurisdictions which do maintain registries. While there is a federal registry for lobbyist communications, most provincial lobbyist registries, including those of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, do not register communications between lobbyists and government officials, nor otherwise capture information which would allow us to assess the quantity or quality of interactions. The Saskatchewan lobbyist registry, for example, requires lobbyists to submit a list of lobbying targets that includes both government officials the lobbyist has met with, and those they *expect to* lobby (*The Lobbyists Regulations* 2016). As such, lists of lobbying targets in the registry reflect primarily the ambition of the lobbyist, without indication of how many meetings actually took place, if any. By not including information on meetings or other interactions, lobbying registries underestimate the activity from successful lobbyists to a larger degree than those of less successful lobbyists, making it difficult to see internal differences in lobbying activity (K. Thomas 2015).

Additionally, lobbyists listed in registries cover only one side of contact between corporations and government officials. Unless there is financial benefit involved, no Canadian jurisdictions require registration of contact between a corporation and a government official when the official initiates the contact (K. Thomas 2015, 8–9). Such contacts, which include policy consultations, open calls for

submission, and invitations to committee appearances, provide another avenue through which corporations can influence policy. Corporate representatives are also regularly invited to participate in exclusive policy discussions and advisory groups, such as the federal Finance Minister's annual summer policy retreat, the Newfoundland Premier's Economic Recovery Team, or the business advisory council to Saskatchewan's Red-Tape Reduction Cabinet Committee (Executive Council of Newfoundland and Labrador 2020; K. Thomas 2015, 8; Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development 2021). Closed-door opportunities for key stakeholders, corporate or otherwise, to provide input on policy development are considered part of the typical policy consultation process, even when the effect is to exacerbate the dominance of large corporations' policy influence (Daub, Ejeckam, et al. 2020). Even where other actors are aware of and have access to provide input on government policy, such as in open policy consultations, extensive corporate resources grant larger corporations greater capacity to participate compared to less resourced actors.

Accounting for lobbyist registries' likely underestimation of lobbying activity, data from lobbyist registries still indicates that large Canadian corporations lobby more frequently and extensively than other interests, including when compared to smaller corporate interests (Brownlee 2020). In a review of the more than 1800 communications recorded in the federal lobbying registry in November 2014, Thomas (2015, 8) found that "301 were in-house lobbyists from corporations, 380 were from industry associations or organizations representing companies, and 352 were consultants hired by corporations." When compared to other large corporations and industries, the oil and gas industry accounts for a large amount of registered Canadian lobbying activity. In 2014, 60% of the 956 active in-house lobbyists registered to TSX60 corporations across Canadian jurisdictions were registered to oil and gas corporations, a figure which includes neither oil industry association lobbyists nor consultants contracted by oil and gas corporations (K. Thomas 2015, 4). The Canadian

Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), an industry association representing 41 oil and gas companies operating in Canada, is consistently among the most active industry lobby groups in Canada (K. Thomas 2015, 10; Woodside and Vis 2023). In 2020, CAPP recorded 269 meetings with federal officials, up from their already high average of 117 meetings annually (Woodside and Vis 2023), and met with more federal officials than any other lobbying sector in April and May 2020 (Vigliotti 2020a). Given that lobbyists representing the oil and gas sector have a history of lobbying for industry deregulation and against action on climate change, the extent of lobbying activity from the oil and gas industry is of especial concern for its potential influence on regulation of the oil and gas sector and, therefore, Canadian climate change mitigation efforts.

2.1.1.2 Structural Power

The second dimension of corporate power, structural power, refers to the agenda-setting power granted by allocative control over vast corporate resources. This power is derived from corporate control over jobs, market access, and large amounts of capital, as well as the relative ease with which multinational corporations can move capital between jurisdictions. In the context of the oil and gas sector, corporate resources also include mobile equipment, infrastructure, and the often transient expert workforce required for production. Structural power grants corporations influence over the input-side of the political process, with the implicit threat of capital flight preventing policy options that could displease corporate interests from ever being added to the agenda (Fuchs and Lederer 2007, 5–8). Due to government reliance on large corporations for jobs, income, and economic growth, the ability to transfer capital investment to other jurisdictions in seconds influences policy choices, even when the threat of capital flight is not explicitly stated (Fuchs and Lederer 2007, 5).

Corporate structural power has grown with the spread of economic liberalization and increases to corporate and capital mobility. Multinational corporations become increasingly difficult to regulate as they grow in size, power, and mobility (Brownlee 2020, 187). As capital movement becomes easier, and multinational corporations expand operations to more jurisdictions, governments have become more hesitant to introduce policies or regulations that could harm jurisdictional "competitiveness" for mobile business investment. As a result, many governments have adopted what Brownlee (2020, 187–89) refers to as a "deregulation agenda" in the hope of attracting corporate investment. The Saskatchewan Party (Sask Party) government in Saskatchewan is an example of a current government with an explicit deregulation agenda, framed as a commitment to "cutting red-tape". Since 2014, Saskatchewan has maintained a cabinet Red Tape Reduction Committee, advised by a business advisory panel, and has released annual reports on provincial deregulation efforts (Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development 2021; Government of Saskatchewan 2023). This deregulatory approach to economic growth comes from the perspective that government regulation stifles innovation, productivity, and investment, and imposes unnecessary costs on corporations (Brownlee 2020, 189). From this perspective, regulations hamper economic activity and reduce a jurisdiction's attractiveness to corporate investment, making it less economically competitive compared to less regulated jurisdictions.

As jurisdictions compete to offer the most favourable, least regulated, environment for business, downward harmonisation and other deregulatory behaviours may occur even without direct corporate requests. Structural power, however, is complementary to instrumental power, as it lends weight to corporate lobbing requests (Fuchs and Lederer 2007, 5). Instrumental power helps to direct the pressure of structural power, while structural power increases the influence and access of instrumental power.

In Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, oil corporations' structural power can be inferred using measures of sector contributions to provincial employment, government revenues, and economic activity.[3] However, statements from policymakers can more poignantly convey the weight of the oil sector's structural power, or the influence it can have on policy. In April 2020, for example, Saskatchewan Minister of Energy and Resources Bronwyn Eyre justified government support for the oil and gas sector by citing the sector's economic contributions, stating "The Saskatchewan energy sector is the second largest contributor to provincial GDP [gross domestic product] and, directly or indirectly, employs more than 34,000 people; so doing all we can to protect jobs is a major priority" (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c).

In Newfoundland, the oil industry's structural power is evidenced in the widely held belief, expressed publicly by policymakers, that no other industries provide viable alternatives to the oil sector for economic growth or government revenue streams. As expressed by the Newfoundland Premier's Economic Recovery Team's (PERT) 2021 report on the provincial economic crisis: "It is challenging to develop an economic growth pathway for Newfoundland and Labrador that does not include growth in the offshore petroleum sector… there are no short-term, realistic scenarios to replace the petroleum royalty revenues necessary to provide public services" (Greene et al. 2021, 82–83). The PERT report also offers an example of structural power's deregulatory pressure:

> The province needs to change its investment and regulatory approach [to secure investments from the petroleum industry needed for economic development]. Investors will not show up simply because the province has resources… The province's approach must encourage large-scale private sector investment, and de-risk investments through tax and other incentives. The approach must be responsive to the needs of the private sector. (Greene et al. 2021, 83)

[3] See Section 3.2.1, "Provincial Resource Dependency".

As the above quote illustrates, governments under the pressure of structural power move proactively to accommodate corporate interests, including via adoption of a deregulation agenda.

2.1.1.3 Discursive Power

Discursive power, the third dimension of corporate power, considers corporate power in the shaping of societal norms, perceptions, and values. As Fuchs and Lederer (2007, 8) describe:

> Discursive power shapes perceptions and identities and fosters the interpretation of situations as of one type rather than another. Thus, it influences the frames of policy problems and solutions, of actors in the political process, and of politics and the political as such.

The promotion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate citizenship discourse, industry funded research on key policy issues, advertisements, corporate op-eds, and strategic philanthropic activity are all examples of means through which corporations exercise discursive power (Eaton and Day 2020; Eaton and Enoch 2021; Daub, Blue, et al. 2020). These strategies allow corporations to influence discourse by shaping the information that reaches the general public. Influencing the framing of issues, shaping how people understand and talk about them, is an opportunity for corporations to set the narrative contexts in which policies are made. All of these techniques are applied by Canadian oil and gas corporations in their efforts to shape discourse around energy, climate change, and other environmental issues. This discursive power can be seen in, for example, industry promotion of Canadian oil as human rights friendly oil, framing of Newfoundland offshore oil as "green oil", and notably, in industry efforts to promote various strains of climate change denialism (Daub, Blue, et al. 2020).

Employing Fuchs and Lederer's three-dimensional framework allows for a fulsome view of influence from the oil and gas sector on provincial environmental regulation. The three dimensions of

corporate power are not siloed; each form of power overlaps, reinforces, and, when applied in corporate strategies to exert influence over policy, complements the others.

In Spring 2020, for example, the oil sector was the most active lobbying group in Canada. Industry spokespeople attributed the spike in lobbying activity to the large impact of the pandemic, and efforts to control its spread, on oil prices and the Canadian oil sector (Woodside and Vis 2023). However, equivalent spikes in activity are not recorded for other heavily impacted industries, and total lobbying activity reported in the federal lobbyist registry actually decreased in April and May 2020 (Vigliotti 2020a). The structural power of multinational oil corporations helps to understand the spike in meetings between oil industry lobbyists and federal government officials, and the apparent success of those efforts in securing government support for the oil sector. As will be discussed in greater detail in following chapters,[4] multinational oil corporations were contracting capital spending due to low oil prices in early 2020. The threat of losing capital investment from the oil sector, a significant contributor to provincial GDP growth in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 5–6; Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2021, 20; Macdonald and Beckman 2019, 5), likely contributed to government attentiveness to oil sector requests.

2.1.2 Regime of Obstruction

In the context of Canadian political economy, Carroll (2021b) argues that corporate power wielded by the Canadian fossil fuel extractive industry forms a "regime of obstruction" preventing climate action and a broader energy transition. Motivated by the potential for further extraction-derived profit, the regime of obstruction is enabled by corporate concentration and capital accumulation in the fossil fuel extraction industry, control over energy production, and the reach of

[4] See Section 3.3.2 "Oil Corporations' Structural Power".

industry capital into civil society and political processes. Carroll describes the regime of obstruction as the confluence of corporate economic power, a form of power "continuous with the entire process of capital accumulation" (Carroll 2021b, 11), and hegemonic power, encompassing "how [consent to rule] is secured, organized, and maintained"(Carroll 2021b, 12). In this way, the regime of obstruction offers an explanation for *how* oil and gas corporations use the three facets of corporate power to block climate action.

The mechanism of the regime of obstruction is expressed through various modalities within overlapping spheres of the state, economy, and civil society (Carroll 2021b, 10). Within the spheres of the state and civil society, the fossil fuel industry's regime of obstruction works to reinforce the industry's hegemonic power, establishing and defending industry perspectives as "common sense" and in the "public interest" (Carroll 2021b, 18). To do so, the regime exerts discursive power to frame energy and climate issues in ways which allow for continued hydrocarbon extraction and obstruct an energy transition away from the dominance of fossil fuels (Eaton and Day 2020, 459). In civil society, this obstruction is expressed through such modalities as:

- allocation of corporate funding to industry-friendly think-tanks;
- corporate funding of selective activism;
- promotion of CSR initiatives (Carroll 2021b, 10–14); and
- development and funding of educational resources and programs promoting industry narratives (Eaton and Day 2020).

The regime of obstruction reaches into the state through modalities such as:

- corporate lobbying;

- regulatory capture, whereby an industry shapes and directs a regulatory agency's actions, priorities, and decision making; and
- co-management of dissent and surveillance, as seen in collaboration between the state and corporations to defend extraction from activist opposition (Carroll 2021b, 14–15).

Corporate cohesiveness is a key enabling force for these expressions of corporate hegemonic power, as it supports corporate consensus, united action, and the consolidation of a unified voice for industry (Carroll 2021, p. 12-13). An oil and gas sector that is willing to speak and act in unison increases the effects of structural and instrumental power in a jurisdiction. Discursive strategies are also facilitated by corporate cohesion, which enables both coordination on messaging and the appearance of consensus.

As described by Carroll (2021b), the regime of obstruction that impedes Canadian climate action was built, reinforced, and is currently maintained by the corporate power of the Canadian fossil fuel extraction industry. The regime of obstruction is an outcome of the three forms of corporate power described by Fuchs and Lederer's framework, and it offers an explanation for how corporate power from the Canadian oil and gas sector is applied in practice. Carroll's work, therefore, supports an understanding of corporate power as key to explaining the gap between climate action and climate science in Canada.

2.2 Regulatory Dynamics

Other authors go beyond the influence of corporate power when describing patterns in oil sector regulation, and tendencies towards deregulation, across jurisdictions.

2.2.1 Explaining Variations in Oil Sector Regulation between Jurisdictions

Rabe and Borick (2013) describe two main pathways for environmental regulatory policy in sub-national jurisdictions: a "race-to-the-top" and a "conventional" pattern. In a regulatory race-to-the-top, sub-national governments emphasize environmental protection as a government priority, both to protect public health and to compete for economic development in industries sensitive to quality-of-life indicators (e.g. air quality). In contrast, a sub-national government following a conventional pattern in environmental regulatory policy would downplay concerns over environmental protection and defer to industry preferences in order to prioritize short-term economic development opportunities.

Governments following a conventional regulatory pattern may also be concerned that taking unilateral regulatory action towards environmental protection could cause investment and industry to move to other jurisdictions, resulting in a loss of economic opportunity and activity. As with Brownlee's (2020, 187–89) deregulation agenda, this government concern over capital flight and competition between jurisdictions, described as part of the conventional regulatory pattern, is a reflection of corporate structural power within a jurisdiction. Such governments are therefore unlikely to enact any additional environmental regulation (Rabe and Borick 2013, 233). Typically, any regulatory changes that do take place in a jurisdiction following a conventional pattern will be minor and unthreatening to industry (Carter and Eaton 2016). Applying the conventional pattern assumes that action from the federal government is required to prevent a "race-to-the-bottom" effect between jurisdictions. Jurisdictions economically dependent on the oil and gas sector, referred to by Rabe and Borick (2013) as energy dominant jurisdictions, tend to demonstrate conventional regulatory patterns in regulating these industries. This observation is consistent with the connection between deregulatory behaviour and structural power, as structural power is heightened in energy dominant jurisdictions.

Through his work on the regulatory dynamics of fracking in American states, Davis (2012) has created a framework which can be used to account for differing policy and regulatory approaches to oil and gas extraction between subnational jurisdictions. Key factors to account for differing regulatory approaches include:

1. the government's relative economic dependence on oil and gas revenues;
2. the degree of party control or competition;
3. the presence and comparative strength of "nonenergy constituencies";
4. the political power and cohesion of the oil and gas industry; and
5. agency governing capacity.

As part of party control, Davis also notes the importance of well-positioned, entrepreneurial leaders in accounting for differences in policy direction. Entrepreneurial leaders are those who are willing to behave opportunistically and use advantageous situations, such as a majority government, to maintain or change the regulatory landscape (Davis 2012, 188).

Non-energy constituencies consist of typical environmental constituencies, municipalities, and other groups or industries negatively impacted by oil and gas extraction. A large, diverse, and important nonenergy constituency can act as a counterbalance to the political and economic clout of oil and gas industry. In the case of Colorado, alliances and opportunities for cooperation between otherwise disparate groups, such as environmentalists, ranchers and retirees, allowed the nonenergy constituency to become strong enough to more effectively balance the political influence of the oil and gas industry (Davis 2012, 186). The absence and relative lack of power of nonenergy constituencies compared to the oil and gas sector has been used to explain weak regulation of extraction in cases such as that of Saskatchewan (Carter and Eaton 2016). Conversely, in states with

an internally divided oil and gas industry, the political and economic influence of the industry is diffused and there is more opportunity for cooperation among nonenergy constituencies (Davis 2012, 186).

2.2.2 Pro-Energy Subgovernments

A consequence of profitable oil and gas extraction in subnational jurisdictions is the development and consolidation of pro-energy interests within subnational governments, referred to by Davis (2012) as "subgovernments". In such contexts, where the structural power of the oil and gas industry is heightened, the oil and gas industry assumes a privileged position in the government, with associated advantages such as regulatory capture and enhanced access to policymakers, for the industry. Among other actors, subgovernments consist of trade associations and industry officials, including pipeline companies and exploration and production firms, state legislators, and regulatory agencies (Davis 2012, 178). A pro-energy subgovernment prioritizes energy production over safety and environmental concerns, resulting in regulatory decisions that can downplay environmental issues to continue status quo extraction behaviour.

Similarly, Rabe and Borik's (2013) energy dominant governments, concerned over potential loss in oil and gas revenues, typically choose to insulate the industry from regulation of environmental consequences. For example, both energy dominant American states and Canadian provinces have chosen to house oil and gas regulators in agencies mandated and established to support the sector (Carter 2020b; Spence 2013) Where fossil fuel extraction industries enjoy the political and economic advantages of an established pro-energy subgovernment, especially one with large financial resources and a reputation for expertise, it is very difficult for jurisdictions to deviate from status quo pro-extraction policy. Both Rabe and Borik's energy dominant jurisdictions and Davis' pro-energy subgovernments are reflections of high levels of corporate structural power within a jurisdiction.

2.2.3 Staples Theory

Staples theory, an approach from Canadian political economy, provides a useful model for considering how both provinces are positioned within Canada. Based on the history of Canadian economic development, staples theory describes a form of economic development based on large-scale resource extraction, primarily for export, and driven largely by foreign investment. Staples economies are prone to boom-bust cycles, vulnerable to international commodity market volatility and eventual resource depletion, and face structural barriers to economic diversification (Carter 2020a, 105–6; McGrane 2014, 31–33). The staples economy model also describes a core-periphery dynamic between, in earlier stages of economic development, the Canadian heartland of Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, and the hinterland regions of the rest of the country. A later stage of economic development involves the creation of regional cores and accompanying regional core-periphery dynamics (McGrane 2014, 32). At the subnational level, governments of staple economies are forced into a reactive position. As McGrane (2014, 33) describes:

> [T]he ideologies of agents in provincial governments are strongly shaped by economic forces over which they have limited control. Economic realities such as a reduction in world demand for certain products or commodities, distance from markets, trade liberalization, and competitive forces in the global economy constrain the ideological preferences of political actors.

As geographically isolated, resource-based economies, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have historically occupied the role of hinterland to the core of Central Canada. Political economy in both provinces is characterized by a long struggle with economic dependency on key natural resources, and a core-periphery relationship with the Canadian heartland. Provincial relationships with the rest of Canada have also been characterized by long-running out-migration trends, as stagnant economic conditions drove young people to find work in more prosperous regions (Wyman 2008, 3.8-3.9).

Chapter 3
Context

3.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic & Policymaking During a Public Health Crisis

3.1.1 Emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Canada

3.1.1.1 Timeline of the Pandemic

The COVID-19 virus spread rapidly around the world in early 2020, bringing dramatic and rapid change to societies and economies on all continents. The international COVID-19 pandemic has been the most comprehensive, simultaneously experienced health challenge in world history. SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19, was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December of 2019. Only a few weeks later, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of the COVID-19 virus a pandemic. By the end of September 2020, within ten months of the virus' initial identification in Wuhan, COVID-19 had infected in excess of 80 million and killed more than one million people worldwide (Taylor 2021). For policymakers, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge of unprecedented scale, speed, and complexity.

The dramatic urgency and scale of change in the early weeks and months of the pandemic demanded quick action from governments. Over the course of only a few days in mid-March 2020, warned by sobering reports of overflowing hospitals and rising death tolls in hard-hit regions, many jurisdictions initiated lockdowns to slow the spread of the virus (CNN Editorial Research 2021). These lockdowns and other pandemic containment measures caused large sections of the international economy to come to an abrupt halt. The shocking speed with which the virus spread around the world, and the flurry of international lockdowns, demanded swift and authoritative responses from governments.

In early March, governments across Canada passed a rush of emergency orders and regulations to slow or contain the spread of COVID-19. Many of the new government measures were sweeping in scope and impact, yet the normal processes of democratic accountability and legislative review were compromised by the speed and nature of the crisis. Governments dispensed with normal legislative procedures to respond to the unfolding crisis with the requisite speed and decisiveness; bills were drafted hastily, reviewed quickly, if at all, by legislators, and enacted (MacDonnell 2020, 142). Public servants were developing new programs and policies on a near daily basis throughout Spring 2020 (Cappe 2020, 166). Legislation was frequently passed using omnibus bills, with negotiations taking place behind closed doors among senior party representatives (MacDonnell 2020; P. E. Thomas 2020). Normal procedures were further disrupted by the near-total closure of courts and legislating bodies in the initial weeks of the pandemic, and ongoing limitations to travel and in-person gatherings. Resuming normal legislative and judicial operations, a process which took several months, required the adoption of technologies enabling virtual and distance capacities (Petit-Vouriot and Morden 2020; Morden and Thomas 2020). During the early pandemic, a period when Canadian governments were exercising extraordinary powers and passing sweeping legislation, the normal processes of legislative accountability and review were impeded both by urgency and an inability to operate in-person.

