

QUESTIONABLE COVERAGE:

Canadian Online News Media and the Representation of the Oil Sands

By

JOSH WILLARD, B.A.

Supervisor: Dr. Graham Knight

A Major Research Paper

Submitted to the Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in Communication and New Media

McMaster University

© Copyright by Josh Willard, August 2011

Over the course of the last several years, we have seen a shift in the ways news is presented. An industry that once revolved around the selling of newspapers, news media have shifted their focus to presenting news online. This shift in the methods in which news is produced and accessed has allowed for many different viewpoints and more occurrences of biased media coverage. Since the emergence of the environmental movement in the 1960s, news media have acted as an essential medium for publicizing environmental issues, and for disputing claims, opinions and arguments about our negligence towards the environment. Some of the most pressing environmental issues, such as climate change and global warming, have been discussed, examined and contested in online news media. Development and production of oil in the Canadian oil sands has become a contentious issue, and has a greater impact on Canadians than is assumed.

The oil sands' environmental consequences and impact on climate change are becoming a problematic issue in Canada at a time when oil supplies may be running scarce. Canadian media coverage and reporting on the oil sands is likely to increase as development expands, and takes more of a toll on the environment and the land that is situated nearby. The oil sands will become a pressing issue for Canadian oil corporations, environmental groups and oil consumers as supplies diminish, and thus it is important to study how news stories of the oil sands are being reported on by media organizations in Canada.

Despite a growing body of research surrounding climate change and pollution, studies have not focused on Canadian online news media, and in particular coverage of

the Canadian oil sands. This major research paper will study media content and will analyze the concept of media bias by examining the differences in reporting styles in the online formats of the CBC, the National Post, and The Globe and Mail, and will discuss to what degree these news websites are providing balanced coverage from an environmental point of view. Do the media examined in this study leave out any missing voices when they report on the oil sands? Are certain groups given more visibility due to the language being used to describe the oil sands? Are environmental organizations receiving a fair amount of direct quotes or references in the articles? Are Canadian media providing newsreaders with balanced news of the oil sands? These are the issues and questions that this research paper will examine and answer.

Studying Canadian media's stance on the oil sands is important as the topic is largely understudied, and as the sands continually take a large toll on the environment, the oil sands will only become more contested and questioned. This major research paper will expand on a growing body of existing research on media bias and environmental issues, and will shed light on Canadian news bias and how environmental issues are selectively structured in Canadian media. As the literature review will illustrate, this topic is largely under-studied in a Canadian context, and this paper will bring reporting styles of Canadian environmental issues to light, while building upon a growing body of communications research which examines environmental issues and climate change.

## A Shift in Media Coverage of Environmental Issues

There has been extensive research completed on placing environmental news coverage into historical events and contexts. As researchers have noted, environmental issues have continually been tied to scientific evidence, climate change, and global warming. It is evident that science and politics have had a role in altering media coverage over time. Yet at the same time, media bias has also influenced scientific and political opinions and decisions. Boykoff (2009), outlines several methods in reporting styles when environmental issues began to gain public attention. During the mid 1980s, “media coverage of climate change science and policy increased dramatically, many climate science and governance issues flowed into public view” (p 437). Not only did media coverage of climate change help audiences become more aware of environmental issues, it also may have been presented in a manner that confused audiences and the public. Media coverage of the environment presents “many distinct issues and challenges (that) are conflated and confused, thereby skewing public understanding, governance, and public action” (p 433).

Furthermore, historical coverage of environmental issues indicates that science and politics influenced and shaped ongoing scientific and political considerations, activities and decisions (p 435). It is evident that media coverage of environmental issues affected social opinions and political decisions in the past, and Boykoff argues that this power of the mass media to affect the public’s personal and political opinions of issues that affect the environment can be seen today.

In addition to mass media's affect on environmental issues, corporations have struggled to frame climate problems and its possible solutions, and those involved with energy production began shifting to the forefront of the issue. Hansen (2009) argues that since the 1980s, media coverage of the environment has focused largely on pollution/contamination disasters, particularly oil and chemical pollution, as well as nuclear energy production (p 5). Environmental news coverage has focused on the production and consumption of carbon-burning fuels in recent years, and news media have tended to downplay or exaggerate claims regarding climate change.

Corporations and large businesses may have struggled in dealing with strategies to frame environmental problems and the solutions to those problems, but this struggle to shift the opinions of consumers and politicians may have resulted from a surge in environmental journalism and the reporting of environmental issues. Friedman (2004) argues that during this time, stories and news coverage of the environment drastically increased, causing coverage to become complicated and in-depth (p 191). While journalists began reporting on these issues, they struggled to explain the environment and its complexity in all of its "scientific, sociological, political, and economic ramifications" (p 192). This rapid increase in the reporting of environmental issues left corporations, businesses, journalists, and media organizations scrambling to cover the environment in a manner that the public would understand. Since environmental issues are particularly complicated and intricate, the severity of a particular issue may be lost in the monotonous coverage prepared by journalists and media organizations that may not fully understand the environment and issues like climate change.

While journalists may have struggled to report on environmental issues and the effects of climate change, Weingart, Engels, and Pansegrau (2009), in speaking on discourse of climate change in the news media, describe a change in communication and journalistic practices that have taken place in recent years. Their report on discourses of climate change in politics and the mass media explains that media coverage of environmental issues has shifted. While the news media once gave little attention to the causes of climate change, they have now gained a general interest in the study of environmental issues, occasionally speaking of an approaching climate catastrophe (p 266). While media and communication research on environmental issues has grown in recent years, it is evident that news coverage has grown as well.

Media coverage of environmental issues and in particular the affects of climate change shifted from a small amount of coverage that focused on stories of human impact on the environment to a relatively high amount of coverage that focused on a climate disaster (p 266-276). While stories of anthropogenic causes of climate change and the public's effects on the environment appeared to diminish, current media coverage tends to combine stories of human affects on the environment, with specific environmental catastrophes or events. According to the authors, "the media facilitate the representation of the highly complex and abstract interrelationships of the anthropogenic influence on climate change by differentiating distinct points in time" (p 276). Media coverage of the environment has changed drastically over time, resulting in an abundance of differing personal viewpoints and political decisions. Stories on environmental issues and global warming will likely change as social media becomes

more abundant among environmental journalists, consumers, corporations, and organizations.

