

## **Where are the dads?**

We all care deeply about the future we are creating for the children of today and tomorrow. And there is currently no issue that threatens the long-term health of our society more than climate change. While caring about our children's future is a characteristic shared by all genders and gender identities, fewer men are involved in the climate action conversation than women and youth.

Marian Hakze, a North Vancouver mom and a leader of "For Our Kids", pointed out in a recent blog post that the organization currently attracts many more women than men. For Our Kids is an organization of concerned parents and grandparents across the country working to fight climate change from the grassroots in their communities.

"I have noticed I'm surrounded mostly by moms, retirees, and students in the climate action movement," wrote Marian. "Only occasionally will we see a dad."

Marian poses an interesting question: where are the dads? According to Abacus Data, men are less likely than women to believe that climate change is an extremely serious issue – 34 per cent of female Canadians versus 27 per cent of male Canadians. Men are also currently twice as likely to believe it's not at all serious.

Perhaps this is not entirely surprising.

Polling data over the years suggests women are often more likely than men to see environmental and social issues - including health care and education - as being highly important. Men, on the other hand, have tended to be more focused on economic concerns.

### **Not one or the other**

But it's a false dichotomy for the conversation to be framed as an "either-or" between the climate and the economy. I believe that key to engaging a broader range of Canadians in climate conversation and action is to highlight the economic opportunities that will be enabled by a transition to a low-carbon future. The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate has estimated that bold climate action could deliver more than \$26 trillion in economic benefits in the next decade. Many companies and financial institutions around the world are already seizing these opportunities. This includes sectors well beyond energy, including building materials, transportation, mining, manufacturing, and others.

I am not a particularly partisan person. However, I got involved in politics because of climate change – partly because of the threat it poses to future generations, but also because of the

economic opportunities I believe Canada can grasp by moving to swiftly transition toward a low-carbon future. Perhaps this broader framing – one of both a science-informed threat and an economic opportunity – if communicated clearly and aggressively by governments and citizens, can attract a broader range of Canadians to actively engage in this existential conversation.

### **Trust the children**

I would also suggest that perhaps the most powerful agents of getting more people – and more men in particular – engaged, are the children of today.

For me personally, my youngest daughter has been a source of energy and inspiration. She tells me of her concerns for her future and regularly exhorts me to do more to fight climate change. I certainly hope that children who are concerned for their future – as hundreds of thousands in Canada demonstrated during the climate marches in 2019 – are being equally forceful with their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and leaders.

We will get through the current pandemic crisis and when we do there is another – even larger challenge we must face – climate change. One lesson I believe we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is how much we can really achieve when Canadians work together – governments, communities, neighbours, moms, dads and kids – to address a common cause.

This is a lesson that will serve us well in the fight against climate change as we create a more sustainable and a more prosperous future for our children.