3.1.1.2 The Canadian Pandemic Response in 2020

Inter-jurisdictional coordination was important to combating the pandemic, but Canadian federalism complicated the response to COVID-19. Public health is an area of shared federal-provincial jurisdiction. The federal government's decision to not declare the pandemic a national emergency respected provincial jurisdiction over infectious disease management, but complicated the pandemic response at the federal level (Flood et al. 2020a, 23). Provincial governments adopted

varied responses to the pandemic, and key aspects of the pandemic response, such as data collection and sharing, were made more difficult by the challenges of coordinating between levels of government with shared jurisdiction (Attaran and Houston 2020). Despite these challenges, all levels of government were unusually collaborative during the initial months of the pandemic, some uncharacteristically so (Merkley et al. 2020; Stephenson and Harell 2023).

The initial Canadian response to the pandemic was also atypically non-partisan. Governments and party leaders at all levels spoke of the importance of adopting a "Team Canada" approach to COVID-19 (MacDonnell 2020; Merkley et al. 2020; Stephenson and Harell 2023). This cross-partisan rallying was not a universal response to the pandemic, as seen in jurisdictions such as the US, where the COVID-19 pandemic was a highly partisan issue from its onset. Highly salient political issues typically become extremely polarized unless political elites send deliberate signals of consensus, as was done in Canada (Merkley et al. 2020). During a national emergency, push-back from opposition parties or general unwillingness to cooperate with other governments may be perceived as unpatriotic. While concern over the optics of uncooperative or overly partisan behaviour may have encouraged political cooperation in Canada, MacDonnell (2020, 144–45) points out that such concern also risks impeding the role of opposition in legislative accountability. While this spirit of collaboration did not last, the initial months of the pandemic saw an unusual level of cooperation between and across orders of government, as well as across partisan lines (Merkley et al. 2020).

3.1.2 Policymaking During the COVID-19 Pandemic

3.1.2.1 The Unknowns

The quality of decision-making is dependant on the quality and availability of data and the evidence on which that data is based. In a fast-moving pandemic, governments were forced to make urgent policy decisions in a storm of uncertainty and with incomplete information, without the

comfort of prolonged deliberation or information-gathering. Policymakers needed to make decisions on measures to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 with inadequate information on the viral loads, immunities, testing and transmission of the virus (Flood et al. 2020b, 171). Understanding of the effectiveness and secondary effects of government pandemic mitigation policies, such as masking or curfews, developed with increased understanding of the virus and through a concurrent global experiment, as approaches were adopted and discarded in other jurisdictions. Additionally, while a vaccine was seen by many as the definitive solution to enable a "return to normal", it was not initially known when or even if a vaccine for COVID-19 could be developed (Flood et al. 2020a, 9).

3.1.2.2 Socioeconomic Impacts of Pandemic Mitigation

Epidemiological data was only one consideration for policymakers making decisions on pandemic policy responses. Around the world, measures enacted to contain the pandemic led to severe job losses and economic recession, interrupted the delivery of education and social services, and increased rates of mental health issues and domestic violence (Flood et al. 2020b). Large segments of the international economy came to an abrupt stop in early 2020 because of pandemic mitigation measures. From February to April 2020, 5.5 million Canadians, making up about 30% of the Canadian workforce, either lost their jobs or had their work hours significantly reduced[5] (Department of Finance [FIN] Canada 2020, 61). The national unemployment rate rose to 13.7% in May 2020, its highest recorded rate, from an historical low of 5.5.% in January 2020 (FIN Canada 2020, 62). Additionally, the worst consequences of both the virus and socioeconomic effects of mitigation measures fell disproportionately on already marginalized populations. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and created societal vulnerabilities along the lines of already existing structural

[5] Statistics Canada defines significantly reduced hours to be work hours reduced by more than 50%. Most workers who remained employed but saw their hours significantly reduced worked zero hours from February to April 2020.

inequalities, amplifying these pre-existing inequalities (Flood et al. 2020b). When considering pandemic response, policymakers needed to balance COVID-19 infection and death rates against the economic and social consequences of mitigation policy. As Flood et al. (2020a, 10) described the balancing act of pandemic policy: "In the longer run, we will have to account for both sides of the ledger, namely the people who were saved because of precautionary measures and the people who were lost or harmed."

3.1.3 International Oil Price War

In early 2020, Canadian oil producing provinces faced the additional, simultaneous, economic challenge of plummeting international crude oil prices. COVID-19 pandemic containment measures, such as closed workplaces and travel restrictions, led to a significant decline in international demand for crude oil from January 2020 (CER 2020; Wang 2020). On March 8th, 2020, only a few days before the WHO's declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, Saudi Arabia triggered an Oil Price War with Russia. Saudi Arabia had asked the expanded Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) to cut crude oil production to raise oil prices in the face of decreased global demand, but Russia refused to comply and Saudi Arabia responded by flooding the international market with cheap oil (Dow 2022; CER 2020; Wang 2021). Increased production from (OPEC+, alongside the sharp decline in global demand associated with the pandemic, sent oil prices plummeting through March and into April. The resulting buildup of global oil inventories caused several benchmark oils to hit record low pricing in April 2020.

The North American benchmark oil West Texas Intermediate (WTI)[6] reached negative pricing for the first time on April 20th, 2020 (Evans 2020; Walker 2020). At the same time, the

[6] West Texas Intermediate (WTI) is a benchmark crude oil, the pricing of which serves as a reference point to track price, risk, and volatility of the commodity. WTI is the primary North American benchmark, and one of

Western Canadian Select (WCS), the benchmark indicator commonly used to track the price of oil produced in Western Canada, dropped to its lowest historical level, averaging below US$5 a barrel on average in April 2020. WCS had been as low as US$16 in early 2016 and US$6 in 2018, but it began 2020 at just over US$36 a barrel (Wang 2020). Expecting oversupply conditions to continue, oil companies responded to low pricing with significant cuts to production and capital investment, as well as reductions in hiring and exploration activity (FIN Canada 2020; Wang 2021)

3.2 Political and Economic Background: Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador

At the beginning of 2020, the Government of Saskatchewan already considered the provincial economy under threat. Weak demand and low prices for key exports, including potash, oil, and uranium, had pushed the resource-dependant province into a mild recession in 2019 (Macdonald and Beckman 2019; Government of Saskatchewan 2020b). The oil industry, a significant contributor to provincial GDP and priority industry for the governing Saskatchewan Party (Sask Party), was subject to increasing external pressures from federal regulation and environmental activism. Throughout January and February 2020, Indigenous-led protests and blockades opposing pipeline construction brought rail transport to a halt across Canada (Global News 2020; R. Johnson 2020). Transportation bottlenecks caused by limits to pipeline and rail capacity forced Saskatchewan producers to sell crude oil at steep discounts (Macdonald and Beckman 2019, 5); a disadvantage that becomes more concerning for provincial oil industry advocates at times when international demand for oil falls and less competitive producers are forced out of the market (Dusyk et al. 2023). The Coastal GasLink and Keystone XL pipeline projects, which had promised to improve access to international markets for

three primary benchmarks globally. Compared to WTI, Canadian crude oils are more difficult to transport and refine. Canadian crudes are, therefore, typically priced lower than WTI and experience more regional price volatility that may not be indicative of international oil market trends. Western Canadian Select (WCS), for example, is among the cheapest crude oils internationally and trades at a discount relative to WTI pricing.

Saskatchewan oil and gas, faced uncertain futures in early 2020 (Bellrichard and Barrera 2020; Panetta 2020). Additionally, the federal Liberal government had successfully imposed a price on carbon starting in April 2019, and new federal regulations limiting methane emissions from the oil and gas sector were set to come into force at the beginning of January 2020 (ECCC 2021b; OAG Canada 2022).

Newfoundland and Labrador, meanwhile, began the year expecting to post real GDP growth of 2.4% in 2019, a rate that would have Newfoundland and Quebec leading the country in economic growth for 2019 (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 4). This economic growth was contingent on oil sector activity, however, and Newfoundland was already in a dire financial situation by March 18th, 2020, the date the provincial government declared a public health emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Oil prices were collapsing and the province, carrying the highest debt to GDP ratio of any Canadian province, was economically dependant on oil sector contributions to government revenue and provincial GDP (Macdonald and Feng 2019, 7; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019; Cochrane and Antle 2020). On March 20th, 2020, then-Premier Dwight Ball wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau to warn him that Newfoundland was at risk of insolvency, writing "our Province has run out of time" (Ball 2020). The provincial government had been unable to finalize its short- and long-term borrowing programs, and had no willing buyers for Newfoundland bonds (Ball 2020; Cochrane and Antle 2020).

3.2.1 Provincial Resource Dependency

Saskatchewan has struggled with resource dependency, volatile commodity prices, and "permanent hinterland" status since becoming a province in 1905 (Warnock 2004, 98). Settlers in the new province enjoyed a brief boom period at the beginning of the 20th century, fueled by free land, favourable weather, and high wheat prices. Entering the 1930s, Saskatchewan was wholly

economically dependent on wheat production. As The Bank of Canada at the time wrote, “no governmental unit in the world attempting to maintain a modern civilization is so completely dependent on the production and marketing of one commodity – a commodity which under even normal conditions is subject to wide variations in production and price” (McGrane 2014, 96). Consequently, the Great Depression and prairie dust bowl of the 1930s was devastating for Saskatchewan and its wheat-based economy. During the “Dirty Thirties”, the province and its wheat fields were hit by what Waiser (2006, 279) describes as, “every conceivable calamity – from unrelenting drought and scorching temperatures to blinding dust storms to insect plagues and crop diseases”.

Saskatchewan’s other resource industries came out of the desperation of the 1930s. By the 1950s, dependency on wheat had been traded for dependency on oil and gas, potash, and uranium (Pitsula 2009). Oil became the dominant resource, both economically and for its role in the popular imagination of the province. Fueled in part by the successful oil boom in neighbouring Alberta, oil development has been viewed by successive governments since the 1940s as the solution to “have-not” status (Carter 2020b, 64–68). Until the late 1990s, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland consistently ranked among the poorest provinces. Unlike Newfoundland, however, Saskatchewan enjoyed occasional boom periods caused by high commodity prices. During one such boom, linked to high prices for uranium, potash, and, most substantially, oil, provincial resource revenues increased from $35 million in 1971 to more than $1 billion in 1981 (Pitsula 2009, 113). When oil prices were high, provincial governments used oil royalties to build strong social programs, notably Medicare. Conversely, low oil prices led to government deficits, austerity measures, and economic stagnation (Carter 2020b, 57–68).

A series of provincial deficits in the 1980s, attributed largely to low oil prices and decreased royalty revenues combined with high interest rates (Carter 2020b, 65–66), led to a provincial debt crisis in the early 1990s. Saskatchewan was $15 billion in debt in 1991, carrying the highest debt per capita in the country, and had an annual deficit of $842 million (D. Roberts 1997b). By 1993, Saskatchewan was on the verge of declaring bankruptcy (D. Roberts 1997a; Pitsula 2009, 117). The allocation of $45 million in federal government assistance allowed the province to remain solvent, but accompanying tax increases and austerity measures had a negative impact on a population already struggling with economic stagnation (D. Roberts 1997b; Butler 2020; Carter 2020b, 66). Rising oil prices in the later half of the decade bolstered government revenues and provincial GDP, and, by 1997, Saskatchewan seemed to have reversed its economic trajectory (D. Roberts 1996; 1997b).

Newfoundland's historical development has been a sequence of dependence on and overexploitation of a series of natural resources. A staple economy since Newfoundland was a colonial possession in the 1700s, the provincial focus on extracting resources for export and vulnerability to volatile international market pricing has resulted in a long struggle with poverty and economic precarity. For much of this time, Newfoundland was economically dependant on the provincial fishing industry. Various government attempts to diversify the provincial economy, none long-lasting, typically focused on attracting foreign investment to develop another staple resource (Carter 2020b, 91–95). Debilitating government debt has also been near constant since the early 1900s, pre-dating the province's entry into Confederation (Carter 2020b, 93).

Oil looms large in the cultural imagination of Newfoundland as the "economic miracle" that allowed the province to break out of "have-not" status. The timing of the industry's start is in part responsible for this reputation, oil production beginning just five years after the 1992 cod moratorium devastated the province's economy (Gushue 2020; Carter 2020b, 95). At the beginning of the 21st

century, Newfoundland was the poorest Canadian province. In 2003, shortly before the provincial government began to receive oil income in earnest, Newfoundland was $11.6 billion in debt with a $827.2 million deficit (Carter 2020b, 95). With oil revenue, the province was able to start paying down debt, balance and increase public spending, and lower taxes.

Prior to the development of their provincial oil sectors, both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland struggled with poverty and economic development. The two provinces were hinterlands to the Central Canadian heartland, economically dependant on resource extraction and exports from a dominant resource– wheat in Saskatchewan, fish in Newfoundland. Both economies were vulnerable to control from Central Canadian monopolies, external factors such as drought or resource depletion, and international market pricing (Carter 2020b, 126).

The 2005-2015 oil boom established oil as the top industry in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, setting the stage for the current oil dependency in both provinces. Fueled by rising oil prices, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland led the country in GDP growth, exports, incomes, consumer spending, and investment for much of the boom period (Carter 2020b, 59). Long-running out-migration trends also reversed during this boom. In 2007, the Saskatchewan population grew for the first time in more than a decade, while Newfoundland saw its first population growth in 15 years in 2008 (Wyman 2008, 3.9). High oil prices had lifted Saskatchewan and Newfoundland into a new period of economic prosperity. With oil as an economic engine, the two provinces had managed to escape “have-not” status, but without fully breaking out of the staple economy pattern of economic dependence on exports and staple resources.

3.2.2 Provincial Political Context

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, Newfoundland was governed by a minority Liberal government and an outgoing premier. Then-premier Dwight Ball announced his

resignation on February 17th, 2020, almost exactly one month before his province declared a public health emergency to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mullin 2020). Ball stated that that he was motivated by a desire to spend more time with his family, but media and critics at the time attributed his resignation to accusations of nepotism from opposition parties and a recent announcement of potential electricity rate increases associated with the controversial Muskrat Falls project (Le Gaboteur 2020; CBC News 2020a; Parkinson 2020). Ball was to remain in power until a party leadership election, originally planned for May 2020, could establish his successor (Kennedy 2020).

In the weeks immediately following Ball's resignation, media reported that Members of the House of Assembly (MHAs) from all three major parties[7] were involved in talks to form a coalition government or force a snap election (CBC News 2020b). While neither opposition party leader officially confirmed plans for a coalition government, in late February 2020, Newfoundland and Labrador New Democrat Party (NL NDP) leader Alison Coffin told media, "I imagine we'll see some interesting things happen before the House opens, [on March 2nd]"(CBC News 2020b).

Talks of a coalition government or snap election came to an abrupt halt with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. As in other Canadian jurisdictions, the Newfoundland Assembly engaged in an uncharacteristic degree of cross-partisan collaboration to pass emergency pandemic legislation (CBC News 2020c; House of Assembly Proceedings 2020, 1788–91; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2020a). Progressive Conservative of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL PC) leader Ches Crosbie told media in late March 2020:

> All of those hatchets you might have been aware of from several weeks ago are now firmly buried and we're focused on the public interest... I couldn't have seen myself standing here two weeks ago,

[7] The Newfound House of Assembly in February 2020 consisted of 20 Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL Liberal), 15 Progressive Conservative of Newfoundland and Labrador (PC NL), three Newfoundland and Labrador New Democrat Party (NL NDP), and two Independent MHAs.

> and praising Mr. Ball, for the way in which he's shown leadership through this crisis. (CBC News 2020c)

Minority governments are typically associated with instability and legislative deadlock, but have also been shown to encourage coalition building, negotiation, and compromise between parties (MacDonnell 2020, 150). Governing effectively through the pandemic required the NL Liberal government to be able to quickly pass sweeping emergency legislation and make potentially contentious decisions while maintaining the confidence of the House of Assembly. Cross-partisan cooperation, however, was limited to the Assembly's immediate crisis response. Reported discussions between the NL Liberals and NL NDP for a supply and confidence agreement under Premier Ball did not achieve a formal agreement (CBC News 2020g). By early June 2020, the first non-emergency sitting of the Assembly since the onset of the pandemic, opposition parties were once again harshly critical of the NL Liberal government (CBC News 2020f).

Ball's resignation left his party and province awaiting both a leadership election and a general election. Newfoundland election law requires a general election be held within one year of an unelected premier taking office (Antle 2021; Garnett et al. 2021). The NL Liberal leadership election was delayed by the pandemic from May to August 2020, and the three-month leadership race to establish a new premier dragged into six months of an on-and-off internal campaign (Kennedy 2020). As a temporary premier awaiting the election of a new party leader, Ball lacked authority to make sweeping or long-lasting decisions that could bind his successor. Because of the delayed leadership election, Ball’s temporary status lasted the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When compared to majority governments, minority governments may be more attuned to the concerns of voters outside their typical constituencies and more wary of taking risks that may alienate voters in the case of a sudden election (MacDonnell 2020, 150). Election support for incumbent governments is also sensitive to provincial economic conditions, regardless of whether those

economic conditions extend beyond provincial boundaries (Stephenson and Harell 2023, 443). As a minority government anticipating an upcoming election and change in leadership, the provincial Liberal government in 2020 may have been especially hesitant to make potentially unpopular decisions in their approach to the pandemic and economic crisis. Ball's untimely resignation left the Newfoundland Liberal government to govern the first six months of the pandemic from a position of weakened authority and legitimacy: as a minority government harried by openly antagonistic opposition parties, under temporary leadership, and distracted by a dragging leadership race.

Saskatchewan was also anticipating a pandemic election to take place in 2020. In contrast to the unplanned Newfoundland elections, however, the Saskatchewan general election had been previously scheduled under Saskatchewan's fixed date election law which required an election to take place no later than October 2020 (Garnett et al. 2021, 7). Also in contrast to Newfoundland's weak minority government, Saskatchewan was governed by a strong majority government in 2020– the right-wing Saskatchewan Party's (Sask Party) third consecutive majority government. As mentioned, election results for incumbents are sensitive to provincial economic conditions (Stephenson and Harell 2023, 443), which may have influenced Sask Party priorities managing an economic recession in the lead up to the election.

Jared Wesley (2011, 115–17) identifies three elements as characteristic to Saskatchewan political culture: collectivism, dirigisme, and polarization. Collectivism encompasses the strong spirit of solidarity, collective action, and civic engagement present in the province. The second characteristic, dirigisme, refers to an emphasis in provincial politics on the government's role in addressing societal and economic issues, including belief both in government's capacity and responsibility to respond to residents' needs. This characteristic is observed in popular support for Crown corporations, nationalization, social ownership, and social programs, as well as promotion of

the same by multiple provincial governments. Government's role in addressing societal issues has historically been accepted by Saskatchewan governments across the political spectrum (Wesley 2011, 114–74).

The current Sask Party government, however, has reversed this historical trend. Since first taking power in 2007, the Sask Party government has assumed what Brownlee (2020, 187–88) refers to as a deregulation agenda, prioritizing "cutting red-tape" to create a favourable environment for business and, thereby, foster economic growth (Saskatchewan Ministry of Trade and Export Development 2020). Despite originally campaigning on a promise to maintain existing provincial Crown corporations, the Sask Party has worked towards privatizing them, in some cases successfully. Provincial Crown corporations, however, still enjoy widespread public support in Saskatchewan. For example, public outcry in support of the provincial telecom Crown corporation, SaskTel, has forced the Sask Party to backtrack on multiple privatization plans since 2007 (Fraser 2020; Ackerman 2019).

Multiple authors (McGrane 2014, 76–77; Wesley 2011, 116) link elements of dirigisme and collectivism in Saskatchewan political culture to a deep sense of political and geographic isolation underlying political discourse in the province. As a perpetual hinterland, longstanding "have-not" province, and the location of North America's most successful socialist parties, feelings of political and geographical isolation from the rest of Canada are deeply embedded in Saskatchewan. This isolation, both real and felt, from economic and political centres has further contributed to an underlying sense of vulnerability with regards to the rest of Canada, especially centres of power and economic activity in the Canadian heartland.

The third characterizing element of Saskatchewan political culture, polarization, refers to the "deep ideological and partisan division" in Saskatchewan politics, where "division of the province between the Left and the Right is … a time-honoured tradition" (Wesley 2011, 20) dating to the

province's founding in the early 1900s. Compared to other Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan politics have long demonstrated a high level of partisan and ideological polarization (Wesley 2011, 20). Despite the otherwise highly polarized political landscape, support for oil sector has been a priority for successive governments of both major parties since oil production began in 1945 (Carter 2020b, 60–68).

3.3 Oil Sector's Corporate Power in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador

The oil and gas sector is deeply embedded in the political landscapes of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. In both provinces, maintaining positive relations with industry and supporting oil sector development has been a priority for successive governments across the political spectrum. This support pre-dates the establishment of the oil industry in both provinces, as governments of the two "have-nots" saw oil as a potential source of economic prosperity (Carter 2020b, 127–28). A three-dimensional framework for corporate power supports an understanding of the mechanisms through which the oil industry exercises influence over provincial policy, including environmental regulation. The oil and gas industry uses various instrumental, structural, and discursive strategies in attempts to influence provincial environmental policy.