### News Media and the Understanding of Environmental Issues

While these authors examine how news coverage of environmental issues has shifted from relatively non-existent to abundant, it is important to discuss how the public and media audiences become aware of certain issues. Recent literature focuses on global warming and its relationship to American media coverage. Dispensa and Brulle (2003) argue that societies depend on news media to help make sense of information that is presented to them, and that this is especially true with information about environmental risks.

Without media coverage of environmental issues, “it is unlikely that an important problem will either enter the arena of public discourse or become part of political issues” (p 79). The public’s knowledge of the environment is largely dependent on information that is presented by news media, and it is argued that without coverage of the environment, it is unlikely that individuals will take notice to environmental problems, concerns, and issues.

While journalists and news organizations claim that their coverage is a balanced and unbiased representation of societal events, there is actually a highly selective process that takes place. Reporters determine what is newsworthy by examining if the story is publicly recognized, important, and interesting. The story is then “shaped in significant part by journalistic norms and conventions” (p 81). Groups that share an

interest in the media organization may also influence journalists and journalistic practices, and this bias is then consumed by newsreaders that attempt to make sense of the information that is being presented. Not only can false information on environmental issues be reported on, this information that has been manufactured by journalists and news organizations may be used to influence personal opinions and political decisions.

Since news media acts as a catalyst of social and political change, journalists should consider the lack of knowledge about environmental issues in our society, and address issues, such as climate change, in a style that would allow individuals to understand the information that is being presented. The problem, however, is that there may be no agreement on which information is accurate, relevant, and scientifically correct. In speaking of the production of environment news agendas, Matthews (2007) explains, “established and culturally inscribed understandings of the environment and demands of news style and broadcast time are encapsulated within news values” (p 429-430). This is further echoed by Gavin (2009), who argues that news coverage of climate change is not effective in that it does not inherently possess newsworthy material such as “human interest, personalization, scandal, surprise, compelling visuals, drama and clarity” (p 771-772). It is evident that news media may not be the most effective communicators of environmental issues such as climate change.

To achieve a neutral and complete view of an environmental issue, readers must consume information from various media channels. While this may be an effective approach in understanding issues in a wide-ranging, complete, and unbiased manner, it



is extremely time consuming for newsreaders to examine articles from several different news organizations. In discussing journalistic practices, Gavin argues that media influence is thought to be “contingent and variable, depending on such factors as level of exposure to coverage, the strength of an individual’s pre-existing political dispositions, the amount of trust people invest in particular media, and the extent to which citizens are dependent on the media for information” (p 767). While it is evident that news media can influence personal opinions of environmental issues, it is important to discuss how the production of news media affects the public’s understanding of the environment.

In studying media bias of national news broadcasts, Kline (1980) examines the influence of various style-related aspects of the news on audience influence and perception. Kline argues that news events are shaped and structured by a mixture of “action visuals, reporters, studio commentators, news announcers and interview sequences; a story which includes action visual sequences and an on-the-spot reporter” (p 50). While this study examined television news, Kline’s perspective can be applied to online news media as well. Reporters attempt to attract individuals to stories of environmental issues by providing the reader with appealing visuals, interviews, and eyewitness accounts of the issue that has occurred or is taking place.

Many environmental problems or issues are not visually interesting or perhaps even visible to the eye, and thus reporters may attract readers to stories of the environment by focusing on extreme repercussions and consequences of the degradation of our environment. This practice of producing news stories that

emphasize sensationalistic events is largely effective in attracting audiences by providing a story that is exciting and entertaining (p 52). It is evident that journalistic practices allow for stories of environmental issues to be emphasized in a sensational style of news reporting, and that this manufactured coverage of sensational events does not provide audiences with clear information.

### Bias in Online News Media

While literature examining the production of news and its role in shaping environmental issues has been discussed, it is essential to tie this into a growing body of research and popular press articles that examine bias from an online news media perspective. While online news bias in the popular press is viewed as essential to generate readership and advertising (see, e.g., Mills, 2008; Walters, 2006; Brooks and Gadher, 2007), scholars have agreed that online news has a powerful reach, with an inherent bias that does not allow for audiences to interpret problems, such as the oil sands and its relation to climate change.

In comparing perceptions of news articles on oil drilling and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, Christen and Huberty (2007) examined the influence of Internet news on public opinion, and found that “users can choose online news sources that share preexisting views” (p 317), and that “online editions of national news publications may lead to differing impressions of what (readers) are thinking about policy issues in the news” (p 318). While readers have a tendency to read news websites that have a similar

preexisting bias, they also read news that they perceive to be produced for, and biased towards a specific audience.

In addition to reading news sources that share preexisting views, readers and the general public may “perceive the Internet as attracting a narrower cross-section of the available news audience” (p 318). According to Christen and Huberty, newsreaders believe that the amount of news that is read online is relatively low, indicating that many news consumers tend to read the news from traditional sources such as newspapers, magazines, and other forms of print media. However, conventional news media sources such as newspapers, television, and magazines are now also available online. It should be noted that news media sources that are only available online, such as The Huffington Post, may not engage in the hard news gathering that conventional media engage in daily. While the authors agree that national news organizations are reaching out to new audiences, the majority of individuals who access various media continue to favor traditional mass media.

In studying audience perceptions of online media bias, Detenber et al. (2008), argue that as readers become increasingly fragmented, their perceptions of media bias becomes driven by the size and type of the audience (p 2). According to Detenber et al., perceptions of media bias tend to be largely self-perceived, but it is also evident that audiences may affect the likelihood of bias information on online news websites as well. The study examined two dimensions of perceived media reach, where the authors identified the perception of the size of the audience, and the different types of individuals that were perceived to be targeted by the media’s message (p 2). The

tendency of media bias to be largely self-perceived may result from individuals choosing to consume news that matches their personal viewpoints, and/or their political opinions.

While the analysis is very in-depth, the authors limit their study by not discussing the relationship between age demographics and the perceived reach of online news media. Scholars agree that different age groups perceive technology in different ways (see, e.g., Peacock and Kunemund, 2007; Sum et al., 2008; Schwender and Kohler, 2006), and the relationship between age differences and perceived online media bias has not been considered. Senior citizens, for example, may favor traditional news media sources, as opposed to online news websites, which feature different types of bias that is not present online. While the relationship between different age demographics and the perception of online news media bias is largely understudied, it is important to tie this into a discussion of media bias in coverage of environmental issues.