3.3.1 Oil Corporations' Instrumental Power

The oil industry's use of strategies to exert instrumental power over policy decisions can be observed through lobbying records and political donations, both indicators of instrumental power. Energy sector corporations have been found to make significant contributions to the campaigns of both major political parties in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party (SK NDP) and the Sask Party (Enoch 2012). Elections Saskatchewan data from 2019, however, reports $1,196,082 in corporate donations to the governing Sask Party (Elections Saskatchewan 2020b),

while the SK NDP received only $51,123 in total corporate donations in the same year (Elections Saskatchewan 2020a). Oil and gas companies feature in the top corporate donors for the governing Sask Party, considered both in number of donors and size of the donations (Press Progress 2020). Elections Newfoundland data from shows that in 2019, of the three parties with sitting MHAs, both the governing NL Liberals and opposition PC NL received donations from oil sector corporations (Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 2020). The NL NDP, however, did not receive any corporate donations in 2019, possibly an indicator of how corporations evaluated the party's chance of forming government.

Saskatchewan Lobbyist Registry records since 2016 indicate that the oil and gas industry is one of the most active lobbying groups in the province (Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists Saskatchewan 2023). As Saskatchewan does not require registration of individual meetings or communications between public office holders and lobbyists, the provincial registry does not include information on the frequency, quality, or success rate of attempted lobbying activities. Resultingly, the Saskatchewan Lobbyist Registry can be used as a barometer for resources invested in lobbying, but not the success or, beyond a minimum threshold, frequency of lobbying activity. Additionally, changes to the lobbying registry in July 2020 reduced the required hours for registration as an in-house lobbyist from 100 hours annually to 30 hours annually (Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists Saskatchewan 2020f), meaning prior data cannot be meaningfully compared to data from post-July 2020. Prior to the change, in-house corporate lobbyists only needed to register as lobbyists if they worked on a lobbying file for 100-hours annually, including travel and prep time, leaving lobbying activity below this threshold unrecorded.

However, even with these limitations to lobbying data in Saskatchewan, lobbyists registered with oil and gas companies and industry associations can be seen to make up a significant portion of

registered lobbyists, indicating a high minimum threshold for activity. Government officials are also open about meeting frequently with oil industry representatives. As Saskatchewan Minister of Energy and Resources Bronwyn Eyre described communication between the oil industry and provincial government at an appearance before the Saskatchewan Legislature's Standing Committee on the Economy (Economy Committee) on March 18th, 2019:

> [Representatives of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources] were recently at PDAC [Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada] in Toronto, and one of the things that I hear most often is how readily the [oil] sector and industry — and Mr. Belanger [NDP Energy Critic] has raised our working with them and the importance of that — how often they say that they can pick up the phone. And in other jurisdictions it's difficult; it's more of a maze, and that in Saskatchewan it remains accessible and easy to get answers to questions and to manoeuvre at what in other provinces, as I say, can sometimes be a maze. We're very proud of that. I'm very proud of that. And it's not a cliché; you hear it all the time. So thank you to my colleagues and the entire ministry [of Energy and Resources] in that regard and in so many others. (Standing Committee on the Economy 2019, 676)

Another strategy used by oil corporations to exert instrumental power is participation in provincial government consultations with industry, including exclusive industry consultations or committees, on regulatory, tax, and other policy decisions. In December 2016, for example, the Newfoundland government established an Oil and Gas Industry Development Council, consisting of representatives from industry and government, to "bring together key stakeholders to work collaboratively towards positioning Newfoundland and Labrador globally as a preferred location for oil and gas development" (Maclean et al. 2018, 1). This council was also the foundation of the Oil and Gas Industry Recovery Task Force, created in September 2020 in response to the pandemic and oil price crash to "identify immediate actions to sustain the Newfoundland and Labrador oil and gas industry" and advise the provincial government on distributing $320 million in federal funding allocated to the provincial oil sector (Fanning et al. 2021, 1).

Oil corporations' participation in policy consultations, and their ability to devote greater resources to such consults compared to other actors, is a form of instrumental power. Exclusive invitations for oil corporations to provide input through consultations and advisory groups, however,

is based on oil industry's structural power. As described in Rabe and Borik's (2013) energy dominant jurisdictions or Davis' (2012) pro-energy subgovernments, in jurisdictions where the oil industry has heightened structural power, oil corporations are given privileged access to policymakers and opportunity to provide input on policy.

3.3.2 Oil Corporations' Structural Power

Corporate structural power is present through the disproportionate economic presence of the oil industry and provincial dependence on oil sector employment and revenues. As a typically unwritten form of influence, oil industry's structural power can be difficult to fully quantify or assess, although it is possible to outline the significance of these firms to the broader economy, which matters for provincial decision-making. The 2005-2015 oil boom established oil as the top industry in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, setting the stage for both provinces' economic oil dependency. As discussed above, high oil prices allowed Saskatchewan and Newfoundland to escape "have-not" status and reverse established out-migration trends. Together, the two provinces led the country in GDP growth, exports, consumer spending, and investment for much of the boom period (Carter 2020b, 59; Wyman 2008).

Oil activity contributes significantly to Saskatchewan government revenues, provincial GDP, and provincial employment. Oil and gas extraction and support activities were the second largest contributor to provincial GDP in 2019, contributing about $8 billion to provincial GDP (Statistics Canada 2023; Government of Saskatchewan 2020c). Saskatchewan also relies on oil and gas sector for employment, especially in rural communities (Carter and Eaton 2016). In 2019, with the provincial government's net debt to revenue ratio at 81.9%, the highest point in more than a decade, the provincial government attributed the increased debt to decreased government revenue caused by low oil prices (Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance 2019, 13). Saskatchewan's net government debt had grown by $4.6 billion between 2014-15 and 2016-17 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance 2019,

14). In April 2020, the provincial Minister of Energy and Resources claimed that the oil and gas sector had employed 34,000 people, directly or indirectly, in the previous year (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c). The sector's economic contributions to the province, however, are accompanied by outsized contributions to provincial GHG emissions: the oil and gas sector is the province's largest emitter of GHG emissions, with upstream oil and gas emissions from the sector alone making up a third of total provincial emissions in 2019 (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics 2021, 35; ECCC 2023).

Still, comments from Saskatchewan policymakers can attest to the influence of industry's structural power in policymaking. When discussing an Act to regulate the provincial oil and gas sector, *Bill No. 147, The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2018*[8] at the March 18th, 2019 meeting of the Economy Committee, public servants, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of both parties, and the provincial Minister of Energy and Resources, all emphasized the importance of the oil industry to Saskatchewan. The economic importance of the industry was connected, by multiple participants, to the importance of supporting industry with a favourable regulatory environment. As NDP MLA and Energy critic, Buckley Belanger, expressed during his opening comments to the Standing Committee on the Economy:

> I'd like to say that the oil and gas sector economy is very important to the province of Saskatchewan. We [the provincial NDP] have continued, certainly in my capacity as Energy critic, to do our very best to support the industry because it's very important to our future and to our economy overall. Obviously the people of Saskatchewan want us to make sure that as legislators, that we are achieving that balance between economic sustainability and the creation of a climate for investment, so to speak. (Standing Committee on the Economy 2019, 666)

[8] A later form of Bill No. 147, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2019*, later became part of the suite of provincial methane regulations modified in 2020. See Section 5.1, "Saskatchewan Results", and, for greater detail, Section 5.1.1.2 "Regulations on Methane Emissions of the Oil and Gas Sector".

Such comments illustrate how structural power can translate into regulatory accommodation, even without industry making explicit threats to move jurisdictions.

Oil looms large in the cultural imagination of Newfoundland as the "economic miracle" that allowed the province to break out of "have-not" status. The timing of the industry's start is in part responsible for this reputation, with oil production beginning just five years after the 1992 cod moratorium devastated the province's economy (Gushue 2020; Carter 2020b, 90–124). In 2003, shortly before the province began to receive oil revenues in earnest, Newfoundland was the poorest Canadian province, with $11.6 billion in debt and $827.2 million deficit (Carter 2020b, 95). Thanks to oil revenue, the province was able to start paying down debt, balance and increase public spending, and lower taxes (Carter 2020b, 98; Wyman 2008).

The economic benefits Newfoundland received from the oil industry left the provincial economy heavily dependant on the sector. Oil revenue, including from royalties, corporate income taxes, and payments to the offshore revenue fund, surpassed 25% of annual provincial government revenue for more than half of the years between 2006 and 2019 (Carter 2020b, 99). Oil revenues to the province are estimated at over $20 billion since 1997 (Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industries Association [NOIA] 2020). The industry accounts for as much as 40% of provincial GDP, a high point reached in 2008 (NOIA 2020), and 41% of total provincial export value from 1997-2019 (Greene et al. 2021, 14). In 2019, shortly before the pandemic, the sector represented 34% of provincial GDP (Statistics Canada 2023).

Consequently, any setbacks to oil production or project development in the offshore oil sector negatively impact the entire province's economic outlook. Changes to oil production on a single project shift annual GDP growth for the entire province by percentage points, and ordinary setbacks to a project's timeline undermine the financial stability of the entire province because of lost revenue

(CBC News 2018; Government of Newfoundland 2019; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019). When oil spills in November 2018 required Husky Energy (Husky) to shut down production on part of the White Rose project for nine months, the deferred revenues resulted in a deficit for the 2018-19 budget (CBC News 2019a; 2019d). Eight months later, another spill and month-long shutdown on the Hibernia platform cost the provincial government $2.5 million per day in deferred revenue (CBC News 2019c). The GDP growth and budget surpluses that had allowed Newfoundland to achieve a degree of economic stability were reliant on a continued boom in the offshore oil sector, and fiscal gains were not enough to lift the province's heavy debt burden.

Newfoundland was $13.95 billion in debt at the end of 2019 (Newfoundland Minister of Finance 2019) and, other than required payments to sinking funds, had not paid any principal on its debt in years (Greene et al. 2021, 37). Some economic indicators appeared favourable for the province at the end of 2019: Newfoundland and Quebec were leading the country in real GDP growth for 2019 (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 4), the 2019 Fall Fiscal Update predicted a 2019-20 budgetary surplus of $1.56 billion (Newfoundland Minister of Finance 2019) and, fueled by anticipated increases in oil exports and capital investment in offshore projects, real GDP was predicted to continue growing through 2020 (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 5–8). As before, however, GDP growth and budget surpluses were entirely reliant on oil sector income.

As previously noted, the oil sector represented 34% of provincial GDP at the end of 2019 (Statistics Canada 2023). The growth in real GDP reported in late 2019 was attributed largely to increased oil production, primarily from ramped up production on the Hibernia project (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 4–5). Predicted increases in real GDP for 2020 were contingent on anticipated increases to exports, due to increased oil production, and capital

investment, linked almost entirely to expected expenditures for the West White Rose expansion (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 7). Additionally, as reported in the provincial fiscal statement for Fall 2019, every $1.00 USD decrease in average crude oil prices meant a corresponding $7.7 million CAD decrease in government revenue for the province (Newfoundland Minister of Finance 2019). At the end of 2019, the economic stability of Newfoundland was highly vulnerable to any decrease in oil prices.

The precarity of Newfoundland's resource dependence, and therefore the influence of the industry's structural power, is heightened by the offshore industry's concentration in only a few mega-projects. In early 2020, the Newfoundland offshore oil sector was concentrated in only four production facilities: the Hebron, Hibernia, Terra Nova, and White Rose.[9] Plans were underway to potentially add a fifth project, the Bay du Nord project, to the Newfoundland offshore, but the project had not received corporate or government approval in early 2020.

The price of crude oil is the most important factor driving future production and investment in the oil and gas sector. Due to the large sunk costs of oil production, when compared to other industries, the oil industry is slower to adjust immediate employment and production in response to changes in price and demand. Oil market conditions may change quickly, and restarting oil production after a shut down is very costly (Wang 2021, 4). Therefore, when oil demand and prices drop, oil companies prefer to keep pumping at a loss for a period. To compensate for decreased profit level and to lower their average variable production costs, oil companies will reduce planned capital spending and decrease investment in long-term production (Wang 2021, 5). Ongoing development projects and exploration activities are at risk of cancellation when oil prices fall, even though falling

[9] Hebron and Hibernia are Gravity Based Structures (GBS), while the Terra Nova and White Rose are Floating, Production, and Off-Loading vessels (FPSO).

prices do not typically result in immediate changes to ongoing production and related oil sector employment.

At the beginning of 2020, the Newfoundland offshore oil sector was anticipating significant investment into future production from oil companies in the form of expansions, repairs, and retrofits on current projects, as well as exploration and development for potential future projects (CBC News 2020d; T. Roberts 2020c). Three of the four existing offshore oil facilities were expecting significant investments for lifespan extending retrofits or expansions.

The Terra Nova FPSO was entirely offline, scheduled to undergo a $500 million lifespan extending retrofit in Spain later in 2020. The Canadian-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) had ordered a halt to production over ongoing safety concerns and non-compliance with safety regulations aboard the FPSO in 2019 (Canadian-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board [C-NLOPB] 2019). The retrofit was expected to extend the project's lifespan by 10 years and allow for production of an additional 80 million barrels of oil (T. Roberts 2021; CBC News 2020i).

The $2.2 billion White Rose expansion project was about 60% complete in early 2020. When the expansion was originally approved in 2017, it was claimed the expansion would add 14 years to the lifespan of the White Rose FPSO, with first oil in 2022, and produce $3-4 billion in royalties, taxes, and equity payments for Newfoundland (T. Roberts 2020b; CBC News 2022; Jaremko 2020a).Investment decisions were also expected for two potential projects in early 2020. The Hibernia Management Development Corporation was considering expansion work to add two subsea tiebacks to the Hibernia platform, potentially extending the project's lifespan by several years (T. Roberts 2019; Antle and Cochrane 2020). Equinor's decision on whether to proceed with the Bay du

Nord contract was expected in April 2020, with a decision on project funding anticipated for later in the same year (CBC News 2020d).

The planned developments and projects were in various stages of planning or construction, but all required large capital investment from the operating oil corporations, and none were expected to produce oil before 2022. These pending decisions and projects, betting on future production and oil prices and requiring billions of dollars in capital investment from companies, were vulnerable to any drop in oil prices.

When international oil prices plummeted in Spring 2020, oil companies quickly cut capital spending. Husky, then one of the "Big Five" oil corporations dominating the Canadian oil and gas sector (Hussey et al. 2021), twice announced large cuts to its capital spending for 2020. On March 12th, 2020, Husky announced spending reductions of $1 billion compared to amounts announced in December 2019, including $900 million in cuts to capital expenditures and $100 million in other cost-saving measures. Slightly more than one month later, on April 20th, 2020, the company announced an additional $700 million in capital reductions. Between December 2019 and April 2020, Husky had cut capital expenditures by almost 50% (Jaremko 2020a; Husky Energy 2020b).

These reductions in capital spending from Husky had immediate negative impacts on economic forecasts for Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, oil sector capital investment being a large portion of total capital investment in both provinces. Husky's cuts included suspending construction on the Newfoundland West White Rose Project (T. Roberts 2020b; Husky Energy 2020a). Newfoundland's expectations for increased overall capital investment in 2020, a key basis for the GDP growth forecast for 2020, were based primarily on expected capital expenditures from the West White Rose Project (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 7). The impact of this singular project on provincial GDP was such that, in the 2019 fiscal update, delays in the West White

Rose Project was one of two reasons[10] given by the Newfoundland government to explain 2019 GDP growth being lower than projected (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 5).

As part of the same round of capital spending reductions announced in April 2020, Husky suspended several planned projects and upgrades in the Lloydminster region of Saskatchewan, and paused all further capital expenditures in Western Canada for the rest of 2020 (Husky Energy 2020b). This was an extension of a previous cut to capital expenditures announced by Husky in 2019, where the company cited pipeline limitations as a factor in reducing investment in Saskatchewan (Macdonald and Beckman 2019, 5).

By early June 2020, cost saving measures from oil companies had suspended all major long-term development plans for the Newfoundland offshore, deferring or stranding $4 billion invested in work commitments for exploration activities (CBC News 2021; T. Roberts 2020c). Equinor and Husky suspended their $6.8 billion deepwater Bay du Nord prospect in March, citing the steep decline in oil prices and general economic downturn related to the pandemic (Antle and Cochrane 2020). On March 24, 2020, Husky halted construction at the White Rose Ocean oil production site, following an order from the C-NLOPB to cut big crews down to essential personnel to allow for social distancing (Jaremko 2020a; Husky Energy 2020a). Finally, in September 2020, Husky announced it was reviewing all operations in the Newfoundland offshore, with the potential to leave the theatre entirely (T. Roberts 2020f).

As part of global cost-saving measures, ExxonMobil suspended all new drilling activities on Hibernia in May 2020, laying off drilling workers and continuing production using only existing

[10] In December 2019, the Newfoundland Government attributed annual GDP growth failing to match their April 2019 projections to two main factors: 1) Delays in the West White Rose project; and 2) Oil production being lower than expected, mainly due to unplanned shutdowns on Hibernia (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance 2019, 5).

wells. Production can continue for several months without new drilling activity once wells are drilled, but continuing oil flow long-term requires wells to be regularly worked over (T. Roberts 2020a). In the case of Hibernia, the platform could continue to produce oil based on proven reserves, but pausing drilling created a timeline of 12 to 18 months for oil production from the platform (T. Roberts 2020d). With multiple projects stalled for need of capital investment and facing a prolonged period of oversupply in international oil markets, Newfoundland was at risk of entirely losing its offshore oil industry.

Because of this economic dependence on oil in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, the oil industry has a high level of structural power in both provinces. Staples economies are vulnerable to corporate structural power, and energy dominant jurisdictions such as Newfoundland and Saskatchewan are especially vulnerable to the influence of oil sector structural power. Pandemic impacts on the oil industry further increased the precarity, both real and felt, of both provincial oil sectors—including widespread cuts to oil corporations' capital investment, decreased production and exploration activity, and, in Newfoundland, the real risk of losing the provincial industry. This increased uncertainty surrounding the provincial oil sectors combined with the pandemic-related economic recession to further heighten the influence of oil sector structural power beyond normal levels.

3.3.3 Oil Corporations' Discursive Power

Oil corporations use discursive strategies in efforts to shape norms, values and beliefs surrounding the oil and gas sector in Newfoundland and Canada. Discursive strategies are used to secure public support for ongoing fossil fuel use and extraction, especially in oil-producing communities, and to establish industry policy perspectives as "common sense" policy. Examples of strategies used by the Canadian oil and gas industry include actions such as open letters, sponsored

opinion pieces, social media campaigns, strategic philanthropy, and promotion of CSR initiatives (Daub, Blue, et al. 2020; Eaton and Enoch 2021; Carroll 2021b, 18–23).

In Newfoundland, discursive strategies used by the oil sector are demonstrated in the promotion of Newfoundland offshore oil as environmentally responsible oil, compatible with net-zero emission targets. The idea that oil production in the Newfoundland offshore is significantly more environmentally friendly than competing oils is the rhetorical basis for continuing development of the provincial oil sector, even in the face of both climate change and competitive per barrel production costs. Continued investment in offshore oil exploration and development is justified with the argument that, not only is Newfoundland oil more environmentally responsible than that from other regions, but global demand for oil with lower upstream emissions will grow as the world transitions towards lower emissions energy sources. This message is illustrated in an open letter sent from CAPP to federal Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O'Regan on May 13th, 2020. Justifying a request for federal financial support for the offshore oil industry in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the letter argues:

> As you are aware, offshore oil is being produced responsibly in Newfoundland and Labrador, with significantly lower emission per barrel than the global average and a robust regulatory regime designed to minimize any potential environmental impact. Investing in our offshore as global demand for oil and gas is expected to continue to rise is a positive investment, not only from an economic perspective but also from the perspective of helping supply much needed environmentally responsible energy to the world.

This message also appears in policy reports from the PERT and the Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industry Recovery Task Force, advisory groups initiated by the provincial government in 2020 (Greene et al. 2021, 86–89; Fanning et al. 2021, 2). Both premises supporting this framing of offshore oil development, that Newfoundland oil is significantly more environmentally friendly and low-emission than other oils, and that market forces will begin to favour

low-emission oil, are not well supported. International customers for Canadian crude oil are not concerned by production emissions when making purchasing decisions (Dusyk et al. 2023, 17–18), and global competitors offering similar oil at lower production costs do not have significantly higher emissions per barrel (Gordon et al. 2016).

Corporate efforts to shape discourse surrounding the industry are complemented by the sector's structural power in oil producing communities. As corporate discursive strategies overlap with the material benefits of oil sector strategic philanthropy and economic activity, "economic dependence is positioned not only as material fact but also as an active ideological construction in the service of power" (Eaton and Enoch 2021, 314). Eaton and Enoch (2021) argue that oil-dependant Saskatchewan communities experience hegemonic community identification, meaning an intense level of personal and community identification with the industry. Where hegemonic community identification with the oil industry is present, people "overwhelmingly understand their community as having a singular economic identity… [and] assume that the general interests of the community are indistinguishable from the particular interests of the oil and gas industry" (Eaton and Enoch 2021, 314–15).

Eaton and Enoch (2021, 316–20) further argue that the corporate discursive strategies of strategic philanthropy and direct community engagement, used by industry to secure community consent for extraction, are key to the creation of hegemonic community identification in these oil producing towns. Various community engagement strategies are used to promote industry-friendly ideologies and policy perspectives, as well as to strengthen relationships between industry and the community. CAPP's "Energy in Action" programming for elementary schools, offered in the mid-2010s, is an example of one such community engagement strategy. Through Energy in Action, elementary students in rural Saskatchewan were presented with CAPP-designed programming about

the oil industry, resource development, and environmental issues. Industry-sponsored educational programs in Saskatchewan, such as Energy in Action, promoted industry messaging which "foreclosed teaching about the possibility of transitioning off of fossil fuels and entrenched an understanding of individual consumption as the primary cause of climate and environmental problems and, therefore, individual actions as the only feasible solutions" (Eaton and Day 2020, 465).

Strategic philanthropy, especially where discrepancies in services compared to non-oil producing communities are readily apparent, encourages the development of a community economic identity where community welfare is directly linked to the oil sector. As Eaton and Enoch describe a key factor in the development of a hegemonic community identity:

> A hegemonic community identity [is] forged through continuous but subtle reminders of a community's economic dependence on industry for the provision of jobs, revenues, public services, and critical infrastructure. The result is the collapse of boundaries between community and industry, such that the interests of fossil fuel producers coalesce with the general interest of the "oil-producing" community. (Eaton and Enoch 2021, 326)

In these examples from Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, discursive strategies are used by the oil industry to shape discourse surrounding energy and environmental issues and secure ideological support for ongoing and intensified oil extraction. Through such efforts, industry-friendly perspectives on issues such as climate change are established as "common sense", and the economic dominance (i.e. dependence) of the industry in energy dominant jurisdictions is framed as either desirable or inevitable. High levels of identification with the industry, as described by Eaton and Enoch (2021, 322), whereby "individuals internalize an industry's ideological position on issues of concern to society as a whole", are also grounded in corporate discursive strategies such as community engagement and strategic philanthropy.

3.4 Provincial Oil Sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador

The oil sectors in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland differ obviously in several key aspects: in type of oil reserves, oil extraction technologies used, the age of the sector, and in provincial regulatory structures. The Newfoundland offshore has been producing oil only since the Hibernia field came online in 1997, though there had been attempts to develop offshore oil since the 1960s, and the provincial government only began profiting from oil extraction once Hibernia reached payout point in 2006 (Carter 2020b, 98; Sweeny 2018). Active oil production in Saskatchewan began in the 1940s, though developments in fracking technology allowed extensive production expansion only in the 2010s.

Oil production in Newfoundland is concentrated in four offshore mega-projects, two GBS and two FPSOs. In contrast with the few mega-projects in Newfoundland, oil and gas in Saskatchewan is extracted from thousands of individual wells (Carter 2020b, 62). Developments in fracking technology have enabled the Saskatchewan oil sector to expand since the 2010s, with future production in the province increasingly dependant on fracking methods (Carter and Eaton 2016, 393–94). While large oil companies do still dominate in Saskatchewan, there is a wider range in the size of corporate operators compared to the large operators in the Newfoundland offshore. Natural gas production is also heavily intertwined with oil production in Saskatchewan, but non-existent in Newfoundland.

In management of oil sector regulation, the Saskatchewan oil sector is provincially managed while the Newfoundland offshore is under joint federal-provincial management, due to oil extraction taking place in distant offshore zones normally under federal jurisdiction. The 1985 Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord (Atlantic Accord) established joint federal-provincial management of offshore petroleum activity through the joint Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore

Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB). In the Newfoundland offshore, the C-NLOPB is the lead authority for offshore environmental protection and environmental regulatory compliance surrounding offshore oil activity, including involvement in environmental assessment processes, approving operators' environmental monitoring programs, and lead responsibility for spill response monitoring (Carter 2020, 105). Regulatory capture by the oil industry has been described in both provinces. Also in both provinces, the lead regulator of the oil sector is housed in bodies with mandates which include fostering oil activity and securing economic benefit from oil extraction: the C-NLOPB in Newfoundland and the Ministry of Energy and Resources in Saskatchewan (Carter 2020, 106).

Upstream oil and gas accounts for a large portion of GHG emissions in both provinces, though to a greater extent in Saskatchewan. The oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan was the largest provincial emitter of greenhouse gases in 2019, accounting for 31.3% of overall provincial emissions (23.4 megatons CO_2 equivalent) (ECCC 2023, 52). Though not to the same extent as in Saskatchewan, the oil and gas sector is also a major emitter in Newfoundland. In 2019, production in the Newfoundland offshore was responsible for 16.4% of provincial emissions (1.8 Megatons of CO_2 equivalent) (ECCC 2023, 45). However, there is the potential for annual emissions from oil production to be much higher than those represented in emissions inventories from 2019, as oil production on multiple projects was suspended for several weeks during 2019.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Overview

This project was divided into three stages. Because it was necessary to first establish the extent and nature of provincial regulatory change before factors contributing to the outcome could be considered, the first stage of this research project established a dataset of relevant regulatory changes during the period of study. Stage one consisted of a thorough review of changes to provincial environmental regulation of the oil sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, from January 1st, 2020, to December 31st, 2020, inclusive. This review was used to create a dataset of relevant regulatory changes during the period of study, as changes to provincial environmental regulation during the early pandemic had not been comprehensively documented nor compiled prior to this project.

In stage two, once the extent and nature of regulatory changes had been established, publicly available government announcements made by the two case provinces during the period under study were reviewed for statements on environmental regulation and the oil sector. This review allowed for public government motivations and key issues related to the oil sector to be identified in each province.

Drawing on the dataset, motivations, and topics identified during the first two stages of this project, the third and final project stage was a comparative case analysis of findings from the two case provinces. This comparative analysis focused on similarities and differences between cases in the nature and extent of regulatory change in 2020, as well as key motivations, relationships, decisions, and concerns related to the oil sector and environmental regulation thereof.

4.2 Project Limitations and Delimitations

4.2.1 Case Selection

The Canadian oil-producing provinces of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland were selected as the two case provinces for this project. Saskatchewan and Newfoundland share certain historical and economic contexts, explored in Chapter 3, including long-running historical poverty, resource dependency, and out-migration. Both provinces have also struggled with high per-capita debt loads and near-bankruptcy– Saskatchewan in the early 1990s and Newfoundland in early 2020 (Butler 2020; Smellie 2021). As the two historical "have-not" provinces in Confederation, oil looms large in both provinces as the resource that enabled a long-awaited reversal of economic fortunes (Carter 2020b). Randy Burton, longtime journalist for the Saskatoon Star Pheonix, described similarities between the two provinces:

> Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have a lot in common. Both are regarded as the sad sisters of Confederation, eternally fighting natural disasters and financial misfortune. Both have traditionally depended on primary industries which always seem to be in trouble, if not outright collapse. Both lament the perennial outmigration of their young people, and both feel ignored by Ottawa (Burton 2004).

Ideas of vulnerability, precarity, and dependence linked to the provincial oil sector, both real and rhetorical, are a major theme in government behaviour towards the oil sector in both provinces. Oil producers in both provinces struggle to be competitive in international oil markets– transportation bottlenecks force Saskatchewan producers to sell at a steep discount (Macdonald and Beckman 2019), while extremely high production costs are a consequence of the isolated and extreme environment found in the Newfoundland offshore (Kaiser 2021). Such similarities between the two case provinces facilitate comparison between differing factors, including differences in provincial responses, as captured by the regulatory review, and the relative strength of various forms of corporate power.

Alberta, the third major Canadian oil-producing province, was excluded from this project. Compared to Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, Alberta greatly exceeds both other provinces in population, overall economic activity, and oil production (CER 2021). Additionally, in sharp contrast to the periphery oil-economies of Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, Alberta is considered to be the geographic core of the Canadian oil sector, with oil sector corporate elites networks centred in Calgary (Carroll and Huijzer 2021; Carroll 2021a; Hussey et al. 2021). The final reason why Saskatchewan and Newfoundland were selected as the cases for this project is that these provinces are understudied in Canadian political economy, both generally and in research on oil-producing provinces; this project aims to help address this gap in attention.

4.2.2 What is meant by regulation?

Regulations are a form of law considered to be delegated or subordinate legislation to their enabling Acts. Similar to Acts, regulations have binding legal effect but, unlike Acts, regulations are not made directly by the legislating body of the jurisdiction in which they apply. The legislating body holds regulatory power, but the regulations themselves are made by the individual or body to whom the legislating body has delegated the authority (Privy Council Office 2017). Typically, an enabling Act establishes the framework for a regulatory scheme and delegates the authority to develop and express the regulation. The regulatory authority remains subject to the will of the legislature and legal constraints, both those set out in the enabling Act and the basic legal requirements for regulations established by applicable laws. In both Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, a regulation cannot have effect unless it meets legal requirements for registration, is filed with the designated registrar, and publication, is published in the provincial Gazette within 30 days of filing (Privy Council Office 2017; *Statutes and Subordinate Legislation Act* 2010; *The Legislation Act* 2019)

All official regulation, therefore, is publicly available and its introduction or modification must have been recorded in the provincial Gazette. Other research has noted informal regulation of the oil sector in the case provinces. Interviews conducted by Carter (2020b, 122), for example, describe emissions in the offshore oil sector as being regulated by "a "gentlemen's agreement" on annual caps on flaring negotiated between the [C-NLOPB] and operators." Changes to such informal regulation and regulatory exceptions cannot be captured by a scan of publicly available documents, and so must be excluded from this project.

As previously stated, the intent of the regulatory review is to determine the full extent and nature of changes to provincial environmental regulation of the oil sector in 2020. The review was therefore restricted to those regulations introduced or modified during 2020. Regulations for which the enabling Act was passed in 2020 but where the regulation did not come into effect until a later date are included in the review, as they are considered part of a regulatory response which took place in 2020, even if the regulation itself was not completed and expressed until a later date.

4.2.3 Period Under Study

This project, as it concerns the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and oil price war on oil sector regulation, considers the first year of the pandemic to encompass the 2020 calendar year, from January 1st, 2020, to December 31st, 2020. While domestic pandemic response began mid-March 2020, travel restrictions and other attempts to contain the COVID-19 virus significantly decreased international demand for crude oil from early January 2020 (CER 2020). Decreased demand for oil was already affecting global markets, and therefore the behaviour of oil corporations, in January 2020, prior to the known arrival of the virus in Canada. December 31st, 2020 is used as the end point for the period under study due to the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines. Prior to the arrival of the first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine in Canada on December 13th, 2020 (Jones 2020), vaccines were an

uncertain variable for policymakers. Though the vaccine roll-out itself was an extended process, the addition of vaccination as a tool for pandemic management drastically changed how governments and populations responded to the pandemic and the socioeconomic impacts of containment measures. For example, Stephenson and Harell (2023, 444) note that pandemic management became an increasingly partisan issue following the introduction of vaccines, when the first months Canadian pandemic governance had been marked by an uncharacteristic level of cross-partisan cooperation (Merkley et al. 2020).

4.3 Stage One: Regulatory Review

Stage one of this research consisted of a systemic scan of changes to provincial environmental regulations affecting the oil sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland from January 1st, 2020, to December 2020. While changes to environmental regulation of the oil sector during this period had been publicly announced and were broadly reported on in the media (Energy Policy Tracker 2022; Government of Saskatchewan 2020c; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2020b; Jaremko 2020b; Corkal and Beedell 2021), the full extent of such changes had not been captured. To build a dataset capturing the extent of such changes, provincial government publications reporting on regulatory change released between January 1st, 2020, and December 31st, 2020 in each case province were scanned for notice of the introduction or amendment of either environmental or oil and gas sector regulation. All changes were recorded in a Microsoft Excel database. Changes captured in this initial scan were then reviewed in greater detail to confirm the affected regulation involved both environmental regulation *and* the oil and gas sector. Regulatory changes which did not meet both criteria were removed from the final data set.[11] This process ensured that the final dataset

[11] See Appendix A "Changes to Environmental Regulations Affecting the Oil Sector, 2020: Newfoundland and Labrador", and Appendix B: "Changes to Environmental Regulations Affecting the Oil Sector, 2020: Saskatchewan".

included only changes made to environmental regulation of the oil sector, but that all possibly relevant changes were reviewed.

4.3.1 Data Sources and Validation

In Saskatchewan, the following publications were reviewed for notice of regulatory change:

- *The Saskatchewan Gazette, Part I*, containing official government notices, Orders in Council, and private notices required by statute to be published in the Gazette;
- *The Saskatchewan Gazette, Part II*, containing official versions of all revised[12] regulations as enacted;
- *The Saskatchewan Gazette, Part III*; containing official versions of all unrevised regulations as enacted;
- Published summaries of Saskatchewan Orders in Council, which includes all directives issued by the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan on the advice of the provincial Cabinet; and
- The published list of "Public Notices and Minister's Orders Issued in 2020", containing all oil and gas public notices and Minister's Orders published on the online "bulletin board" for the Saskatchewan Minister of Energy and Resources (Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources [ER Saskatchewan] 2020).

All publications reviewed were available online at the Saskatchewan Publications Centre website maintained by the Government of Saskatchewan. Reviewing Orders in Council, Ministerial Orders, and Saskatchewan Gazettes was an opportunity to ensure data validity by confirming the

[12] A revised regulation is a regulation which is part of *The Revised Regulations of Saskatchewan*, a body of all Saskatchewan regulations enacted on or after December 5, 1980.
An unrevised regulation is part of the "Saskatchewan Regulations", a body of regulations enacted before December 5, 1980. Different numbering and cataloging systems are used for revised and unrevised regulations (*The Regulations Act Regulations, 1997* 1997).

consistency of data available in the Saskatchewan Gazette and in the published copies of Ministerial Orders and Orders in Council. To account for the 30-day delay between the creation of a regulation and its publication in the Saskatchewan Gazette, all provincial Gazettes published between December 1st, 2020, and February 1st, 2021, were reviewed.

In Newfoundland, the following sources were reviewed for notice of regulatory change in the Newfoundland oil sector:

- *The Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette, Part I,* containing official government notices, orders in council, and private notices required by law to be published in the provincial Gazette*;*
- *The Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette, Part II,* containing official versions of all subordinate legislation, including regulations, as filed;
- *The Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette, Extraordinary Issues*, containing notices and regulations which must take effect on a date falling outside of regular publication dates; and
- Newfoundland and Labrador Orders in Council Database, containing all Orders in Council made by the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland acting on the advice of the Cabinet or Premier.

Copies of the *Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette* were accessed on the official website of the King's Printer (formerly Queen's Printer) maintained through Digital Government and Service NL by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. All Orders in Council issued in Newfoundland during 2020 were exported in excel spreadsheet form from the Orders in Council Database maintained by the provincial Cabinet Secretariat. This dataset was reviewed and compared to data from the Newfoundland Gazette to validate the dataset of regulatory changes. To account for

the delay between the creation of a regulation and its publication in the Newfoundland Gazette, gazettes published between December 1st, 2020, and February 1st, 2021, were included in the review. The Office of the Legislative Counsel of Newfoundland also maintains an annual list of regulations published within a given calendar year (Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador 2020). This list was reviewed and compared to the collected dataset of regulatory changes as an additional measure to ensure data accuracy.

4.4 Stage Two: Review of Announcements

The second stage of this research was a scan of provincial government news releases related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the oil sector. All official provincial announcements mentioning the oil sector or the COVID-19 pandemic, both together or separately, were identified through a high-level scan of all written government announcements released between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, as published on the official government websites of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. Identified news releases were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, with webpage snapshots saved to a Zotero database. These announcements were reviewed for key messaging, motivations, decisions, and issues related to the oil sector, oil sector regulation, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Announcements were also reviewed for indicators of corporate power and corporate strategies, such as lobbying, used by the oil sector to exert influence over government policy.

4.5 Stage Three: Analysis

Stage three consisted of a comparative analysis of data collected in the first two stages. Data collected for each case province in stages one and two was analyzed for key themes and recurring topics, and a timeline of major events was created for each case

province.[13] Identified themes, timelines, corporate strategies, and regulatory changes were then compared between Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, allowing common patterns in environmental deregulation to be described.

[13] See Appendix A "Timeline of Key Events Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Oil Industry in Newfoundland and Labrador", and Appendix B, "Timeline of Key Events Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Oil Industry in Saskatchewan".

Chapter 5
Results and Analysis

Results of the regulatory scan indicate that the provincial governments of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland did include accommodations on environmental regulation along with financial support offered to the oil industry in 2020. Regulatory accommodations offered to the oil sector by each province, described in greater detail throughout this chapter, can be divided broadly into three overlapping categories:

1. accommodations for pandemic disruption to workplaces;
2. releases of initiatives already under development, reframed as pandemic-related support for the industry; and
3. streamlining of regulations surrounding oil exploration activity.

Regulatory changes in each province are described in largely chronological order, with some exception for overlapping events. Indicators of instrumental and structural power, or at least of attempts to exert instrumental and structural power, are discussed alongside regulatory changes in each province.

Strategies employed by corporations to exert discursive power, however, are difficult to separate from those used in corporate attempts to exert structural and instrumental power. Discursive strategies are always present within broader context in which structural and instrumental strategies are applied, shaping and being shaped by corporate efforts.

Through reviewing government announcements and oil industry news, I have identified three key messages used in framing oil sector regulation in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. The oil sector is essential to short- and long-term economic recovery in the province.
2. Continued extraction by the oil sector in the province is environmentally responsible and/or compatible with climate change mitigation and broader environmental goals.
3. Ensuring regulatory competitiveness for the province is essential to ensuring the oil sector fulfills its potential for economic recovery.

This discursive context served as the backdrop to the events of 2020 described throughout this chapter.

A series of open letters sent by CAPP to various federal and provincial ministers in March, April, and May 2020, offer examples of how instrumental strategies used in oil sector efforts to influence government policy intersected with the discursive and structural context surrounding the sector in each province. As open letters, these communications are an example of a discursive strategy used by industry to influence public opinion and framing of the government response to the pandemic. The content of these letters centres around the three key messages, listed above, used to frame oil sector regulation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the letters being part of industry efforts to establish their messaging as "common sense". References to meetings and other lobbying efforts in the letters provide some information on how instrumental strategies were being employed during this period. The oil and gas industry's structural power was also referenced throughout the letters, especially to establish the first key message, that the oil sector as essential for economic recovery. This illustrates both how structural power is used by the oil and gas industry to support discursive strategies, and how structural power can be used to complement instrumental strategies to influence government policy.

In one open letter to federal Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O'Regan, sent March 27th, 2020, CAPP requested federal government support for the oil industry in the form of regulatory

accommodations, going so far as to attach a list of requested changes to federal regulation. Requested accommodations included regulatory flexibility in response to pandemic conditions, such as the deferral or waiver of low-risk regulatory requirements, but also amendments "to streamline regulations and to identify other actions that can improve the regulatory environment and support economic recovery" (McMillan 2020a, 2), a reference to the third key message.

Efforts from the oil industry to advocate for oil exploration incentives referenced other jurisdictions' competitive regulatory environments and pandemic supports— using reminders of corporate mobility and structural power as a persuasive tactic to influence policy. For example, as written in another open letter from CAPP to Minister O'Regan, sent May 13th, 2020:

> We are seeing countries and regions around the globe introduce tax changes and incentives to ensure they are best positioned to attract investment when the market begins to recover… As recovery begins, competition for reduced investment dollars will be stronger than ever and it is imperative that Canada take action to ensure our industry can compete if it is to survive. (McMillan 2020c, 2)

Such messaging from oil industry advocates illustrates how the structural and discursive backdrop in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland complemented instrumental strategies used by the oil and gas industry.

5.1 Saskatchewan Results

Unfolding in largely chronological order, the following section describes changes to environmental regulation of the oil and gas sector in Saskatchewan enacted during 2020. Instrumental, structural and discursive forms of corporate power are noted throughout the section, as are various strategies to influence government policy. The section begins with changes to provincial regulation-- already underway prior to 2020-- surrounding pipelines and upstream oil and gas industry methane emissions. While not connected to the pandemic or oil price war, the development and

implementation of a new regulatory framework surrounding pipelines demonstrates the established relationship between the Saskatchewan government and the oil industry, including long-running patterns of regulatory accommodation.

The overview of regulatory changes continues with a description of the Saskatchewan government's pursuit of an equivalency agreement with the federal government on provincial methane regulations. Next, accommodations for regulatory reporting and compliance requirements, offered in response to pandemic conditions, are examined. This includes an overview of the impact of such accommodations on provincial methane regulations and the federal-provincial equivalency agreement. The section concludes with changes to the regulation of oil exploration activity introduced in December 2020. As incentives for oil exploration activity are an indicator of structural power from the oil sector, structural power's role in these changes will also be discussed.

5.1.1 January & February 2020: IRIS Pipeline Module & Methane Regulations

The Saskatchewan government was already extending regulatory accommodation to the oil sector prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the oil price war. At the beginning of 2020, the Government of Saskatchewan was in the process of introducing new regulations for the oil and gas sector: one set of regulations affecting pipeline licencing, and a second set regulating methane emissions from the upstream oil and gas sector. In each case, the introduced regulations resulted from external pressure, civil society for the former, and federal regulatory pressure in the latter. In both cases, oil and gas corporations were intimately involved in the development and implementation of the new regulations– an example of the oil sector employing instrumental strategies to exert corporate power in the province. As discussed in this section, the resulting regulatory regime, although nominally strengthened, was ultimately very permissive of and favourable to the provincial oil and gas sector.

5.1.1.1 Online Pipeline Registry

On January 23, 2020, the Saskatchewan government introduced a new online pipeline registry: the Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS) Pipeline Module. The IRIS Pipeline Module streamlined the administration and issuance of pipeline licences and expanded the scope of provincial pipeline licencing to include flowlines previously outside of regulatory oversight (Government of Saskatchewan 2020a). Although not the result of the pandemic, the development and early 2020 implementation of this module illustrates the relationship between industry and the provincial government in the period immediately preceding the pandemic, including the influence of multiple forms of corporate power.