In discussing the degradation of forests by acid rain in Norway, Roll-Hansen (2011) argues that journalists themselves are responsible for producing biased news. The author describes a story where a large national newspaper provided background information on the amount of forest damaged by acid rain. The article stated as fact that 68,000 square kilometers of the forest had been damaged. Roll-Hansen states that the journalists were not aware that this covers the total area of forests in the country (p 329). It is evident that bias in online news media can derive from journalists simply not understanding the environmental issue, and thus incorrect facts or descriptions of the issue become taken at face-value by news readers who then attempt to make sense of the biased news that is read and consumed. Individuals who read online news may also

share the information with their friends and colleagues through social networks, further increasing and expanding the reach of the news media and any incorrect facts that can be found in news stories. Individuals may also read blogs or websites that are issue-specific, where the distinction between fact and opinion may become blurred.

Roll-Hansen also argues that journalists encounter obstacles in their attempts to report the truth and correct facts in news stories. While these obstacles are described in a traditional media setting, they can also be applied to online news stories. While aiming to report on a vast array of news stories, “economic competition is the driving force behind deadlines and other time limitations that make it difficult for journalists to pursue issues in-depth or to acquire extensive technical knowledge” (p 332). The author argues that journalists’ little interest in the evaluation of scientific claims is a major problem, and the lack of competence in learning about environmental issues is one reason why media bias exists in news stories of the environment. It is important to keep in mind that news organizations, both online and traditional, exist to create a profit, and they may generate news stories in a style that is quick and inexpensive to produce. While scholars agree that different types of bias can be found in both online and traditional news media, it is important to understand how this bias relates to media coverage of the oil industry and its effects on the environment.

### Media Coverage of the Oil Industry

Due to skyrocketing fuel prices and uncertainties in the amounts of oil remaining that is suitable for production, the oil industry is capable of severely affecting national

and global economic markets. In analyzing the theme of media bias from an environmental perspective, it is necessary to tie this into a growing body of research that examines news media coverage of the oil industry. In analyzing network news coverage of the oil industry, Erfle and McMillan (1989) argue that coverage of the industry is strongly influenced by market conditions within the industry itself. The study's findings indicate that the oil industry is not a single product market and that not all oil products are equal in importance in determining mass media's interest in the industry (p 128). It is evident that coverage of the industry is closely tied to economic markets, and that only certain events that take place in the industry are interesting to the news media.

The authors also indicate that during times of a crisis, all oil products are affected, but those effects are not considered to be newsworthy if they do not directly affect consumers (p 128). Not only is coverage of the industry very limited, only the day-to-day operations that has an affect on consumers, such as rising fuel prices or gasoline shortages, will be reported by the news media. This is problematic as the oil industry has a much larger affect on consumers besides the price of fuel. Not only does the industry have a large impact on environmental factors, it affects other economies as well, such as rising prices of groceries, travel, and clothing. The industry has a large impact on consumers, and it is unfortunate that the article did not examine these factors.

In analyzing newspaper coverage of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill that occurred off the coast of California, Molotch and Lester (1975) found that national

coverage of the spill was very limited, and only covered 7.7% of the study's sampled occurrences (p 242). The results also indicate that the frequency of reporting declines with increasing chronological distance from the date that the oil spill occurred (p 243). News coverage of the crisis was limited and was considered not important on a national level. This means that an environmental catastrophe or event may not receive coverage on a national level, which minimizes the amount of attention and impact that the event should be receiving. However, if an event can be embedded in an existing environmental issue, the more coverage the event will likely receive. For example, an oil-related event that occurs in Western Canada may not receive coverage in Eastern Canada, unless it is linked to diverse issues of climate change. While this may be a result of the sheer size of the country, it means that consumers may not be informed of events that directly impacts and affects their lifestyle or consumption behaviors.

The study also found that oil companies and conservation organizations were conflicting interest groups in terms of coverage of the aftermath of the spill. The results indicate that nonlocal coverage was overwhelmingly favorable to oil companies nearly 85% of the time (p 245). Not only do these results suggest that coverage of the spill was biased, environmental voices and opinions were barely covered, indicating that news readers were consuming content that was very one-sided, and did not report on how they would be personally affected by the spill. While Molotch and Lester's study is somewhat dated, it can be argued that this type of reporting is still present in today's media coverage of oil spills and other environmental events that impact the environment and society's consumption habits. It also raises the question of whether

the same type of media coverage would occur in today's fast-paced news cycle, where environmental issues are now more widely regarded as legitimate news stories by the media.

In a contemporary study of the relationship between the oil industry and the news media, Murphree and Aucoin (2010) examine Mobil's engagement with the media, where the corporation carried out a communications strategy that would consistently confront the news media through direct contact with journalists, video pieces, and advertising (p 10). In order to control the amount of negative coverage Mobil was receiving, they designed a comprehensive public affairs and relations campaign. According to the study, Mobile executives found that "the media were almost always biased against its organization and against the oil industry. Therefore, Mobil crafted a plan to reach people without having to go through 'biased' news reporters and editors" (p 13). Not only are oil corporations receiving questionable coverage in the news media, they realize that coverage of the industry will leave news consumers with a negative image of the corporations that control the industry.

Tremendous effort is put into creating campaigns that aim to curb the amount of negative coverage the industry receives, and these campaigns may eventually make their way to the news media who will report on the positive things that the industry is accomplishing. In studying the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill off the coast of Alaska, Daley and O'Neill (1991) found that newsreaders could find contested positions about the spill from Exxon executives, Alaskan officials, the Coast Guard, environmentalists, concerned citizens, and others in the newspapers they were reading (p 51). However, the majority



of coverage clearly favored governmental and industry officials. The news media's tendency to favor particular individuals in their stories means that many voices were being left out. While studies about the oil industry are limited, it is apparent that oil corporations and the industry receive news media coverage that may benefit oil production operations or the industry's environmental image.

### Understanding News Media Bias

In order to place this study into a specific and proper framework, it is necessary to define the term 'media bias' and explain how it was used to guide this research. This study made use of the previous works of others, such as Entman (2007), Baron (2006), Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006), Mullainathan and Shleifer (2004), and Sutter (2001), to help guide this study of media bias into the right direction. Their definitions of media bias were used to analyze and make sense of the data that has been found.

Entman (2007), defines media bias with three major meanings, stating that media bias can be "applied to news that purportedly distorts or falsifies reality, ...to news that favors one side rather than providing equivalent treatment to both sides in a political conflict, and...sometimes to the motivations and mindsets of journalists who allegedly produce the biased content" (p 163). Media bias is further defined by Mullainathan and Shleifer (2003), who argue that bias is an occurrence where a journalist fails to report on facts relevant to the story, rather than reporting on false facts (p 9). By this definition, a news story is only unbiased if a journalist fails to report on all facts that are necessary to understand the news event that occurred.

Due to time constraints or limited resources, journalists may not be able to report on all facts that are relevant to the story. Journalistic practices, combined with the fast-paced production of news by media organizations, may result in the production of biased news stories. Keeping this concept in mind, Entman's definition of media bias was used for this study. This specific explanation of media bias allowed this paper to explore various aspects of news bias and can be applied directly to news stories relating to the Canadian oil sands. However, representations of the oil sands in the news media are partial and perspectival, where particular viewpoints and perspectives on issues may be ignored or favoured. Part of this bias is determined by which sources the news media tend to utilize for quotes and information on stories, and which viewpoints and interests these sources reflect.

### Research Questions

Literature on news media and the audience's understanding of bias in environmental issues has found that there is a great deal to be said on online news media and how readers may not be receiving balanced coverage of issues surrounding global warming and climate change. Research generally agrees that news media can be effective in promoting social understanding and political change of environmental issues and policies. However, it is unclear if Canadian online media are providing readers with clear information from which interpretations can be made. Do the media examined in this study leave out any missing voices when they report on the oil sands? Are certain groups given more visibility due to the language being used to describe the oil sands?

Are environmental organizations receiving a fair amount of direct quotes or references in the articles? This also raises questions as to how news media decide whom or what group constitutes as a legitimate voice on specific events or issues.

Furthermore, little research has examined the relationship between the Canadian media and the Canadian energy and petroleum production industry. As current studies do not address these questions and issues, the subsequent research will examine and shed light on the reporting styles of Canadian media, and if they are providing Canadians with balanced information from which interpretations can be made. This study will not examine the news media's affect on audiences, but will analyze news stories that audiences use to make sense of the oil sands.

## Methodology

To ensure that this research paper was an innovative contribution to the field of media studies and media bias, a quantitative content analysis was used to collect and analyze articles from the CBC, the National Post, and the Globe and Mail. Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”. Content analysis also “provides new insights, increases a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions” (p 18).

Quantitative content analysis is an effective and reliable research technique as it can measure both frequency and the context in which texts appear, meaning that texts and variables can be measured as they are written. Krippendorff states that “research

must also yield valid results, in the sense that the research effort is open for careful scrutiny and the resulting claims can be upheld in the face of independently available evidence”, and that the “methodological requirements of reliability and validity are not unique to but make particular demands on content analysis” (p 18). Content analysis is an effective and reliable research tool, but there are also limitations that should be considered.

In discussing the role that researchers face in analyzing and understanding the data they gathered, Krippendorff argues:

Content analysts become interested in data only after the data have been generated. They have to cope with texts in a diversity of formats associated with different purposes, do not always find what they are looking for, and cannot fully anticipate the terms and categories used by the sources of their texts. This puts content analysts in an analytical position that is less than advantageous, a condition they share with ethnomethodologists, anthropologists doing fieldwork, historiographical researchers, and researchers using hermeneutical or interpretive approaches (p 41).

The limitations that can be found in using content analysis as a research tool also apply to many other research methodologies and fields of study. In measuring for bias in terms of positive and negative coverage of the oil sands, and to maintain the reliability and validity of the study, a quantitative content analysis was performed using Voyeur Tools, which is a web-based text analysis application that allows researchers to perform analysis of various texts, including the study of frequency and distribution data

(Sinclair 2009). Voyeur tools was used to analyze the word count and frequency of mentions of the terms 'Oilsands', 'Environment', and 'Water' in daily stories that discussed oilsands-related news on the three news websites. The headlines, content, and quotes that can be found in the news stories were then examined and coded as 'Negative', 'Neutral', or 'Positive'.

News coverage was found to be negative if the headlines and stories emphasized the problematic, such as complications or consequences that arise from production in the oil sands. The coverage was found to be neutral if the headlines or stories did not contain direct associations of the oil sands with either positive or negative undertones, and provided a balanced report on the event or issue that was receiving coverage. Finally, news coverage was characterized as positive if the headlines and stories focused on the benefit of oil production in the sands, including if the benefits were economical, social, environmental, or ethical.

The CBC.ca, Nationalpost.com, and TheGlobeandMail.com were chosen for this study as they are considered to be dominant leaders in Canadian news, due to their national reach and wide readership. It is expected that these three news sources will differ in reporting styles and coverage of oil sands news. It should be noted that the CBC is a publicly funded broadcaster, where the National Post and The Globe and Mail are both privately held news organizations. The National Post is a business-friendly, conservative newspaper, and it is expected that it will be less critical on oil sands issues than the CBC and The Globe and Mail, which are more liberal and are expected to be more critical in their coverage. These news sources will be examined as three distinct

viewpoints, and thus it is the differences in coverage that will be compared and examined.

The coverage period relied on analyzing the online news articles as they appeared during the day in which they were written. The coverage sample was constructed from a six-month period of news stories that were found Monday to Sunday from October 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. The stories' headlines and content were individually examined on the day that they occurred for negative, neutral, or positive undertones and suggestions. It is worth noting that while stories were individually examined, it is the headlines that express the primary story frame. The number of articles analyzed were N=48 for CBC.ca, N=63 for Nationalpost.com, and N=61 for TheGlobeandMail.com. Coverage that was studied was not limited to only environmental stories, however news articles that focused on market prices of oil or share prices of oil company stocks were not included as they featured business updates and were deemed outside the scope of this study. Articles that were repeated on days following the original date of publication were not counted twice.