Work on the IRIS Pipeline Module began in March 2017, as part of the provincial government's response to the July 2016 Husky pipeline spill (Government of Saskatchewan 2017a). One of the most significant environmental events in Saskatchewan history, the 2016 Husky pipeline spill released 25,000 litres of heavy crude near and into the North Saskatchewan River. Husky's delayed response to the spill[14] allowed oil to travel more than 500km downriver, forcing multiple communities to take emergency measures to protect their water supply (MacPherson 2016b; 2016a; E-Tech International and Resurgence Environmental 2016). Prior to the incident, the Saskatchewan auditor and external commenters had found that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources (ER Saskatchewan) had neither sufficient capacity nor effective processes to ensure compliance with existing pipeline regulations, which were, resultingly, going unenforced (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan 2012; MacPherson 2016b; Carter and Eaton 2016).

[14] Several reports, including Husky's initial incident report, state that Husky did not alert the government until 14 hours after the leak was detected, and that Husky did not react to the spill itself until several hours after emergency alerts began. Husky now disputes this timeline, claiming they did not become aware of the spill until several hours after the leak began, and notified the government only 30 minutes after becoming aware.

The Saskatchewan government responded to the 2016 Husky spill by updating some of those previously identified regulatory gaps, increasing funding to the regulator, and by funding programs to "strengthen Saskatchewan's approach to pipeline regulation" (Government of Saskatchewan 2017a). The IRIS Pipeline Module was the ultimate result of one such funded program. Oil corporations' involvement in developing the government policy response to the Husky spill is an example of instrumental strategies being applied to the policymaking process. From the earliest stages, the oil and gas industry was consulted on the provincial government's response to the Husky spill, including changes to pipeline regulation, and oil corporations later played a key role in the development of the IRIS Pipeline Module (Government of Saskatchewan 2017b; Saskatchewan Standing Committee on the Economy [Saskatchewan Economy Committee] 2019, 671–72; Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources [ER Saskatchewan] 2020b). Following 18 months of consultation with an oil and gas industry "Business Change Advisory Group", the IRIS module was implemented on an industry-requested timeline and specifications (ER Saskatchewan 2020b; Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 671). Although the online pipeline registry and associated regulations came out of calls to strengthen regulatory oversight following a major environmental disaster, in execution, the online registry simplified licencing processes for industry without meaningfully increasing regulatory oversight.

The IRIS Pipeline Module was established through *The Pipeline Amendment Act, 2019* and two pieces of supporting regulations: *The Pipelines Administration and Licencing Regulations* and "Directive PNG034: Saskatchewan Pipelines Code". *The Pipeline Amendment Act* was originally passed by the Saskatchewan Legislature in May 2019, but came into effect along with the two supporting regulations on January 20th, 2020, per Order in Council (Executive Council of Saskatchewan 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2019* 2019).

Primary effects of *The Pipelines Amendment Act* and accompanying regulations include:

1) Establishing the IRIS Pipeline Module as the legal online licence registry, holding the authoritative version of all pipeline licence documents and supporting information;
2) Automating the granting of licences and amendments to licences for pipeline projects considered "low-risk"; and
3) Expanding licencing requirements to include previously exempt pipelines and flowlines (Government of Saskatchewan 2020a).

The launch of the IRIS Pipeline Module improved regulator access to pipeline documentation, removed requirements to maintain paper records, which were burdensome for both industry and regulators, and expanded the scope of regulatory oversight to include around 80,000 previously unlicensed flowlines (Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources 2020b; *The Pipelines Administration and Licensing Regulations* 2020). The expansion of projects under regulatory oversight, which might otherwise be considered a strengthening of regulation, was undermined by the accompanying automatization of pipeline licencing and reversion to regulation by declaration.

Under the online licencing process, licence applications for lower risk projects receive automatic and immediate approval from the module. The criteria to determine whether a project is considered lower risk, and therefore eligible for automatic licencing, are not fixed. Criteria determining project risk levels are adjusted by Energy and Resources according to the level of resources available at the time (i.e. subject matter expert availability) (Standing Committee on the Economy 2019, 669; Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources 2020b, 2). If a criteria change is expected to have a high impact on industry (e.g. an increase by more than 5% of applications flagged as higher-risk), the Ministry will hold a formal consultation with industry operators. In

contrast, changes which decrease stringency, therefore reducing the number of applications flagged as higher risk, are done internally, without external consultation (Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources 2020b; Saskatchewan Energy Regulation Division 2020).

Pipeline applications flagged by the module as higher risk do require review from an ER Saskatchewan subject matter expert for licence approval. However, the subject matter expert only reviews those aspects of the application related to why the module flagged the application as non-routine (Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources 2020b, 2). Regulatory oversight which does not consider the whole of a project is less effective than oversight which does, as it is more likely to miss problematic combinations of cumulative or intersecting factors.

With the launch of the IRIS Pipeline Module, the Government of Saskatchewan expanded a system of "regulation by declaration", already used to regulate other aspects of the provincial oil sector, to include pipeline projects. Regulation by declaration is a form of industry self-regulation whereby companies simply declare regulatory compliance. Government oversight under such systems is diminished to random audits and following up on complaints (Carter and Eaton 2016, 407–10). A similar online self-service module for oil well development, offering automated approval for oil drilling and completion applications considered routine, had already been in place for several years by 2020 (Carter and Eaton 2016; Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 672). By using the IRIS Pipeline Module to expand the industry self-service approach to sector regulation, the Saskatchewan government was actively retreating from regulating the provincial oil and gas sector.

Any oversight in regulation by declaration lies in the regulator's ability to encourage compliance through frequent and thorough audits. In Saskatchewan, the regulator's capacity to ensure regulatory compliance has historically been undermined by austerity measures and a deliberate atrophying of the public service (Carter and Eaton 2016, 408–9). Under such austerity measures, referred to as "de

facto" deregulation by Prudham (2004, 352), what regulation does exist is ultimately unenforceable due to lack of funds, staff, and required expertise. The history of de facto deregulation in Saskatchewan brings into question the level of regulatory oversight provided by the IRIS Pipeline Module, especially with screening criteria for licences determined by regulator staffing capacity. While the provincial government did increase regulator capacity as part of its initial response to the 2016 Husky spill (Government of Saskatchewan 2017a), this was a one-time increase, and the Sask Party remains ideologically committed to minimizing regulation and cutting perceived public sector excess (Government of Saskatchewan 2021).

The launch of the IRIS Pipeline Module and accompanying regulation did slightly strengthen provincial pipeline regulation by improving regulator access to pipeline documentation, relieving the regulator of some record-keeping requirements, and expanding regulatory oversight to include additional flowlines. However, the overall effect was to facilitate pipeline construction by streamlining the licencing process and expanding existing oil industry self-regulation through regulation by declaration. These changes to the provincial regulatory framework cannot reasonably be linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic crisis, given the development and implementation timeline. However, the development and implementation of the IRIS Pipeline Module is useful as a demonstration of the relationship between the Saskatchewan government and provincial oil sector at the beginning of 2020, and provides examples of strategies used by the oil and gas industry to exert corporate power over environmental policy in Saskatchewan.

Following the 2017 Husky spill, the Saskatchewan government was under pressure from civil society and Indigenous communities to address longstanding gaps in provincial environmental regulation surrounding pipelines (E-Tech International and Resurgence Environmental 2016; MacPherson 2016a). In the face of this pressure, the provincial government prioritized industry

preferences, and worked to ensure that any changes to environmental regulation would either positively or minimally impact the oil and gas sector. For example, when discussing the IRIS module and proposed changes to the *Pipeline Act* at the March 18, 2019, meeting of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly's Economy Committee, Energy and Resources Minister Bronwyn Eyre emphasized the new system's benefits to industry, including that "these changes [to *The Pipeline Act*] support the business improvement goals of the pipeline regulation enhancement program" (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 671). Doug MacKight, Saskatchewan Assistant Deputy Minister of petroleum and natural gas, further explained that an online system had been chosen because "[filing pipeline registrations is] a lot of work for industry, so we need to make sure we have a good electronic system that makes that go as easy as possible" (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 672).

Being based on the belief that increasing sector regulation would discourage future investment from oil and gas corporations, these efforts from government to preserve a favourable regulatory environment for industry reflect the structural power of the oil and gas corporations in Saskatchewan. SK NDP MLA Belanger's comments from the same March 2019 Economy Committee meeting illustrate policymakers' concerns over potential economic consequences of regulating, or even discussing regulating, the oil and gas sector. Referring to statements from SK NDP MLAs, including himself, advocating for further protections at pipeline river crossings, MLA Belanger stated, "I want to clarify for the record, [the suggestion of further strengthening pipeline regulations at river crossings] is not intended as a slight against industry, *nor was it intended to discourage investment*" [emphasis added] (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 676).

Another statement from MLA Belanger from the same meeting also attests to the influence of the oil and gas industry's structural power in the development of the IRIS Pipeline Module and associated regulation:

> "[T]here is so much at stake … the oil and gas sector is something that we've always been very aware of, this tremendous economic opportunity for the province of Saskatchewan and for Western Canada as a whole. And everything that we can do to not surprise [oil and gas corporations] and to collaborate with them --- lockstep in terms of the regulatory [sic], the monitoring, the preparation for disasters, to minimize challenge for the industry as a whole --- is really, really important." (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 675–76)

MLA Belanger's comment also illustrates one means by which industry's structural power complements the instrumental strategies corporations used to influence pipeline regulation. Seeking to, in Belanger's words above, do "everything that we can do to not surprise [oil and gas corporations] and to collaborate with them", the Saskatchewan government heavily involved oil and gas corporations in the development of the IRIS module. In addition to other industry consultations referred to vaguely by officials, Energy and Resources Saskatchewan consulted with an industry Business Change Advisory Group for 18 months prior to the module launch (ER Saskatchewan 2020b, 1). The Saskatchewan Lobbyist registry data for 2019 and 2020 also shows that pipeline policy, the IRIS module, and changes to the *Pipeline Act* were lobbying topics for oil industry lobbyists, including those representing CAPP, Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL) and Husky, along with several smaller industry actors (Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists Saskatchewan 2020b; 2020a; 2019). IRIS module release notes reference industry input during these consultations as justification for the launch timeline and implementation stages, suggesting that industry input during consultations had at least some effect on the final policy outcomes. Similarly, when speaking to the Economy Committee, Minister Eyre explained that establishing IRIS as the legal licence

registry, rather than using the module only to issue and administer licences, was a change requested by industry during consultations (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 671).

5.1.1.2 Regulations on Methane Emissions of the Oil and Gas Sector

In April 2018, the federal government finalized regulations to reduce methane emissions from the upstream oil and gas sector: the *Regulations Respecting Reduction in the Release of Methane and Certain Volatile Organic Compounds (Upstream Oil and Gas Sector)* (federal methane regulations). Targeting fugitive emissions (i.e. leaks) and venting emissions, the federal methane regulations introduced emissions limits and set inspection and repair requirements for upstream oil and gas facilities (ECCC 2021, 4). The first requirements under the federal methane regulations were set to come into force on January 1st, 2020. The Government of Saskatchewan, however, intended to achieve an equivalency agreement with the federal government prior to the federal methane regulations coming into force, and thereby prevent federal regulations from impacting the province's oil and gas sector (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c; Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 665).

A potent but short-lived greenhouse gas, methane has a warming potential more than 80 times greater than CO_2 over a 20-year period, and more than 25 times greater over a 100-year period (ECCC 2021, 2). With a comparatively higher potency and shorter lifespan, reducing methane emissions has significant near-term benefits for reducing climate change impacts compared to reducing emissions of other GHGs, and has been identified as one of the lowest-cost GHG reduction opportunities in Canada (ECCC 2021b; IPCC 2023, 32).

The oil and gas sector is the largest single industrial emitter of methane in both Saskatchewan and Canada overall, responsible in part for Saskatchewan's outsized contribution to Canadian GHG emissions (ECCC 2021a, 7; 2022a, 34). Methane emissions from the oil and gas industry are

generated largely from upstream activities, including exploration, drilling, production, and field processing. During oil and gas production, methane emissions are both accidentally leaked, known as fugitive emissions, and deliberately released through venting or flaring (Saskatchewan Environmental Society [SES] 2017; ECCC 2021b). In 2019, Saskatchewan accounted for about 17% of Canadian methane emissions, around two-thirds of which were emitted by the oil and gas sector (ECCC 2021a, 30).

Methane emissions from the upstream oil and gas sector, however, may be much higher than already high reported data. "Top-down" inventories of methane emissions in Canada suggest that official historical inventories underestimate actual methane emissions, especially those originating from the upstream oil and gas sector (Singh and Hopton 2021; MacKay et al. 2021; Zavala-Araiza et al. 2018). Official methane inventories have relied on industry reporting and estimated emissions to build "bottom-up" inventory estimates. "Top-down" studies using atmospheric measurements to produce inventory estimates observe discrepancies that suggest bottom-up inventories underestimate methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, and that actual methane emissions from the industry are much higher than reported (ECCC 2022a, 51).

Equivalency agreements are a regulatory tool included in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA) to reduce regulatory duplication and enable regional approaches to environmental issues. Under Section 10 of CEPA, a provincial government and the federal Environment Minister may enter into an equivalency agreement on federal regulation made under CEPA if the two governments can come to a written agreement that:

1. Provisions within the province's jurisdiction are equivalent to the CEPA regulation; and
2. The province has provisions similar to CEPA sections 17 to 20, which allow citizens to report and trigger investigations into suspected offences (ECCC 2021, 5).

As CEPA regulation, the federal methane regulations were eligible for an equivalency agreement if the Saskatchewan government could demonstrate that provincial regulations met the above requirements. If an equivalency agreement is successfully reached, the CEPA regulations subject to the agreement do not apply within the province.

At the start of 2020, the Saskatchewan government was already pursuing an equivalency agreement at the request of industry, with the goal of preventing federal methane regulations from coming into force in that province (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c; Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 667–68). Prior to 2019, Saskatchewan methane regulations for the provincial oil and gas industry consisted of very permissible guidelines for venting and flaring emissions, and voluntary industry standards for fugitive emissions (SES 2017). To achieve an equivalency agreement, therefore, several new environmental regulations needed to be introduced prior to 2020 (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 667). With some regulatory changes introduced in 2019, Saskatchewan did meet the requirement to have provincial provisions similar to CEPA sections 17 and 20. Nonetheless, provincial methane regulations for the oil and gas industry did not otherwise satisfy requirements for regulatory equivalency in time to meet the 2020 deadline, and federal methane regulations came into force in Saskatchewan at the beginning of the year.

As with the January 2020 overhaul to pipeline regulation, the Saskatchewan government's pursuit of an equivalency agreement on federal methane regulation is an indicator of influence from the structural power of the oil and gas industry. Saskatchewan was pursuing the equivalency agreement with the federal government to "[fulfill] the request of industry to be regulated by the province" (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c; Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 668). The provincial government's willingness to undermine federal regulation to support this request from industry is consistent with the Sask Party's deregulation agenda, an expression of structural power

whereby jurisdictions compete to offer the most favourable regulatory environment for corporate investment.[15] By undermining federal methane regulation at the request of industry, the Saskatchewan government was working to protect provincial oil and gas operators from a more restrictive regulatory environment and signaling willingness to accommodate industry requests—both attempts to attract future corporate investment.

The structural power illustrated by the Saskatchewan government's deregulation agenda was complemented by instrumental strategies employed by the oil and gas industry to influence environmental policy, as with the development and implementation of the IRIS Pipeline Module. The oil and gas industry was consulted extensively in the development of the provincial methane regulations. As Minister Eyre described the consultation process:

> First we began with a working group with the major emitters just to make sure we got the elements right. That included industry associations, CAPP, and the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada. Based on those discussions, we then formulated a plan and consulted with all of the producers by way of some distribution of draft documents and draft regulations. That's our normal course of things. (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 668)

In contrast to the extensive consultation with industry, only one environmental non-governmental organisation (ENGO), the Saskatchewan Environmental Society, was even briefed on the methane regulations, and they were not included in the full consult (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 668). As a result of this discrepancy in access, potentially linked to industry's structural power, instrumental strategies used by oil and gas industry have greater reach compared to efforts from other actors. The provincial regulations that came out of this consultation process were more flexible and favourable to industry when compared to federal methane regulations. As Minister Eyre described industry feedback on the Saskatchewan methane regulations:

[15] See Section 2.1.1.2, "Structural Power" and Section 3.2.2, "Provincial Political Context".

> Just to add that in terms of [oil] industry and sector reaction, it has been very positive in terms of, if this is what the process will be and this is the type of thing that will be applied, then I think the consensus has been pretty clear that it's the Saskatchewan plan and the Saskatchewan approach that industry in this sector want to work with, in comparison and in contrast to the federal plan, federal option. (Saskatchewan Economy Committee 2019, 668)

Privileged access to policymakers and the Saskatchewan government's willingness to accommodate industry's requests throughout the development of methane regulations may help account for this expressed preference from industry to be regulated on the provincial level.

Federal-provincial negotiations continued into early 2020. The Saskatchewan government continued to revise provincial methane regulations, and the oil and gas industry continued to lobby both the federal and provincial governments to reach equivalency agreement (Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists Saskatchewan 2020c; 2020b; 2020a; McMillan 2020a, 9). Saskatchewan methane regulations introduced in 2019, considered insufficient to reach an equivalency agreement, included:

1. *The Oil and Gas Emissions Management Regulations*, applying company-level GHG emission intensity limits to venting and flaring emissions from oil facilities;
2. "Directive PNG036: Venting and Flaring Operations", providing venting limits on oil and gas facilities and restrictions on temporary venting during well completions; and
3. "Directive PNG017: Measurement Requirements for Oil and Gas Operations", consolidating, clarifying, and updating requirements for oil and gas facilities on how fuel gas, vent gas, and flare gas volumes are measured for reporting purposes (ECCC 2021, 6–7).

The Oil and Gas Emissions Management Regulations were, once more, lightly amended via Order in Council on January 31st, 2020. Despite all these revisions to provincial methane emissions throughout 2019 and early 2020, an agreement still had not been reached by April 2020.

5.1.2 March & April 2020: Response to Oil Price War and Onset of the Pandemic

5.1.2.1 Extensions to Deadlines for Reporting and Compliance

Social distancing, closures of non-essential workplaces, and other pandemic management restrictions introduced in March 2020 caused immediate disruption to normal workplace operations. As most workplaces were unprepared for remote work, the burden of compliance for regulatory and reporting requirements increased near universally across industries. To lighten administrative burdens for the oil industry, the Saskatchewan government temporarily extended industry reporting and filing deadlines.

Under the regulating authority of the Minister of Energy and Resources, deadlines were extended for two directives via Minister's Order on April 14th, 2020:

1. *Directive PNG017: Measurement Requirements for Oil and Gas Operations*, extending the April 1st, 2020 deadline for compliance with new measurement and reporting requirements to April 1, 2021; and
2. *Directive PNG076: Enhanced Production Audit Program*, extending the March 31st, 2020, implementation deadline for measurement and reporting of remediation at oil and gas facilities to April 1st, 2021 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Energy and Resources 2020c).

The modifications to these two directives extended the deadlines for compliance with and implementation of new emissions regulations included in the suite of methane regulations originally introduced to achieve a federal equivalency agreement. These accommodations, therefore, delayed the collection and reporting of methane emissions data by a full year. Moreover, these deadline extensions limited the ability of the provincial regulator to monitor compliance with new emissions regulations as they come into effect.

These accommodations on statutory deadlines were announced alongside other supports for the provincial oil industry on April 14th, 2020. Additional supports included reducing the industry portion of oil and gas regulator funding for 2020 by 50% and the announcement of a draft equivalency agreement on federal methane regulations (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c). This targeted announcement for the sector indicates both the economic prominence and perceived vulnerability of provincial oil and gas industry in early 2020, a context under which industry's structural power is heightened. Less than one week following the announcement, on April 20th, 2020, the WTI benchmark oil hit negative pricing for the first time in history (Evans 2020), and Husky announced a second round of spending cuts which included investment in Saskatchewan projects (Husky Energy 2020b).

Despite being included in the April 14th government announcement, the draft equivalency agreement on federal methane regulations had been under negotiations for several months prior to the pandemic and oil price crash. A final equivalency agreement with the federal government was only signed several months later, following multiple further changes to provincial regulation, on September 29th, 2020 (ECCC and ER Saskatchewan 2020). As previously discussed, governments following a deregulation agenda attempt to attract corporate investment by weakening regulation, competing with other jurisdictions to offer the regulatory environment most favourable to industry. Announcing a draft agreement at such a preliminary stage exemplifies the Saskatchewan government's deregulation agenda, as the timing suggests the announcement was being used to signal ongoing regulatory support for industry and willingness to work with industry on regulation. A collaborative approach to industry regulation, reflecting industry's structural power and the government's deregulation agenda, is made explicit in Minister Eyre's statements expressing intentions to continue developing methane regulations collaboratively with the oil and gas industry.

Minister Eyre closed her announcement of the draft equivalency agreement saying, “We will now work with our operators in a common sense way to reduce emissions from venting and flaring” (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c).

Deadline extensions and other business continuity measures, provincial methane regulations, and the provincial-federal equivalency agreement were the target of instrumental strategies from oil corporations in March and April 2020. Saskatchewan lobbyist registrations for oil industry associations and corporations, including those from CAPP, Husky, and CNRL, list business continuity measures, such as deadline extensions, and methane regulations as topics of discussion with government officials in Spring 2020 (Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists Saskatchewan 2020e; 2020d; 2020g). Additionally, the deadline and reporting extensions for provincial methane regulations introduced in Saskatchewan on April 14th, 2020, resemble regulatory accommodations which CAPP publicly requested of the federal government.

On March 27th, 2020, CAPP sent an open letter to the federal Minister of Natural Resources, Seamus O’Regan, asking for regulatory accommodations for the oil sector to be included in the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Justifying the requests, CAPP wrote, “Canada’s energy sector is currently facing unprecedented fiscal challenges resulting from a collapse in energy demand …. As a result, companies have been forced to cut capital expenditures by close to $6 billion in the last few weeks alone” (McMillan 2020a, 1). This reference to capital expenditures and directly linking them to the then-ongoing liquidity crisis in the oil and gas sector, provides an example of structural power being used in industry strategies to influence policymakers.

The accommodations requested by CAPP on behalf of the Canadian oil and gas industry, ranged from low-risk deadline extensions to halting the development of federal Clean Fuel Standards, included deferring several deadlines for facility registration, reporting, and compliance under the new

federal methane regulations which were set to come into effect in April 2020 (McMillan 2020a, 4–5). The deadline extensions offered by the Saskatchewan government for the provincial equivalents of those methane regulations, discussed above, correspond to extensions requested in the open letter. CAPP's letter, however, requests only that federal methane regulation deadlines be extended by 6 months, while the provincial deadlines were extended by a full year.

Negotiations for an equivalency agreement on upstream oil and gas sector methane regulations continued for several months beyond the April 14th, 2020, announcement of a draft agreement with the federal government. Two additional amendments to provincial emissions regulations, *The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases (Standards and Compliance) Regulations* and *The Oil and Gas Emissions Management Regulations*, passed through Orders in Council on September 2nd and September 16th, 2020, respectively (The Saskatchewan Gazette 2020a; 2020b), were introduced as part of negotiations. Following these final changes, an equivalency agreement between the federal and Saskatchewan governments for regulation of upstream oil and gas sector methane emissions was signed on September 29th, 2020 (Environment and Climate Change Canada and Energy and Resources Saskatchewan 2020).

5.1.3 December 2020: Incentives for Exploration

The final change to Saskatchewan environmental regulation of the oil sector to take place in 2020, *The Seismic Exploration Amendment Regulations, 2020*, were introduced via an Order in Council on December 17, 2020 (*The Seismic Exploration Amendment Regulations, 2020* 2020; Executive Council of Saskatchewan 2020e). Introduced to "increase operational efficiency and remove unnecessary red tape" (Executive Council of Saskatchewan 2020d), these changes to regulation of exploration activities are a clear expression of the Saskatchewan government's deregulation agenda, itself a reflection of oil corporations' structural influence in the province.

Government efforts to foster oil exploration activity, such as this amendment, also reflect industry's structural power.

The timing of this last regulatory change is notable for being filed less than one week after the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Canada on December 13th, 2020, and for being published in the December 24th, 2020, issue of the Gazette– the holiday Gazette and penultimate issue of 2020. This timing for publication suggests either an attempt by the government to avoid media notice with the changes, or that the exploration regulations were rushed through before the holiday. Unlike other changes to the regulatory landscape affecting the oil and gas sector in 2020, these amendments to the *Seismic Exploration Regulations, 1999,* were not accompanied by a government news release or other publicity.

The Seismic Exploration Amendment Regulations, 2020 were introduced with the stated intent of streamlining regulation for certain exploration activities, thereby removing a perceived barrier to oil exploration. This included removing all provisions on the handling, loading, or detonating of explosives during exploration activities from *The Seismic Exploration Regulations,* including permit requirements for explosive use. This removal streamlined regulatory approval processes for exploration activities and left the use of explosives in exploration activities regulated primarily under the non-environmental regulations of *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 1996.* Regulation of shot hole abandonment[16] was also weakened by the changes. Previously prescriptive requirements for shot hole abandonment, specifying accepted materials and methods, were replaced with the requirement that operators only meet unspecified "accepted industry standards" (*The Seismic Exploration Amendment Regulations, 2020* 2020).

[16] In the context of oil exploration, shot holes are holes drilled to detonate explosive charge for seismic exploration, which uses seismic waves generated by explosives to search for oil.

Government support for exploration initiatives reflects economic dependence on the industry, through which structural power can be inferred. Oil exploration activity is a primary indicator of future oil production and corporate investment in a region (Greene et al. 2021, 89). A government that is economically dependant on the oil sector is, therefore, likely to move to incentivize exploration activity in hopes of securing continued oil production and investment from oil corporations, thereby protecting the economic stability that is believed to be reliant on that industry. Incentives for oil exploration activity in jurisdictions with vulnerable oil sectors, such as Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, are therefore an indicator of influence from structural power from the oil sector.

5.2 Newfoundland and Labrador Results

The following section describes changes to environmental regulation of the Newfoundland offshore oil gas sector introduced in 2020. Instrumental, structural, and discursive forms of corporate power are noted throughout the section, as are various corporate strategies used in efforts to influence government policy. The section begins with an overview of regulatory accommodations offered in response to pandemic workplace conditions, including the effects of accommodations on emissions data reliability. Changes to the regulation of oil exploration activity, introduced through a new federal regional assessment process, are then discussed. Newfoundland was subject to a high level of structural power throughout 2020. With incentives for oil exploration activity being an indicator of oil industry structural power, the role of this form of corporate power in these changes will also be discussed.

5.2.1 March & April 2020: Accommodations for Pandemic Conditions

Social distancing, closures of non-essential workplaces, and other pandemic management restrictions caused immediate disruption to normal procedures and limitations to human resource capacity across industries. As most industries were unprepared for remote work, the burden of

compliance with regulatory and reporting requirements increased across industries. Offshore oil workers were originally considered essential workers, exempting them from many workplace restrictions. However, in response to complaints from unions about crowded workplace conditions in offshore projects, on March 22nd, 2020, the C-NLOPB ordered operators to remove non-essential employees from offshore facilities (C-NLOPB 2020). Instead of scaling-back operations, Husky opted to suspend construction on the West White Rose Project entirely, including the project in large-scale spending reductions announced in April 2020 (Husky Energy 2020b).

To enable regulatory flexibility under the near-universally complicated and evolving conditions, the Newfoundland House of Assembly passed the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* on March 26, 2020 (*Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* 2020). This Act allowed for the administrator of a given piece of subordinate legislation, either the relevant Minister, the Premier, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, or the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to temporarily vary deadlines in subordinate legislation, such as regulation. Variations in deadlines were not to exceed six months. The Act was originally set to expire at the end of the following sitting of the House, then an unknown future date. However, the House extended the expiration of the Act at the following sitting on May 6th, 2020, with *An Act to Amend the Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*, setting the Act to expire alongside other pandemic-related emergency legislation on September 30, 2020 (*Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines (Amendment) Act* 2020).

Under the authority of the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*, deadlines under three pieces of legislation affecting offshore environmental regulation were extended:

1. The *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations*, amended April 24th, 2020 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment to extend submission deadlines for operators' emission, verification, and compliance reports;

2. The *Energy Corporation Act*, amended April 24th, 2020 by the Minister of Natural Resources to extend submission deadline for the annual report of provincial Crown corporation Nalcor Energy;[17] and
3. The *Environmental Assessment Regulations*, amended May 1st, 2020 by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Environment to extend the standard timelines by which the Minister was required to provide decisions or guidelines on projects under environmental assessment.

Like much early pandemic legislation, the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* was by necessity passed with haste and through irregular processes. The *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* was passed as part of a four-part omnibus bill during an emergency sitting of the Newfoundland House of Assembly for which only ten MHAs were present. Though MHAs had agreed on both the conditions of the emergency session and the use of an omnibus bill, the inclusion of the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* in the bill was controversial at the time due to the scope and diversity of affected legislation. As expressed by Independent MHA Paul Lane:

> When it comes to the Temporary Variation Of Statutory Deadlines Act, … I do have a huge concern about the fact that there are eight significant pieces of legislation that are going to be impacted, potentially, by this and I've had no time to go through those pieces of legislation to see what could be changed and what impact it could potentially have…
>
> I think the other three pieces [of the omnibus bill], for the most part, everyone is going to be in agreement with, but I think that the [Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act], there are concerns and I wish it could be removed and dealt with separately. (House of Assembly Proceedings 2020, 1788)

[17] Nalcor's oil and gas exploration, development, and research activities were transferred to the newly formed Oil and Gas Corporation of NL (OilCo) Provincial Crown Corporation at the beginning of 2020, but fell under Nalcor for the reporting period affected by this change (Oil and Gas Corporation of NL 2022).

MHA Lane's concerns over the inclusion of the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* in the omnibus bill were shared by members of opposition parties (House of Assembly Proceedings 2020, 1788). Concerns over the lack of oversight were not unwarranted, given the increased potential for both deliberate abuse of exceptional powers and error caused by speedy legislating. However, oil sector regulation does not appear to have been directly undermined by changes introduced under the authority of the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*.

Deadlines extended under the *Energy Corporation Act* and the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations* concerned reporting periods predating pandemic impacts, meaning data collection itself was not affected by the deadline extensions. As extensions made under the authority of the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* only delayed, rather than waived, reporting requirements in the *Energy Corporation Act* and *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations,* extensions did not have a long-term impact on regulators' access to data reported according to these regulations. Additionally, with the amendment to *Environmental Assessment Regulations* extending the period the minister and department had to consider and issue guidance on projects under assessments, the effect of this change was to improve government capacity to regulate in the complicated pandemic context.

As previously discussed, the oil industry has one of the most active, well resourced, and coordinated lobbying groups in in Canada.[18] Because of this lobbying capacity, oil industry groups were able to move quickly in the acute crisis period of mid-March and April 2020 to express sector-specific challenges, such as difficulty meeting statutory deadlines, and request government support. The oil industry was the most active lobbying group at the federal level for April and May 2020 (Vigliotti 2020a; Woodside and Vis 2023). While data on lobbying frequency is not available for

[18] See Section 2.1.1.1, "Instrumental Power", and Section 3.3.1, "Oil Corporations' Instrumental Power"

Newfoundland, throughout 2020 various government officials and industry representatives assured media that they were meeting frequently (T. Roberts 2020e; CBC News 2020h). The extra lobbying capacity derived from oil corporations' wealth not only enabled the application of instrumental strategies, such as lobbying, in Spring 2020, but did so at a time when lobbying activity from other interest groups was at a low (Vigliotti 2020a). The gap in resources which allows large corporations to provide input on policymaking to a greater extent than less resourced groups in normal times was exacerbated by the disruptive effects of the early pandemic.

In an example of the rapid mobilization of the oil industry lobby, CAPP sent a series of open letters to policymakers in March, April, and May 2020. A letter sent on April 1st, 2020, to Newfoundland Minister of Natural Resources Siobhan Coady included a list of requests for regulatory flexibility, along with requests for financial support and assistance in advocating to the federal government (McMillan 2020b, 3). While Newfoundland may have moved to offer deadline extensions to industry under the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act* without this prompting, CAPP's rapid mobilization in March 2020 provides an example of how instrumental strategies were used to communicate industry needs during this period, and how disproportionate resources enable an unequal access to policymakers which favours the oil sector.

Although deadline extensions ultimately only delayed, and did not prevent, data availability to regulators, later changes similarly introduced to accommodate pandemic work conditions did undermine the quality of the reported data. On May 15th, 2020, the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations (Amendment)* was issued via Ministerial Order by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, waiving the requirement for site visits as part of emission report verification process for the 2019 reporting period (*Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations (Amendment)* 2020). While this amendment, applicable to industrial facilities including

offshore production and exploration projects, was made to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread in workplaces, it also removed an opportunity for regulators to independently verify operators' emissions data. The waiver was later extended in 2021 to include the 2020 reporting period (*Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations (Amendment)* 2021), meaning two years of emissions data provided by offshore operators was not externally validated with site visits.

Under the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations*, all emissions reports submitted by operators of facilities either designated as opt-in or which emit in excess of 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year require verification by an outside body. Prior to the May 14th, 2020, amendment, all verifications required site visits. Without site visits, the verification process relies solely on provided records and historical data to assess the reliability of reported emissions data. The *Management of Greenhouse Gas Regulations* relies on data from emissions reports generated according to the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations* to monitor compliance. By removing site visits to verify reported emissions data, emissions reports and those regulations relying on the reported data were reduced to corporate self-regulation. Therefore, though regulators did receive emissions data for the 2019 reporting period, the reliability of the industry reported data, and its use for monitoring regulatory compliance, is uncertain.

The conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic required rapid, burdensome changes to workplaces across industries. Despite concern over lack of legislative oversight expressed at the time, initial regulatory accommodations offered in recognition of the extreme operating context, namely deadline extensions offered under the *Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*, seem to have had little long-term effect on data reporting. In contrast, waiving site visit requirements as part of the emissions report verification process under the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations* reduced data on operating emissions to industry self-regulation. Without external

validation of reported emissions data, the validity of offshore emissions data for the 2019 and 2020 reporting periods, and the usefulness of these data for monitoring regulatory compliance, is questionable.

5.2.2 Summer 2020: Incentives for Exploration

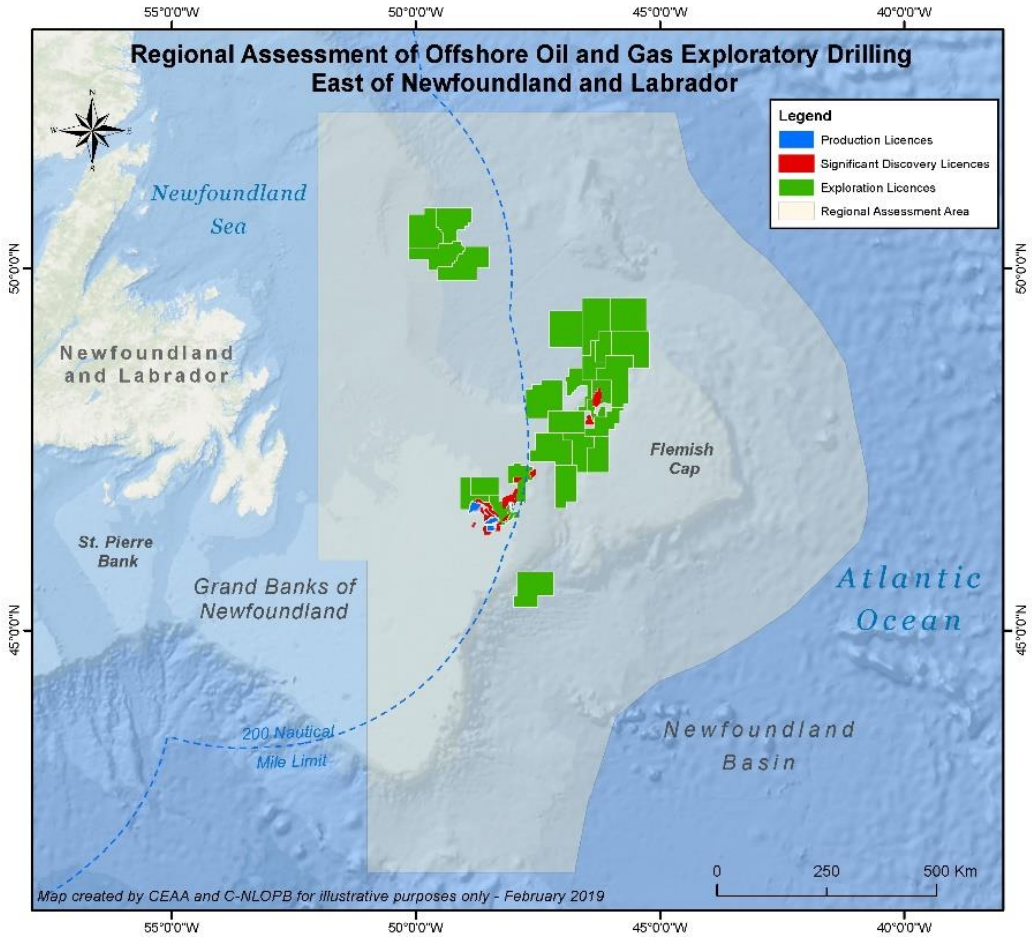
With the lifting of additional burdens introduced by pandemic mitigation measures, the greatest remaining regulatory barriers to offshore oil activity, as identified by the offshore industry and its supporters, included regulation of exploratory activities and new projects. The regulatory burden on existing projects in 2020 was light, especially with reduced or paused production, halted construction, and Terra Nova entirely offline. Advocates for offshore oil, including the provincial government, expressed concern that slowed offshore oil activity would cause highly specialized workers and equipment to leave Newfoundland for more active offshore oil regions (CBC News 2020k; Fanning et al. 2021). As Darin King, executive director of the Trades NL union, explained to press in December 2020, "Skilled trade workers will not sit around for two years without a job, so [further layoffs on the West White Rose extension project] … will have a detrimental impact on our retention of trade workers in the province" (T. Roberts 2020g). Once gone, incentivising workers and equipment to return would increase the costs for oil companies to resume activity, increasing the chance that they would further delay or cancel projects. Corporate structural power is heightened in this context of economic vulnerability and high corporate mobility.

On June 3, 2020, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Jonathan Wilkinson released the ministerial regulation, *Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities (Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Exploratory Wells)*. The ministerial regulation, made under authority of the *Impact Assessment Act*, modified the assessment process for exploratory drilling projects in areas of the Newfoundland offshore covered by the *Regional Assessment of Exploratory*

Drilling Ease of Newfoundland and Labrador (Regional Assessment) (see Figure 2. *Map of the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador*) (*Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities (Newfoundland and Labrador Off-shore Exploratory Wells)* 2020). Under the new process, exploratory drilling projects in the designated area are excluded from requirements to undergo a project-specific federal impact assessment. The Regional Assessment was intended to shorten the approval process timeline for new projects, improving perceived regulatory uncertainty identified by oil companies in the Canadian oil and gas regulatory framework (Government of Newfoundland 2020b).

Despite being federal, the regulations introduced on June 3rd, 2020, fall under the provincial scope of this project due to extensive involvement of the Newfoundland government in the development and release of the Regional Assessment, and the ultimate effect of the Regional Assessment on provincial regulation. The Regional Assessment was conducted by a joint federal-provincial committee established in April 2019 through an agreement between the governments of Canada and Newfoundland (Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2020; Natural Resources Canada et al. 2019) In its effect, the Regional Assessment shortens approval timelines by removing offshore exploratory activities from federal regulation under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2020; Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada et al. 2020).

Figure 2. ***Map of the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador***



Source: Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and C-NLOPB 2019.

Removing the requirement for federal approval left the regulatory task of reviewing and issuing approvals for offshore exploratory activity in the designated area entirely to the C-NLOPB (Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada et al. 2020; *Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities (Newfoundland and Labrador Off-shore Exploratory Wells)* 2020). The C-NLOPB approval process for exploratory activity replaced the federal impact assessment with a 90-day notification process and requirement to meet some conditions for environmental protection, both overseen by the

C-NLOPB. This new process is an example of "regulation by declaration", also observed in regulation of the oil sector in Saskatchewan.[19] As previously described, regulation by declaration is a form of industry self-regulation whereby operators declare compliance, and the regulator's role is reduced to responding to complaints and spontaneous audits (Carter and Eaton 2016, 407–9). Systems using regulation by declaration depend on regulators having strong verification processes and sufficient capacity to uphold regulation. However, the changed approval process transferred responsibility for ensuring regulatory compliance from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) to the C-NLOPB without establishing updated standards or expectations for compliance verification (Impact Assessment Agency of Canada [IAAC] 2020b; *Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities (Newfoundland and Labrador Off-shore Exploratory Wells)* 2020; Government of Newfoundland 2020b).

Rushed and perfunctory public consultations had been noted as an ongoing problem prior to 2020, both in the development of the Regional Assessment itself and in impact assessments conducted on offshore oil projects by the C-NLOPB prior to the federal impact assessment process coming into effect in 2019 (Carter 2020b, 108–16). The Regional Assessment had been under development since September 2018, with an original deadline for the final report set for Fall 2019 (Natural Resources Canada et al. 2018). While the Fall 2019 deadline was extended to February 2020, multiple ENGO and other civil society commentators agreed that timelines were still too short for an objective and rigorous assessment process or effective public engagement (Mitchell et al. 2019; Feyrer et al. 2019). Notably, the final 30-day window for public comments on the draft report closed on February 21st, 2020, only eight days before the final report was submitted to Minister Wilkinson on February 29th, 2020 (IAAC 2020a; Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada et al.

[19] See Section 5.1.1.1, "Online Pipeline Registry".

2020). Requests from civil society for more time to comment on the draft report were rejected, with the Regional Assessment Committee expressing to participants that they were on a "tight timeline" (Kofahl 2020). This is consistent with previous communications from members of the joint federal-provincial committee in May 2019, when they told representatives of ENGOs that there was a "sense of urgency" in completing the Regional Assessment (Mitchell et al. 2019).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic during the final stages of the Regional Assessment's development further limited the ability of the public, government, and other stakeholders to effectively contribute to the process and comment on the proposed ministerial regulation. Civil society recommendations and comments on the Regional Assessment and ministerial regulation focus on information and data gaps in the final report submitted to the Minister. Several of these information gaps were acknowledged by the Committee in the final report, attributed to timeline and resource constraints (East Coast Environmental Law 2020; Kofahl 2020). It is therefore expected that choosing to continue with the Regional Assessment process and ministerial regulation with only a slight extension to account for the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic would result in an incomplete and only partially informed regional assessment and regulation.