This study also included an examination of the context of the words 'Oilsands', 'Environment', and 'Water' in the sentences in which they were written. Water was placed into a separate category as it was expected that it would be a large portion of the overall environmental news frame, as water is heavily used in the production of oil, and due to the polluted oil sands' proximity to clean drinking water which is used by local communities. The study also examined whether the individuals who were first and last quoted represented an oil company, an environmental organization, the government,

were a citizen, a scientist/expert, or other, the most frequently used word in the article, and the headlines for each respective article. These units of analysis were used to determine what type of bias these news articles contained. It should be mentioned that while measuring for the frequency of specific words in each article, only words that suggested positive, negative, or neutral undertones were examined. Words such as 'the', 'and', 'was', and so forth were not examined and measured due their definition having no implied meaning to this study.

## Data and Results

Tables summarizing the results of the study are presented on the following three pages, and are followed by a summary and discussion of these findings. The story headlines for the CBC, National Post, and The Globe and Mail can be found on appendices A, B, and C, respectively. Please note that 'context' refers to the remainder of each article.

| Headline # | Context  |         |          | Frequency |         |          | Word     | First Quoted | Last Quoted           |
|------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|--------------|-----------------------|
|            | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative  | Neutral | Positive |          |              |                       |
|            |          |         |          |           |         |          | Oilsands | Environment  | Water                 |
| 1          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 11       | 5            | 7 Oilsands (11)       |
| 2          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Carbon (5)          |
| 3          |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 7        | 8            | 7 Panel (8)           |
| 4          |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 5        | 0            | 0 Shell (8)           |
| 5          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 8        | 6            | 2 Minister (5)        |
| 6          |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 4        | 6            | 8 University (13)     |
| 7          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 12       | 8            | 4 Development (6)     |
| 8          |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 5            | 0 Pipeline (11)       |
| 9          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 3        | 7            | 1 Syncrude (10)       |
| 10         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 2            | 2 Syncrude (11)       |
| 11         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 3            | 1 Birds (12)          |
| 12         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 2            | 2 Syncrude (7)        |
| 13         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 3        | 0            | 0 Ducks (6)           |
| 14         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 16       | 7            | 2 European (7)        |
| 15         |          |         | X        |           | X       |          | 2        | 1            | 0 Alberta (4)         |
| 16         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 2            | 12 Tailings pond (12) |
| 17         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 5            | 6 Tailings pond (10)  |
| 18         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 7            | 2 Tailings pond (8)   |
| 19         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 7            | 1 Tailings pond (8)   |
| 20         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 7        | 6            | 0 Canada (13)         |
| 21         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 3            | 1 Tailings pond (6)   |
| 22         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 0            | 0 Husky (7)           |
| 23         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 4            | 0 Yogurt (9)          |
| 24         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 3        | 2            | 0 Greenpeace (6)      |
| 25         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 3            | 0 Cancun (4)          |
| 26         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 15       | 11           | 9 Athabasca (10)      |
| 27         |          |         | X        |           | X       |          | 10       | 4            | 4 Report (7)          |
| 28         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 10       | 5            | 2 Alberta (8)         |
| 29         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 8        | 7            | 5 Monitoring (6)      |
| 30         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 14       | 7            | 16 Monitoring (14)    |
| 31         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 3        | 5            | 2 Suncor (5)          |
| 32         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 6        | 4            | 0 Prentice (10)       |
| 33         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 4        | 2            | 0 Alberta (2)         |
| 34         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 0            | 0 Looking (3)         |
| 35         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Fire (4)            |
| 36         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 8        | 0            | 1 Barrels (6)         |
| 37         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 0            | 1 Story (6)           |
| 38         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 3        | 0            | 0 Worker (5)          |
| 39         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Brett Forrester (8) |
| 40         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Brett Forrester (4) |
| 41         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 6        | 4            | 1 Panel (5)           |
| 42         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 5        | 5            | 3 Program (13)        |
| 43         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Fire (3)            |
| 44         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 5            | 3 Panel (15)          |
| 45         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 0            | 0 Shell (6)           |
| 46         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 4        | 2            | 4 Panel (8)           |
| 47         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Fire (4)            |
| 48         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 1            | 0 Government (4)      |

## Legend

|                                                                                     |                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|  | : Oil company                |
|  | : Environmental organization |
|  | : Government                 |
|  | : Citizen                    |
|  | : Scientist/Expert           |
|  | : Other                      |
|  | : N/A                        |