As in the case of Saskatchewan, government efforts to foster exploration activity can be linked to the province's economic dependence on the oil sector, and therefore to oil corporations' structural power. As Newfoundland Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance Siobhan Coady described the government's perspective on the oil sector in 2020:

> The value of the oil and gas industry to our province cannot be overstated, nor can it be replaced by any other sector in our economy. Upwards to 30 per cent of our GDP, 13 per cent of our labour compensation and 10 per cent of all employment is attributed to this industry. We will support this industry in any way that we can, because it supports our province (Government of Newfoundland 2020e).

Operating from this belief that the oil sector is vital to the Newfoundland economy, securing future economic stability requires support for oil exploration. Oil sector exploration activity is a key indicator of future oil production and corporate investment in a jurisdiction. The importance of exploration in the offshore from the provincial government's perspective is further heightened by the economic context of the pandemic recession and provincial debt crisis, and the real threat of oil corporations pulling out of their Newfoundland operations (T. Roberts 2020f; CBC News 2021). Without sufficient exploration activity or the promise of future exploration, Newfoundland also risked mobile offshore exploration infrastructure such as drill rig boats leaving for another theatre of operations, further increasing the cost of future exploration (T. Roberts 2020c). The structural power of oil corporations, being grounded in highly mobile corporate capital and equipment, is heightened in such provincial contexts.

The Newfoundland government in 2020 was responding to a pandemic recession and provincial debt crisis, decreased revenue from reduced oil production, and uncertain futures for multiple offshore oil projects. The provincial government was under pressure to not only retain current projects but also to demonstrate an economically stable future, one where the government could avoid bankruptcy, pay down debt, and offer economic prosperity to residents. As the Newfoundland Premier's Economic Recovery Team (PERT), an advisory group assembled in 2020 to develop a plan for economic reopening, argued in their final report:

> PERT believes that the window for new oil and gas exploration and development has narrowed considerably. Projects that are not discovered in the next five years and sanctioned in the next 10 years may never be developed. If development in the province does not happen within these time lines, considerable wealth will be stranded, hindering the province's ability to improve its fiscal situation and limiting its ability to fund a transition to a green economy. Both the Provincial and Federal Governments must openly support the oil and gas industry and develop a framework that ensures that the province captures this income. (Greene et al. 2021, 89)

By incentivizing oil sector exploration, the Newfoundland government hoped to secure a future for the oil sector, thereby securing long term economic stability which might not otherwise be realized. The mobility of exploration infrastructure also put Newfoundland in competition with other offshore oil jurisdictions, primarily Scotland and Norway, for investment in exploration activity. This pressure manifest in a deregulation agenda, expressed as an imperative to compete with to offer a favourable regulatory framework for exploration (Government of Newfoundland 2020e; Greene et al. 2021, 90).

Instrumental strategies used by oil corporations in 2020 leveraged corporate structural power, and the pressure to compete regulatorily with other jurisdictions, to advocate for regulatory exploration incentives. An open letter CAPP sent to federal Minister of Natural Resources, Seamus O'Regan, on May 13th, 2020, for example, argued, "Exploration incentives have been introduced in other offshore oil and gas producing jurisdictions and Canada must be able to compete with these jurisdictions in order to see the offshore industry, and resulting benefits grow" (McMillan 2020c, 3). As part of efforts to achieve their desired regulatory change, industry actors compared Newfoundland to other jurisdictions' more competitive regulatory frameworks, reminding policymakers of corporate mobility—an example of the oil industry employing instrumental strategies to direct structural power's influence over policy.

Concern over losing offshore infrastructure capacity was validated by the West Aquarius and Transocean Barents drill rigs departing the Newfoundland offshore in November 2020 due to a lack of exploration activity, leaving the region entirely without exploration vessels (Fanning et al. 2021, 13; C. Johnson 2021; CBC News 2020j).

Chapter 6
Discussion

This project originally set out to respond to two questions:

> *In 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, what changes were made to provincial environmental regulation of the oil sector in the oil-producing provinces of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, and what was the impact of such changes on regulatory effectiveness?*
>
> *What strategies did the oil sector mobilize in 2020 to influence provincial environmental regulation of the sector in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland?*

Government support for the oil sector in 2020, including direct and indirect financial subsidies, preferential access to policymakers, and regulatory support, was broadly reported on at the time, with some commentators expressing concern that the pandemic and oil price war would result in "rollback" of regulations for the oil sector. Regulatory changes and accommodations, however, were not systemically reviewed, making it unclear to what extent the financial bailout of the oil sector in 2020 was accompanied by a "regulatory bailout".

In short response to the first research question, regulatory accommodations *were* included in oil sector support offered by both the Saskatchewan and Newfoundland provincial governments in 2020. However, regulatory rollbacks did not reach the extent feared by some commentators at the time, and industry bailouts from both governments primarily focused on financial supports.

A response to the second research question is supported by Fuchs and Lederer's (2007) three-dimensional framework for corporate power, and a comparison of instrumental, structural, and discursive forms of corporate power exercised by the oil industry in both case provinces. Considering regulatory accommodations through the lens of the oil sector's discursive and structural corporate

power offers some explanation for accommodations offered to the oil sector by each provincial government. Meanwhile, when comparing the two case provinces, the form and expression of the oil sector's corporate power in each province, as well as strategies used in corporate effort to influence policy, helps to account for differences and similarities in the support offered to the sector.

This section aims to identify key influences affecting changes to oil sector regulation in 2020, beginning with a brief comparison of the historical, economic, and political contexts in each province as they relate to the oil and gas sector. Similarities in provincial history and economic situation contribute to similar expressions of corporate power by oil corporations.

Changes to environmental regulation surrounding the oil sector and corporate strategies exercised by the oil sector to influence policy in each province will then be compared, with this thesis arguing that the oil sector's corporate power is key to understanding government support for the oil sector. In turn, differences in the expression of oil sector's structural and discursive power help account for differences in regulatory approaches between case provinces.

6.1 Comparison of historical, political, and economic contexts

The "two sad sisters of Confederation", Newfoundland and Saskatchewan are both historical hinterlands with long-running economic dependencies on resource extraction for export. As internal hinterlands to a Central Canadian core, both provinces are alike in having complicated relationships with Ottawa and Confederation as a whole, characterized by core-periphery dynamics, feelings of isolation, and frustrations about being overlooked. For both provinces, the oil sector looms large as the industry which enabled an escape from long-time economic dependency and stagnation.

However, although in each province the oil sector remains linked to ideas of economic prosperity, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland both currently face concerns over the economic competitiveness of their oil sector—a concern that is increasingly present as global demand for oil

falls (Dusyk et al. 2023). Barriers to economic competitiveness in each provincial oil sector echo historic barriers to economic stability. In Saskatchewan, transportation bottlenecks caused by pipeline and rail capacity limits force producers to sell Saskatchewan crude oil at steep discounts, a structural disadvantage reminiscent of historical rail monopolies and price-setting for Saskatchewan agricultural exports (McGrane 2014, 46–47). Production costs for Newfoundland oil, meanwhile, are much higher than international averages, including costs in similar offshore oil environments. The uncompetitively high production costs per barrel are largely the result of geographical isolation and extreme weather conditions in the Newfoundland offshore, currently considered the most extreme conditions for offshore oil extraction globally (Kaiser 2021), both historical barriers to economic growth for the province. As will be mentioned in the following section, this similar historical context and contributes to parallels in the structural and discursive power wielded by oil corporations in both provinces.

Although there are parallels in provincial attitudes towards the oil sector, the Saskatchewan and Newfoundland oil sectors differ obviously in several key points: in type of oil reserves, oil extraction technologies used, the age of the sector, and in provincial regulatory structures. Newfoundland oil production is concentrated in four offshore projects, two platforms and two FPSOs, which have come online between 1997 and 2017. Although there were attempts to develop offshore oil since the 1960s, the Newfoundland offshore has been producing oil only since the Hibernia field came online in 1997. The Newfoundland government has only been receiving oil profits since Hibernia reached payout point in 2006 (Carter 2020b, 98; Sweeny 2018). Active oil production in Saskatchewan began in the 1940s, though developments in fracking technology allowed extensive production expansion only in the 2010s. In contrast with the few mega-projects in Newfoundland, oil and gas in Saskatchewan is extracted from thousands of individual sites, including many using fracking extraction methods (Carter 2020, 62). While large oil companies do still dominate the

Saskatchewan oil and gas sector, there is a wider range in the size of corporate operators compared to the corporations operating in the Newfoundland offshore. Natural gas production is also heavily intertwined with oil production in Saskatchewan, but non-existent in Newfoundland.

In the management of oil sector regulation, the Newfoundland offshore is under joint federal-provincial management, in contrast to the provincially regulated Saskatchewan oil sector. The 1985 Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord (Atlantic Accord) established joint federal-provincial management of offshore petroleum activity through the joint Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB). In the Newfoundland offshore operations, the C-NLOPB is the lead authority for offshore environmental protection and environmental regulatory compliance surrounding offshore oil activity, including involvement in environmental assessment processes, approving operators' environmental monitoring programs, and lead responsibility for spill response monitoring (Carter 2020, 105). Regulatory capture by the oil industry has been described in both provinces. Also in both provinces, the lead regulator of the oil sector is housed in bodies with mandates which include fostering oil activity and securing economic benefit from oil extraction (Carter 2020, 106).

Emissions from upstream oil and gas do account for a large portion of both province's greenhouse gas emissions, though to a larger extent in Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan, the oil and gas industry was the largest provincial emitter of greenhouse gases in 2019, accounting for 31.3% of overall provincial emissions (23.4 megatons CO_2 equivalent) (ECCC 2023, 52). Though not to the same extent seen in Saskatchewan, the oil and gas sector is still a major emitter in Newfoundland. In 2019, production in the Newfoundland offshore was responsible for 16.4% of provincial emissions (1.8 Megatons of CO_2 equivalent) (ECCC 2023, 45). However, there is the potential for annual

production emissions to be much higher than those represented in this year, as oil production on multiple projects was suspended for several weeks during 2019.

In late-2019, Saskatchewan's sensitivities over access to transportation networks and international markets were coming to a head, with Indigenous-led protests against pipeline projects. As of late 2019, both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland were in adverse economic positions beyond the structural barriers to competitiveness in the provincial oil sector. Saskatchewan experienced a mild recession in 2019, linked to low uranium and potash prices, the end of three large construction projects, and the impact of strained Canada-China relations on Saskatchewan agricultural and potash exports. Though Newfoundland led Canada in GDP growth for 2019, that growth was dependant on oil production and construction on offshore mega-projects, and masked growing provincial debt burden and ongoing losses from the Muskrat Falls hydro project. The looming threat of Newfoundland's provincial debt burden, the highest per capita in Canada, was realized in March 2020, when the province's debt refinancing plan was rejected by its creditors. While Saskatchewan carried a lower debt per capita ratio, this was largely a result of cost-cutting austerity measures accompanying decreasing government revenue, and following several years of deficits, provincial debt was also on the rise in Saskatchewan.

6.2 Changes to environmental regulation

It is first important to note that both provinces were already offering regulatory support to the industry prior to the oil price war and arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. The crisis context of the pandemic and oil price war did not introduce the concept of regulatory accommodations for the industry. In Saskatchewan, the IRIS pipeline registry and its accompanying regulation launched in January 2020 had been under development since 2017 (Government of Saskatchewan 2017b). Negotiations between the federal and Saskatchewan government to establish

an equivalency agreement on regulation of upstream oil and gas sector methane emissions were also already underway prior to 2020, with amendments to provincial emissions regulation in late-2019 and early-2020 part of the provincial government's efforts to secure an agreement. Unlike Saskatchewan, Newfoundland was not actively amending regulation in January and February of 2020. However, the regional assessment later released in June 2020 was already underway, having been initiated in 2018 (Natural Resources Canada et al. 2018).

The oil and gas industry's structural power was already high in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland prior to 2020, as indicated by economic dependency and reflected in comments from policymakers. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and oil price crash in 2020 brought this economic dependency into high relief, and further heightened the influence of industry's structural power in both provinces. Already periphery oil economies with geographic and structural barriers to economic competitiveness, in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland the increased scarcity of corporate capital investment further augmented policymaker's desperation to attract and retain investment from oil corporations. The heightening of structural power's influence was especially acute in Newfoundland, where, without federal intervention, falling oil prices would have pushed the province into bankruptcy. Corporate cuts to capital spending in the oil sector also carried the potential of closing the Newfoundland offshore oil sector entirely. Industry's heightened structural power, made apparent in the immediate negative economic impact of falling oil prices in both provinces, accounts for the speed with which both provincial governments moved to support the oil industry through pandemic-related challenges in the spring of 2020.

In this context, oil sector instrumental strategies appear to have been used to direct the influence of structural power. Lobbying activity from oil corporations and oil industry associations increased in

2020, contrasting with a reported decrease in lobbying activity of other industries, especially during the immediate onset of the pandemic in Spring 2020.

Though in both provinces regulatory accommodations were already being offered to the oil industry prior to the onset of the oil price war and arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, both provincial governments explicitly connected further regulatory changes in 2020 to the pandemic, oil price crash, and economic downturn. Regulatory accommodations for the oil industry were framed as government support for the provincial economy, with messaging presenting the oil sector as essential to long-term provincial economic stability and a rebound from the pandemic. From mid-March 2020 onward, changes to the regulatory regime in both provinces fell into three broad categories, with some overlap:

1. accommodations for pandemic disruption to workplaces;
2. releases of initiatives already under development, reframed as pandemic support for the industry; and
3. streamlining of regulation surrounding oil exploration activities.

As most industries were unprepared for remote work, workplace shutdowns and other pandemic mitigation measures increased the burden of regulatory compliance near universally across sectors. To alleviate the impact of this disruption, the Saskatchewan and Newfoundland governments offered accommodations, such as the extension of statutory deadlines for regulatory, requirements made more difficult by the pandemic. While accommodations for pandemic-related disruption were offered in other areas of government regulation, in both provinces the increased burden of regulatory compliance on the oil sector received special attention (CBC News 2020e; Government of Saskatchewan 2020c; Government of Newfoundland 2020a).

In Newfoundland, such accommodations consisted of extensions for the reporting of previously collected 2019 data, and the waiver of site-visit requirements for data verification. Deadline extensions for the reporting of 2019 emissions data were temporary, and did not prevent emissions data from being collected, nor remove reporting requirements for the affected periods. However, the reliability of reported offshore emissions data for 2019 and 2020 is undermined by the waiver of third-party site visit requirements as part of the regulator's data validation process, which reduced emissions reporting to industry self-reporting.

The Saskatchewan government, in contrast, extended deadlines for compliance with and implementation of multiple new provincial emissions regulations introduced as part of the negotiation of a federal equivalency agreement on methane regulations. Accommodations offered by the Saskatchewan government delayed the collection and reporting of emissions data under the new regulations by a full year, going beyond the six month extension timeline requested by CAPP on equivalent federal methane regulations (McMillan 2020a, 4–5). Delaying these compliance and implementation deadlines limited the provincial regulator's ability to monitor compliance with new emissions regulations as they came into effect, and further brings into question the reliability of, already disputed, bottom-up methane emissions data.

Both provincial governments adjusted regulatory requirements for the oil sector as part of efforts to alleviate workplace disruptions caused by pandemic mitigation measures. In both cases, regulatory accommodations can be considered to have compromised the reliability of emissions data for the affected periods. However, accommodations extended by the Saskatchewan government were more substantive than those offered by the Newfoundland government, as they both covered a longer period and fully removed, rather than delayed, requirements for operators to collect and report on data for the affected period.

The material reality of structural dependence on the oil sector was reinforced in both provinces by messaging, promoted by industry using discursive strategies such as open letters and news releases, that presented continued oil production as crucial to provincial prosperity, if not overall economic stability. This belief was widespread in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. However, differences in the pervasiveness of certain corporate messages, and effectiveness of corporate discursive strategies, may help explain the more extensive regulatory support offered by the Saskatchewan government.

In Newfoundland, the belief that the oil sector is economically irreplaceable and must, therefore, receive government support is widely held, but not universal even among policymakers. This lack of consensus is illustrated by a 2019 statement from NL NDP leader Alison Coffin on government support for the oil sector, "If the profitability is actually there for the oil and gas industry, the province does not need to support that. Industry will do that" (CBC News 2019b). This comment is in sharp contrast to SK NDP MLA Belanger's apologetic disclaimer when suggesting strengthening regulation of pipelines at river crossings, "[this] is not intended as a slight against industry, nor was it intended to discourage investment" (Standing Committee on the Economy 2019, 676). Saskatchewan policymakers demonstrate an oil sector identification similar to that previously described by Eaton and Enoch (2021, 326) in Saskatchewan oil-producing communities, whereby "communities come to understand their fate as inextricably tied to that of industry." In Saskatchewan the perceived indispensability of the provincial oil sector is accepted as fact by both sitting political parties, as is the related belief that government must therefore go to great lengths to support the provincial industry. The apparent universality of this industry identification among policymakers is even more striking when considering that Saskatchewan political culture is typically characterized by political polarization (Wesley 2011, 115–17).

The governments of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland had both previously worked to establish a provincial regulatory environment that was welcoming to the oil industry, an expression of the structural power-linked deregulation agenda. After March 2020, both provinces released changes to environment regulation of the oil sector framed as pandemic support, but which had been initiated in prior years. This paper cannot speculate on how the pandemic and economic conditions may have affected the timeline of these regulatory changes and their introduction. However, both provincial governments announced regulatory changes as part of broader announcements of provincial support for the oil sector, and/or in conjunction with fiscal announcements (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c; 2020d; Government of Newfoundland 2020b; 2020d; 2020c). This framing choice suggests that, even if not initiated in response to the pandemic and economic crash, both governments wished to present regulatory changes as action in support of the oil sector and, by association, economic recovery from the pandemic.

The Saskatchewan government, for example, announced achieving a draft equivalency agreement on federal methane regulations on April 14th, 2020, as part of an announcement of "a series of relief measures for the provincial oil and gas sector, in response to the unprecedented economic downturn resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia" (Government of Saskatchewan 2020c). Less than three days later, on April 17th, 2020, the provincial government released a preliminary estimate of the revenue impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and oil price war, estimating a decline in government revenue of $1.3 billion to $3.3 billion for the 2020-21 fiscal year (Government of Saskatchewan 2020d). The announced equivalency agreement had been under active negotiation prior to early 2019 (Standing Committee on the Economy 2019, 667–68), and the agreement was not finalized until October 2020 (ECCC and ER Saskatchewan 2020). Still, the Saskatchewan government chose to include the draft agreement in the

announcement of pandemic supports. As two directives enabling the agreement were amended through Ministerial Orders only days before, on April 9th, 2020 (ER Saskatchewan 2020a), the government likely rushed to be able to announce the draft agreement in advance of the fiscal update and alongside other oil industry support.

Similarly, the new regional assessment process for exploratory drilling projects in the Newfoundland offshore was announced, on June 4th, 2020, the same day as Newfoundland's fiscal update for the 2019-2020 fiscal year (Government of Newfoundland 2020c; 2020b). The Newfoundland 2019-2020 fiscal update announced a $690 million decrease to expected government revenue, attributed largely to the pandemic-related drop in oil prices and production shutdowns in the offshore (Government of Newfoundland 2020c). The new regional assessment process, under co-development by the Newfoundland and federal governments since 2018, removed the requirement for exploratory drilling projects in a designated region of the Newfoundland offshore to undergo federal environmental assessment. By defaulting to the provincial system of regulation by declaration for exploration projects, this new system significantly reduced processing times for project approvals, noted by Minister Coady as "a major consideration for companies looking to make global investment decisions" (Government of Newfoundland 2020d). While the regulatory changes already underway cannot be fully attributed to conditions of the pandemic and oil price war, the governments of both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland chose to launch and frame these changes to regulation as part of pandemic-related support for the industry.

The final category of regulatory change encompasses initiatives to streamline regulatory processes for exploration activities. In Saskatchewan, this support is seen in amendments made to the Seismic Exploration Regulations, 1999, to "increase operational efficiency and remove unnecessary red tape" (Executive Council of Saskatchewan 2020d). The notice of this amendment was released in

the December 24th, 2020, edition of the Saskatchewan Gazette and, unlike other changes to oil sector regulation earlier in 2020, this amendment was not included in a government news release, nor otherwise highlighted by the provincial government. Publication in the year-end issues of the gazette is often a sign that the government is either hoping to avoid public attention for a change, or trying to push out legislation before the holiday break. The timing and nature of this announcement suggests that, unlike other announcements of support for the oil and gas sector, the general public was not included in the intended audience for these amendments.

In contrast, encouraging new offshore exploration activities was an open priority of the Newfoundland provincial government. The provincial government used exploration activity as an indicator of the future health of the offshore oil sector and provincial economy overall, and as evidence for continued viability of the offshore industry (Government of Newfoundland 2020e; Government of Newfoundland 2020e). As Andrew Parsons, Newfoundland Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, described a financial incentive for exploration activity in December 2020: "This exploration drilling incentive will provide near term drilling activity and employment, enhance global competitiveness at a critical time, and *position the province to realize its significant resource potential*" [emphasis added] (Government of Newfoundland 2020f).