| Headline # | Context  |         |          | Frequency |         |          | Word      | First Quoted | Last Quoted               |
|------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|--------------|---------------------------|
|            | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative  | Neutral | Positive |           |              |                           |
|            |          |         |          |           |         |          | Oil Sands | Environment  | Water                     |
| 1          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2         | 1            | 0 Oil (6)                 |
| 2          |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 8         | 0            | 0 Oil (11)                |
| 3          |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 6         | 3            | 0 James Cameron (13)      |
| 4          |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 15        | 4            | 14 Oil (19)               |
| 5          |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 1         | 0            | 0 Silver Birch Energy (5) |
| 6          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 5         | 0            | 0 Carbon (7)              |
| 7          | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 1         | 0            | 0 Barrels (9)             |
| 8          |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 6         | 1            | 2 Alberta (9)             |
| 9          |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 1         | 3            | 1 Tides (21)              |
| 10         |          |         | X        |           | X       |          | 14        | 1            | 1 Ted Morton (9)          |
| 11         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1         | 4            | 1 Federal Government (4)  |
| 12         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 4         | 0            | 0 Syncrude (7)            |
| 13         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 5         | 3            | 0 Energy (7)              |
| 14         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 7         | 4            | 3 Syncrude (6)            |
| 15         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 3         | 1            | 2 Birds (9)               |
| 16         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 4         | 3            | 1 Ponds (9)               |
| 17         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 7         | 0            | 0 Canadian (16)           |
| 18         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 3         | 2            | 0 Fossil (8)              |
| 19         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 4         | 1            | 0 Energy (9)              |
| 20         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 16        | 6            | 0 Documents (7)           |
| 21         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 7         | 1            | 0 Statoil (9)             |
| 22         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 8         | 0            | 0 Osum Oil Sands (6)      |
| 23         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 0            | 1 Energy (15)             |
| 24         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 19        | 0            | 0 Percent (11)            |
| 25         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1         | 0            | 0 China (4)               |
| 26         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 2         | 0            | 0 Tailings Pond (5)       |
| 27         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 12        | 6            | 2 Greenpeace (7)          |
| 28         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 8         | 1            | 1 Asian (7)               |
| 29         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 4         | 5            | 0 Canada (7)              |
| 30         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 4         | 2            | 0 Tailings (5)            |
| 31         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 8         | 6            | 3 Alberta (4)             |
| 32         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 33        | 8            | 1 Report (10)             |
| 33         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 12        | 16           | 8 Monitoring (18)         |
| 34         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 4            | 3 River (7)               |
| 35         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 6         | 2            | 0 Prentice (13)           |
| 36         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 0            | 0 Week (5)                |
| 37         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 1            | 0 Company (4)             |
| 38         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 1         | 0            | 0 Alberta (2)             |
| 39         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 1            | 0 Horizon (6)             |
| 40         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 7         | 4            | 1 Stephen Harper (7)      |
| 41         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 0            | 0 Horizon (4)             |
| 42         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2         | 1            | 0 Site (6)                |
| 43         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 2         | 0            | 0 Drums (5)               |
| 44         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 4         | 1            | 0 Fire (9)                |
| 45         |          | X       |          |           |         | X        | 2         | 0            | 0 Drums (5)               |
| 46         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 1         | 1            | 0 Ethical (5)             |
| 47         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 12        | 0            | 2 Gas (29)                |
| 48         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 3         | 1            | 1 Pipeline (7)            |
| 49         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 5         | 0            | 0 Canada (6)              |
| 50         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 14        | 0            | 0 Emissions (12)          |
| 51         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2         | 4            | 0 Carbon (7)              |
| 52         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 5         | 2            | 0 Project (5)             |
| 53         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 5         | 7            | 0 Panel (4)               |
| 54         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 4         | 3            | 0 Border (6)              |
| 55         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 7         | 7            | 2 Pipeline (11)           |
| 56         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 6         | 4            | 0 Pipeline (9)            |
| 57         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 10        | 0            | 0 Aboriginal (19)         |
| 58         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1         | 0            | 0 Alberta (6)             |
| 59         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 9         | 6            | 1 Pipeline (12)           |
| 60         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 10        | 3            | 1 EU (15)                 |
| 61         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 6         | 1            | 0 U.S.                    |
| 62         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 5         | 2            | 8 Pipeline (18)           |
| 63         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 15        | 11           | 1 Environmental (8)       |

| Headline # | Context  |         |          | Frequency |         |          | Word     | First Quoted | Last Quoted          |
|------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|--------------|----------------------|
|            | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Negative  | Neutral | Positive |          |              |                      |
|            |          |         |          |           |         |          | Oilsands | Environment  | Water                |
| 1          |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 2        | 0            | 0 Oil (7)            |
| 2          |          |         | X        |           | X       |          | 4        | 0            | 0 Company (9)        |
| 3          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 7        | 4            | 1 Fossil (6)         |
| 4          |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 1        | 0            | 0 Nitrogen (8)       |
| 5          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 1            | 1 Recession (6)      |
| 6          | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 2            | 18 Water (18)        |
| 7          |          |         | X        |           | X       |          | 1        | 6            | 5 Million (12)       |
| 8          |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 3        | 0            | 0 Insider (4)        |
| 9          |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 0            | 0 Canadian (12)      |
| 10         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 12       | 3            | 0 Keystone (10)      |
| 11         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 5        | 5            | 0 Syncrude (13)      |
| 12         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 1        | 1            | 1 Syncrude (6)       |
| 13         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 1            | 2 Syncrude (9)       |
| 14         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 2        | 6            | 0 Birds (8)          |
| 15         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 8        | 0            | 0 Suncor (9)         |
| 16         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 5        | 3            | 0 Cenovus (12)       |
| 17         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 2            | 0 Jim Prentice (9)   |
| 18         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 7        | 0            | 0 Athabasca (12)     |
| 19         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 10       | 2            | 0 Statoil (8)        |
| 20         |          |         | X        |           | X       |          | 11       | 1            | 1 Statoil (8)        |
| 21         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 9        | 4            | 0 Ad (12)            |
| 22         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 7        | 1            | 0 Avon (4)           |
| 23         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 7        | 1            | 1 Asian (7)          |
| 24         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 6        | 0            | 0 Canadian (6)       |
| 25         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 7        | 0            | 0 Workers (11)       |
| 26         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 8        | 3            | 4 Tailings pond (14) |
| 27         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 7        | 1            | 0 Syncrude (10)      |
| 28         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 16       | 2            | 1 Carbon (11)        |
| 29         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 4        | 2            | 1 Tailings (7)       |
| 30         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 18       | 11           | 3 Report (18)        |
| 31         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 7        | 7            | 7 Fish (12)          |
| 32         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 7        | 8            | 0 Panel (6)          |
| 33         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 13       | 15           | 2 Industry (6)       |
| 34         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 9        | 10           | 0 Prentice (11)      |
| 35         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 6        | 0            | 1 Fort McMurray (14) |
| 36         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 4        | 4            | 14 Gateway (38)      |
| 37         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 4            | 0 Stephen Harper (6) |
| 38         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 4        | 0            | 0 Alberta (2)        |
| 39         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 7        | 1            | 0 Fire (14)          |
| 40         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 5        | 4            | 1 Out (6)            |
| 41         |          | X       |          | X         |         |          | 14       | 10           | 0 Peter Kent (10)    |
| 42         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 14       | 10           | 0 Stephen Harper (8) |
| 43         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 0            | 1 Gas (22)           |
| 44         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 0            | 0 Encana (13)        |
| 45         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 11       | 3            | 1 Ezra Levant (10)   |
| 46         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 9        | 0            | 0 Suncor (8)         |
| 47         | X        |         |          |           | X       |          | 1        | 0            | 0 Prices (10)        |
| 48         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 13       | 1            | 0 Neil Camarta (10)  |
| 49         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 10       | 5            | 1 Emissions (10)     |
| 50         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 3        | 2            | 2 Total (40)         |
| 51         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 16       | 3            | 0 Alberta (8)        |
| 52         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 6        | 8            | 0 Emissions (9)      |
| 53         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 10       | 10           | 1 Panel (11)         |
| 54         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 4        | 3            | 2 Approval (4)       |
| 55         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 3        | 1            | 2 Chipman (18)       |
| 56         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 9        | 2            | 0 Canada (12)        |
| 57         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 3        | 1            | 0 Fire (8)           |
| 58         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 3            | 0 Pipeline (8)       |
| 59         | X        |         |          | X         |         |          | 8        | 2            | 1 EU (10)            |
| 60         |          | X       |          |           | X       |          | 2        | 4            | 0 Alberta (10)       |
| 61         |          |         | X        |           |         | X        | 4        | 2            | 0 Alberta (10)       |

| Summary of Results |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                    | CBC.ca                                                                                                                       | Nationalpost.com                                                                                                              | TheGlobeandMail.com                                                                                                            |
| Coverage Period    | October 1st, 2010 - March 1st, 2011<br>(6 months)                                                                            | October 1st, 2010 - March 1st, 2011<br>(6 months)                                                                             | October 1st, 2010 - March 1st, 2011<br>(6 months)                                                                              |
| Number of Articles | 48                                                                                                                           | 63                                                                                                                            | 61                                                                                                                             |
| Headlines          | Negative: 22<br>Neutral: 24<br>Positive: 2                                                                                   | Negative: 16<br>Neutral: 42<br>Positive: 5                                                                                    | Negative: 23<br>Neutral: 29<br>Positive: 9                                                                                     |
| Context            | Negative: 32<br>Neutral: 15<br>Positive: 1                                                                                   | Negative: 10<br>Neutral: 36<br>Positive: 17                                                                                   | Negative: 19<br>Neutral: 36<br>Positive: 6                                                                                     |
| Quoted First       | Oil company: 9<br>Environmental organization: 4<br>Government: 16<br>Citizen: 4<br>Scientist/Expert: 4<br>Other: 6<br>N/A: 5 | Oil company: 18<br>Environmental organization: 3<br>Government: 23<br>Citizen: 2<br>Scientist/Expert: 1<br>Other: 8<br>N/A: 8 | Oil company: 20<br>Environmental organization: 1<br>Government: 19<br>Citizen: 0<br>Scientist/Expert: 3<br>Other: 13<br>N/A: 5 |
| Quoted Last        | Oil company: 6<br>Environmental organization: 9<br>Government: 17<br>Citizen: 2<br>Scientist/Expert: 5<br>Other: 4<br>N/A: 5 | Oil company: 18<br>Environmental organization: 7<br>Government: 18<br>Citizen: 2<br>Scientist/Expert: 1<br>Other: 9<br>N/A: 8 | Oil company: 17<br>Environmental organization: 6<br>Government: 13<br>Citizen: 2<br>Scientist/Expert: 3<br>Other: 15<br>N/A: 5 |

## Discussion of Results

### **CBC.ca**

When examining the headlines of the 48 articles that were found on CBC.ca, it is evident that nearly all conveyed either negative or neutral undertones towards production of oil in the Canadian oil sands. There were nearly an equal number of negative headlines as there were neutral. Yet what is interesting is the number of headlines that were found to be positive reflections of the oil sands. The barely noticeable amount of positive headlines, which totaled 2/48, indicates that the CBC.ca

chooses to report on stories taking place in the oil sands in a style that comes across as either negative or neutral. There were two headlines that were deemed positive depictions of the oil sands, titled “European politicians praise oilsands”, and “Oilsands not boosting cancer levels: scientists”. However, since positive headlines of the oil sands were very limited on the CBC.ca website, the headlines are buried under the large majority of negative or neutral headlines that CBC.ca tends to write when reporting on stories of the sands.

The contexts of the 48 articles were relatively similar to that of the headlines, in that an overwhelming majority of the articles contained either negative or neutral stories of the oil sands. However, 32 out of 48 stories placed the oil sands in a negative context, 15 stories in a neutral context, and one story in a positive context. The number of negative to positive stories that were written about the oil sands is overwhelming, with barely any news stories being written to place the oil sands in a positive light or context. The one story which was found to place the oil sands into a positive context, titled “Oil industry condemns Greenpeace satire” reports on the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers’ response to a Greenpeace ad campaign. While this one story tends to make Greenpeace appear somewhat foolish, it becomes hidden under the majority of negative or neutral articles.

The frequency of the words ‘Oilsands’, ‘Environment’, and ‘Water’ that were found in the articles also suggests that very little coverage of the oil sands focuses on issues such as oil production’s impact on the environment or any effects that production has on polluting clean drinking water. Many stories chose to not focus on these issues

at all, however three stories did have a focus on either environmental problems or issues surrounding water. Articles titled “Alta. oilsands pond sludge oozes into bush”, “Federal lab not testing for oilsands chemicals”, and “Oilsands water monitoring to change” were clearly negative reports on the environmental challenges that oil producers face in the oil sands and contained relatively high frequencies of the words ‘Environment’ or ‘Water’.

When examining which group received the most frequent amount of first and last quotes in the articles, the CBC.ca tends to utilize quotes from governmental organizations or politicians more than any other group. However what is interesting is who is not given representation in these oil sands-related stories. Environmental organizations, citizens, and scientists/experts are rarely given the first or last words. Oil companies received the first word 9 out of 48 times, however environmental organizations were given the last word 9 out of 48 times as well. Since many of the articles on the CBC.ca give the first and last word to a governmental organization or politician, the oil sands may come across as largely a political issue and not an environmental issue, for example. In considering all of these factors, it was found that the CBC.ca reports on oil sands-related news in a negative-to-neutral context.

### **Nationalpost.com**

After examining the 63 articles that were found on Nationalpost.com, it was found that nearly 2/3 of all headlines regarding the oil sands contained neutral undertones and words. There were a total of 16 headlines that were deemed to be negative coverage of the oil sands, while five of the headlines contained positive

phrasing. Similar to the CBC.ca, the Nationalpost.com featured a low amount of positive-sounding headlines, which is an indication that the Nationalpost.com tends to write headlines in a largely neutral to slightly negative style.