The provincial government worked to create a favourable regulatory environment for offshore exploration by initiating and co-developing the new regional assessment process for offshore drilling with the federal government. The new regional assessment removed requirements for project-specific federal assessments from the approval process for new exploration projects, reducing the process for offshore drilling approvals to a, further streamlined, provincial system of regulation by declaration (Government of Newfoundland 2020b). Beyond the amendments to environmental regulation within the scope of this thesis, the Newfoundland government's interest in offshore exploration can also be

seen in provincial efforts to increase exploration activity with financial incentives, and in public advocacy for the federal government to also offer exploration incentives (Government of Newfoundland 2020a).

Attempts from both provincial governments to support oil exploration activity are a reflection of economic dependence on the industry, and therefore industry structural power. As oil exploration is one of the primary indicators of corporate interest and future oil production in a jurisdiction, a government that is economically dependant on the oil sector is likely to incentivize exploration activity. With increased oil exploration activity, the structurally dependant government is hoping to secure continued oil production and capital investment from oil corporations, thereby preserving future economic prosperity.

Based on a review of regulatory changes in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland in 2020, I argue that a regulatory bailout was part of a broader oil sector bailout enacted during the first year of the pandemic. Both provincial governments offered regulatory accommodations, framed as pandemic support, to the provincial oil industry over the course of 2020. The content of regulatory changes offered as part of each bailout, however, did not break significantly from behaviour previously described in both provinces by Carter (2020b) and Carter and Eaton (2016). This is consistent with an understanding of Newfoundland and Saskatchewan as staple economies already subject to high levels of corporate structural power. Both provinces had responded to pressure from corporate structural power with efforts to create a favourable regulatory environment for oil sector investment, largely through the promotion of regulatory streamlining and industry self-regulation. This behaviour was especially pronounced in Saskatchewan, where the governing Sask Party has adopted an explicit deregulation agenda.

Illustrating the continuity of this behaviour, the most substantive changes announced in each province during 2020, namely the federal equivalency agreement on methane regulations in Saskatchewan and the regional assessment process for exploratory drilling projects in Newfoundland, had actually been initiated in prior years. Novel regulatory changes in both provinces were either direct responses to pandemic condition or, later in the year, part of efforts to incentivise exploration activities. Exploration activity is a key indicator of corporate interest and promise of future activity, including the likelihood that oil and gas companies will invest in future production (Greene et al. 2021, 89). The use of exploration activity as an indicator of oil sector and overall economic growth may help explain why initiatives to promote exploration activity were announced later in 2020, at a time when government attention had moved from managing the initial pandemic and preventing the immediate loss of oil investment to reopening the economy and economic growth.

Although both provinces used regulatory accommodations to support the oil industry, these measures did differ between provinces on a few areas of framing and substance. With the launch of the electronic pipeline registry and negotiations for a methane equivalency agreement in January and February 2020, Saskatchewan was already actively changing the regulatory environment for the oil sector at a time when Newfoundland was not engaging with offshore regulation. While both provinces modified oil sector regulation to alleviate the impact of the pandemic, Saskatchewan's accommodations were more long-lasting and extensive in their effect. Deadline extensions offered by Newfoundland were more short-lived and, unlike those offered by Saskatchewan, did not entirely waive reporting requirements for the affected period.

These differences in regulatory accommodation can be partially explained by differences in expressions of corporate power. Lobbying reports and news releases indicate that corporate instrumental strategies were used to direct the influence of structural power in both provinces, without

visible discrepancy between provinces. Significant levels of oil sector structural power were also present in both provinces in 2020, likely influencing policymakers to support industry with pandemic-related accommodations and in the development of exploration activity incentives. Pressure from the oil sector's structural power, however, was more pronounced in Newfoundland during this period, due to the province's near bankruptcy and the risk for the province to lose its entire offshore oil industry.

Government framing of changes to regulation affecting exploration activities differed between the two provinces. Newfoundland's provincial government used exploration activity as an indicator of future economic growth, and publicly promoted government initiatives in support of offshore exploration. In contrast, Saskatchewan amendments to regulation of exploration activities were, if not intentionally buried, at least not publicly promoted by the provincial government.

Unlike Saskatchewan, Newfoundland did not pursue an equivalency agreement with the federal government on federal methane regulations. British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan all signed equivalency agreements with the federal government in 2020, leaving Newfoundland the only significant oil and gas producing province in Canada where federal regulations on methane emissions are in effect (ECCC 2021).

Regulatory changes in both provinces, though not without long-term consequences, were overshadowed in impact by substantial direct and indirect financial subsidies to the provincial oil sectors. In addition to billions of dollars in federal subsidies, provincial subsidies for the oil and gas sector in the 2020-21 fiscal year totalled more than $413.8 million in Saskatchewan, and more than $82.6 million in Newfoundland (McKenzie, Beedell, and Corkal 2022).

The comparatively smaller regulatory change in the 2020 oil sector bailout may be partially attributed to already sparce environmental regulation of the oil sector in both case provinces. Prior to

2020, the regulatory environments in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland were already extremely favourable to the oil industry. Based on a survey of oil sector executives' perceptions of provincial regulation and tax regimes, the Fraser Institute ranked Saskatchewan and Newfoundland as the first and second most favourable Canadian jurisdictions for upstream oil industry investment in 2019 (Stedman and Aliakbari 2019). It is possible that regulatory accommodation was not included to a greater degree in oil sector support packages because provincial regulation was not considered a significant barrier to oil sector operations. Multiple Newfoundland projects were also not running for much of 2020, meaning environmental regulation was not a barrier to operations for those projects most at risk of closing.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

7.1 Considerations for Public Policy

As the outsized impact of oil-producing provinces on emissions is due almost entirely to upstream oil sector activity, weak regulation of the oil sector at the provincial level undermines Canada's ability to achieve emission reduction targets and meet international commitments. As Canadian provinces hold primary jurisdiction over natural resources, including oil and gas extraction, environmental regulation of the Canadian oil sector must be first considered at the provincial level, and oil producing provinces must assume a leadership role in Canadian climate change response.

Sub-national jurisdictions that are structurally dependant on the oil industry and subject to high levels of pressure from corporate power are likely to continue doubling down on oil extraction, even when the industry is no longer providing clear benefits. At a time when other jurisdictions are making efforts to transition away from fossil fuels, Canada's current policy trajectory would strengthen ties to oil and gas production. If the corporate bloc that controls fossil fuel production is able to continue steering provincial fiscal, energy, and climate policies, then Canada will not be able to live up to its international obligations, and the eventual economic devastation and human cost of stranded workers will be immense.

7.2 Areas for Future Research

Future research could use comparison with other jurisdictions to consider government capacity and wealth as a factor in deregulatory behaviour, beyond the influence of corporate structural power. Both case provinces have relatively small governments. This heightened industry structural power, but there may have also been a less visible "steamrolling" effect whereby industry instrumental strategies overwhelmed government resources. Is influence from instrumental power

heightened in less resourced jurisdictions, even where industry holds less structural power (e.g. more diversified economies)?

Using a comparison to jurisdictions with conventional oil resources, future research could consider the relationship between oil industry's corporate power and extraction methods, specifically conventional oil compared to non-conventional or extreme oil. Oil extraction in both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland uses predominantly extreme extraction methods, with high production and infrastructure costs. Compared to jurisdictions with conventional oil, how do extraction methods contribute, if at all, to feelings of industry precarity and the weight of corporate structural power?

The project was unable to capture changes to de facto regulation, such as how pandemic changes to the functioning of regulators affected regulation enforcement. Future research could use a combination of interviews and freedom of information requests to assess the impacts of the pandemic conditions on regulatory enforcement during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional research could evaluate any long-term effects of the pandemic on regulator capacity and enforcement of regulation.

The geographic core of the Canadian oil sector is in Alberta, with both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland as periphery oil-economies (Carroll and Huijzer 2021; Carroll 2021a; Hussey et al. 2021). Future research could consider the role of that core-periphery relationship in sector regulation, comparing oil sector regulation and expressions of corporate power in Alberta with those in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland.

7.3 Concluding Statement

The scale, scope, and intensity of the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying economic downturn was unprecedented in the scale, speed, and scope of change to international economy, including global oil markets. As the international economy came to an abrupt halt in early 2020, and

policymakers around the world grappled with a new public health crisis, the oil dependent provinces of Newfoundland and Saskatchewan faced the additional economic challenge of an economy hallowed out by falling oil prices. In addition to direct and indirect subsidies, both provinces moved to support their provincial oil sector with short-term regulatory accommodations and long-term loosening of sector regulation.

Environmental regulations surrounding the sector were weakened in 2020 to accommodate the oil industry in both provinces, a result of oil corporations influence and corporate power. The intense pressure of oil industry structural power, pushed to extreme levels by the oil price crash and pandemic recession, leant weight to policy requests expressed through corporate instrumental and discursive strategies. Regulatory changes were not as extensive as some commentators feared at the time. However, this is likely the result of preexisting structural power, expressed as competition with other jurisdictions for corporate investment, having already pushed both provincial governments to weaken regulation of the sector. Further changes to the regulatory landscape in 2020 were the result of an intensification of the existing deregulation agenda.

The pandemic and oil price crash heightened oil corporations' structural power—a key change to the influence of oil sector in 2020. Already influential in Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, industry's structural power was further heightened by the pandemic-linked recession and devastation to other economic sectors. The widespread economic devastation intensified reliance on the already economically dominant sector, as policymakers in the two provinces looked for another economic miracle from the oil industry. Massive reductions in capital investment from oil corporations put further pressure on policymakers to compete for remaining corporate investment. This pressure to compete was further increased in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, both having structural and

geographic barriers to economic competitiveness. Capital investment in the oil sector had also been a major contributor to provincial GDP in 2019 for both provinces.

Throughout 2020, the oil industry used discursive strategies to promote narratives which established government support for the sector, including deregulation, as a "common sense" response to economic challenges. Oil industry narratives presented the oil sector as vital to economic recovery from the pandemic in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and framed regulation as a barrier to securing the economic potential of the industry. The combination of industry discursive strategies and the material reality of structural dependency on the oil sector, felt acutely when oil prices hit record lows in early 2020, worked to establish economic dependence on the oil sector as both inevitable and the only option for long-term economic recovery. While the material consequences of structural dependency on the oil sector were felt in both provinces, the consequences of this dependence were felt more intensely in Newfoundland, with the province being nearly driven to bankruptcy by falling oil prices in March 2020.

Established identification with the oil industry among policymakers, whereby individuals internalize industry's ideological positions and come to see industry and community well-being as one and the same, amplified the influence of oil sector structural power. Higher levels of identification with industry in Saskatchewan compared to Newfoundland help to account for differences in the regulatory accommodations offered to industry, with Saskatchewan accommodations in some ways being more extensive and more permissible of industry compared to those in Newfoundland.

This thesis supports an understanding of the corporate power of the oil sector, expressed through various intersecting instrumental, structural, and discursive modalities, as an influential force working to entrench oil extraction and impede environmental regulation of the sector in

Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. Oil and gas production is the single largest source of GHG emissions in Canada, and regulation of this sector falls under provincial jurisdiction. Corporate power of the oil sector at the provincial level is therefore key to explaining the policy gap between climate action and climate science and is a major barrier to an effective policy response to climate change in Canada.

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Appendix A

Timeline of Key Events Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Oil Industry in Newfoundland and Labrador

17 February, 2020	Liberal leader and Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador Dwight Ball tenders his resignation as party leader and premier, effective upon the election of his successor by the party.
18 March, 2020	A Public Health Emergency is declared in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
20 March, 2020	Premier Dwight Ball writes to Prime Minister Trudeau warning that Newfoundland is at risk of insolvency, writing "our Province has run out of time" (Ball 2020).
1 April, 2020	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers sends an open letter to Newfoundland Minister of Natural Resources, Siobhan Coady. The letter requests financial and regulatory support for the oil and gas sector to offset the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, OPEC-Russia oil price war, and related drop in oil prices.
21 May, 2020	Premier Dwight Ball sends an open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau requesting urgent federal action to support the offshore petroleum industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the letter, Premier Ball estimates that oil industry cancellations, deferrals, and suspensions due to the combined effects of the Oil Price War and COVID-19 pandemic will create a loss of $61 billion to the provincial GDP up to 2038.
25 May, 2020	The Council of Atlantic Premiers sends an open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau requesting support for an economic recovery from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter names key industries and priorities for each Atlantic province, including the offshore oil and gas sector in Newfoundland.
26 May, 2020	Premier Dwight Ball and Minister of Natural Resources Siobhan Coady join oil industry representatives at a virtual press conference to express united

	support for the offshore oil and gas industry. Together they request the federal government provide financial support for the offshore oil and gas industry.
4 June, 2020	Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Jonathan Wilkinson releases a Ministerial Regulation modifying the assessment process for exploratory drilling projects in areas of the Newfoundland offshore covered by the Regional Assessment of Exploratory Drilling Ease of Newfoundland and Labrador. The new process excludes exploratory drilling projects in the area covered by the Regional Assessment from the requirement to undergo a project-specific federal Impact Assessment, shorting the approval process timeline for new projects.
4 June, 2020	Release of the 2019-20 Fiscal Update, reporting on the fiscal situation of Newfoundland as of March 31, 2020. Reported provincial revenue is $690 million less than projected at the 2019 budget, including $181 million less oil royalties than projected.
3 August, 2020	Dr. Andrew Furey elected leader of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Party, becoming the Premier-elect.
19 August, 2020	Dr. Andrew Furey sworn in as the 14th Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.
23 September, 2020	Federal Speech from the Throne for the 43rd Parliament
24 September, 2020	Announcement of a new offshore exploration initiative intended to encourage drilling of exploration wells in the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area by reimbursing well costs. The initiative reimburses a percentage of well costs for the second and third well drilled on an exploration license (thirty per cent of costs up to $30 million for the second well, and fifty per cent of costs up to $50 million for the third well). Funds for reimbursement are drawn from security deposits forfeited by successful bidders on exploration licenses who failed to meet their work commitment.

25 September, 2020	The Oil and Gas Industry Recovery Task Force is established with a mandate to develop recommendations for immediate actions to sustain the offshore industry in Newfoundland and to determine eligibility and prioritization criteria for distribution of federal support funding.
25 September, 2020	Federal government announces $320 million contribution to the offshore oil and gas sector, to be distributed by the province.
29 September, 2020	Release of the 2020 Independent Resource Assessment findings, which identify an additional 11.1 billion barrels of oil and 24.5 trillion cubic feet of gas potential in offshore Newfoundland. Total identified resource potential in offshore is now 63.6 billion barrels of oil and 224.1 trillion cubic feet of gas.
30 September, 2020	Release of Budget 2020. Due to reduced revenue and increased expenses attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and volatility of global oil prices, Budget 2020 predicts a deficit of $1.84 billion. This deficit is $309 million less than that predicted at the July fiscal update, a difference attributed by the minister to increased oil revenues and federal COVID-19 funding.
13 December, 2020	The first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Canada (Jones 2020).

Appendix B

Timeline of Key Events Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Oil Industry in Saskatchewan

20 January 2020	Saskatchewan legislature proclaims Chapter 16 of the *Pipelines Amendment Act, 2019*, introducing the first entirely electronic registry for pipeline licensing and administration in Canada. The electronic registry is intended to streamline the application review process and reduce approval timelines. Some administrative penalties, The Pipelines Administration and Licensing Regulations, and Directive PNG034: Saskatchewan Pipelines Code also come into effect with the proclamation of the Act.
30 January, 2020	Saskatchewan Legislature passes *The Oil and Gas Emissions Management Amendment Regulations, 2020.*
4 February, 2020	Announcement of new Pipelines Projects Assessment Committee (PPAC). The PPAC is tasked with the mandate of evaluating and identifying possible government involvement in supporting potential pipeline projects in Saskatchewan.
18 March, 2020	A Public Health Emergency is declared in Saskatchewan as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
18 March, 2020	Tabling of 2020-21 Budget Estimates. Previously developed revenue forecasts were considered inaccurate because of the Oil Price War and COVID-19, and spending estimates were tabled without revenue forecasts. Budget estimates include $14.15 billion in government expenses (3.1% increase from 2019-20). The Oil Infrastructure Investment Program, a tax incentive to support new and expanded pipelines and pipeline terminals, is introduced.
14 April, 2020	The Government of Saskatchewan announces provincial support and relief measures for the oil industry. Relief measures include extensions for regulatory and reporting deadlines, extensions of mineral rights, and the

	reduction and/or deferral of some fees. Also announced is a Memorandum of Agreement with the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors to harmonize service rig regulation with Alberta. Both federal and provincial governments announce an agreement for Saskatchewan to gain provincial jurisdiction over methane regulations has been drafted.
17 April, 2020	Release of preliminary revenue impacts of the pandemic. Forecasted scenarios predict a potential revenue decline of $1.3 billion-$3.3. billion, depending on the duration of pandemic-related economic restrictions.
22 April, 2020	Announcement of the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan, a plan for a phased approach to lifting pandemic restrictions.
15 June, 2020	Release of the 2020-21 Budget. Deficit forecast for 2020-21 is $2.4 billion, with revenue forecast at $13.6 billion. This is $1.2 billion less in revenue than the previous year, a decrease attributed to pandemic-related economic closures and oil price collapse.
27 August, 2020	Release of 2020-21 First Quarter Budget Update and Medium-Term Outlook.
3 September, 2020	Saskatchewan Legislature amends *The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases (Standards and Compliance) Regulations*, modifying the criteria for regulated emitters.
14 September, 2020	Premier Scott Moe sends an open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in advance of the federal Throne Speech delivered on September 23, 2020.
22 September, 2020	Saskatchewan Carbon Tax Reference Case argued before the Supreme Court of Canada.
29 September, 2020	Dissolution of the 28th Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, beginning the 29th General Election.
26 October, 2020	SaskParty elected to majority government.
9 November, 2020	Announcement of new provincial cabinet members.

27 November, 2020	Release of 2020-21 Mid-Year Budget Update.
30 November, 2020	First Session of the 29th Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and Speech from the Throne.
13 December, 2020	The first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Canada (Jones 2020).
17 December, 2020	*The Seismic Exploration Amendment Regulations, 2020* passed by Order in Council

Appendix C

Changes to Environmental Regulations Affecting the Oil Sector, 2020: Newfoundland and Labrador

Date of Effect (Date of Notice)	**NLR**	**Regulation or Act**	**Enabling Statutes**	**Stable Link**
24-Apr-20 (24-Apr-20)	N/A	*Energy Corporation Act, SNL 2007*	*Energy Corporation Act, SNL 2007; Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*	https://canlii.ca/t/53kzt
24-Apr-20 (24-Apr-20)	14/17	Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations	*Management of Greenhouse Gas Act, SNL 2016; Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*	https://canlii.ca/t/53kpn
01-May-20 (01-May-20)	54/03	Environmental Assessment Regulations, 2003	*Environmental Assessment Regulations, 2003; Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act*	https://canlii.ca/t/k0x5
15-May-20 (15-May-20)	37/20	Management of Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations (Amendment)	*Management of Greenhouse Gas Act, SNL 2016*	https://canlii.ca/t/53kpn

04-Jun-20 (04-Jun-20)	N/A	Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities (Newfoundland and Labrador Off-shore Exploratory Wells)	*Impact Assessment Act*	https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/iaac-acei/documents/acts-regulations/regulation-reglement.pdf

Appendix D

Changes to Environmental Regulations Affecting the Oil Sector, 2020: Saskatchewan

Date of Effect (Date of Notice)	**RSS**	**Regulation or Act**	**Enabling Statutes**	**Stable Link**
20-Jan-20 (24-Jan-20)	C P-12.1 Reg 2	The Pipelines Administration and Licensing Regulations	*The Pipelines Act, 1998*	https://canlii.ca/t/547gl
20-Jan-20 (16-Jan-20)	N/A	Directive PNG034: Saskatchewan Pipelines Code (Technical Standards and Requirements)	*Pipelines Act, 1998; The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2019*	https://training.saskatchewan.ca/EnergyAndResources/Files/Notices/2020/MRO%2017-20.pdf
12-Feb-20 (07-Feb-20)	c O-2 Reg 7	The Oil and Gas Emissions Management Amendment Regulations, 2020	*The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*	https://canlii.ca/t/5489k
14-Apr-20 (14-Apr-20)	N/A	Minister's Order 80/20: Extension of Full Implementation Date for Measurement and Reporting Requirements	*The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*	https://training.saskatchewan.ca/EnergyAndResources/Files/Notices/2020/MRO%2080-20.pdf
03-Sep-20 (25-Sep-20)	c M-2.01 Reg 3	The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases (Standards and Compliance) Amendment Regulations, 2020	*The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases Act*	https://canlii.ca/t/54qzk

17-Sep-20 (25-Sep-20)	c O-2 Reg 7	The Oil and Gas Emissions Management (Miscellaneous) Amendment Regulations, 2020	*The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*	https://canlii.ca/t/54r3d
01-Feb-21 (24-Dec-20)	c M-16.1 Reg 2	*The Seismic Exploration Amendment Regulations, 2020*	*The Mineral Resources Act, 1985*	https://canlii.ca/t/54w4d