There were two positive headlines that were particularly interesting to this study. The headlines, titled “Ducks fly at their own risk” and “Comparison of oil-sands tailings to yoghurt deemed not misleading” are written about the numerous bird and duck deaths caused by toxic pools of various chemicals known as ‘tailings ponds’. These two headlines take on a largely pro-oil sands stance, where oil companies continually spread a message that tailings ponds are not dangerous to wildlife such as birds and ducks. However, since these types of positive headlines were very limited on the Nationalpost.com, they counteract the total number of negative headlines and have a small effect on the overall large amount of neutral headlines that are found on the website.

In terms of the contexts of each article, the results are similar to the headlines in that the majority of articles are written in a way that reads as a neutral message. A total of 36 articles were found to be neutral stories on the oil sands, however 10 of the stories were written in a negative context, while 17 articles contained positive messaging of the sands. The number of positive stories that were written about the oil sands means that the Nationalpost.com has a tendency to favour positive stories over negative ones. While the majority of the articles are written in a neutral style, there are still a large number of positive-sounding articles in which readers may take notice. Many of the positive articles focused on accomplishments by oil companies, and actions

or responses taken by governments to help maintain the oil sands as a viable source of Canada's energy. Articles titled "Analysis: Court victory helps push pipeline ahead", "Canada and the U.S.: Partners in energy security", and "Climate action no threat to oil sands, Ottawa told", for example, read as positive stories.

The measurement of the frequency of the words 'Oilsands', 'Environment', and 'Water' that were found in the 63 articles indicates that there was a very small amount of attention given to issues of the oil sands polluting the environment and clean water. Most of the stories did not give any focus to these issues whatsoever, however four stories did give some attention to issues of oil sands-related pollution of the air and water. These articles, titled "Poster child for oil sands", "What the #!%\*?: Oil sands report", "Ottawa told to establish oil sands monitor", and "The oil sands: Sorting fact from fiction" were written in a negative context and provide some background information on environmental problems that oil companies face in the sands. The high frequency of the words 'Environment' and 'Water' in these stories is an indication that Nationalpost.com is attempting to write environmental stories in a style that contains different viewpoints and opinions.

Looking at which group received the most frequent amount of first and last words in the articles, it is clear that Nationalpost.com tends to give the first and last quotes to spokespeople from oil companies and members from the government, such as politicians. Individuals from these groups were given the first quote 41 out of 63 times, and were given the last quote 36 out of 63 times. These results signify that individuals who represent other groups that have different viewpoints are barely receiving any

noticeable coverage in these articles. In considering all of the findings, it was found that Nationalpost.com reports on oil sands news in a neutral-to-positive context.

### **TheGlobeandMail.com**

When examining the headlines of the articles that were found on TheGlobeandMail.com, it was found that 29/61 of all headlines contained neutral undertones towards the oil sands. This left a total of 23 negative headlines, with the remaining 9 headlines containing positive undertones. Similar to the CBC.ca and the Nationalpost.com, TheGlobeandMail.com's relatively small amount of positive headlines indicates that news stories about the oil sands contain headlines that are written in a neutral to negative style and context.

There were four headlines that focused on the oil sands' affect on wildlife, and these were particularly interesting to this study. The headlines, titled "Syncrude to pay \$3M for duck deaths", "Birds again land at Syncrude tailings pond", "Syncrude blames freezing rain for duck deaths at tailings pond", and "Toxic Syncrude tailings pond kills hundreds more ducks", are similar to the coverage of the bird and duck deaths that were found on the Nationalpost.com. While the Nationalpost.com's headlines took on a critical stance of the sands, TheGlobeandMail.com's and the CBC.ca's headlines were far more critical on tailings ponds, and on Syncrude, an oil company which owns the ponds. The headlines from TheGlobeandMail.com and the CBC.ca included the name of the oil company, whereas the Nationalpost.com headlines did not associate Syncrude with the bird and duck deaths. These particular headlines written about oil sands-related wildlife



deaths indicate that coverage of these incidents greatly varies between different Canadian media.

The contexts that the articles were written in from TheGlobeandMail.com were very similar to the results from the Nationalpost.com, in that the majority of the articles were written in a neutral context. A total of 36 articles were found to be neutral, with 19 stories measured as negative, and a remaining 6 articles measured as positive. The greater amount of negative coverage indicates that TheGlobeandMail.com tends to cover negative stories about the oil sands over positive stories. Similar to the Nationalpost.com, the positive coverage focused on accomplishments by oil companies in the sands. Two of the positive stories, titled “Athabasca sees potential for major oil find” and “In the oil patch, Alberta hopes to ride the next wave of prosperity”, for example, place the oil sands into a context that deems them as a profitable and essential source of energy.

Measurements of the words ‘Oilsands’, ‘Environment’, and ‘Water’ indicate that there was little coverage of the oil sands’ affect on the environment and water. Similar to the Nationalpost.com, most of the stories did not give any focus to these pressing issues. However three articles, titled “Canada not ready for shale gas boom”, “Governments vow to overhaul environmental monitoring of oil sands development”, and “The Big Pipe: Enbridge’s plan to connect the oilsands and China divides locals”, did discuss issues of the environment and water, and were critical of actions that are being taken to curb environmental damage that results from production of oil in the sands. It

is clear that TheGlobeandMail.com is providing readers with coverage of the oil sands and its affects on our environment, yet is this coverage enough?

In examining which group received the most frequent amount of first and last quotes in stories about the oil sands, it was found that TheGlobeandMail.com has a tendency to give the first and last words to individuals that represent oil companies, and the government. Individuals from these groups were given the first word 39 out of 61 times, and were given the last word in 30 out of 61 articles. Similar to the CBC.ca and the Nationalpost.com, many groups that may have opposing viewpoints are not given any noticeable coverage in oil sands news stories. Environmental organizations were given the first word only one time, and citizens were not quoted at all. In considering all of the findings from TheGlobeandMail.com, it was determined that the news organization reports on oil sands news in a neutral-to-negative style and context.

### Framing Negativity

#### **CBC.ca**

While the news media tend to see negativity as newsworthy and aim to emphasize the problematic in their coverage, it is important to discuss who is being portrayed as the target of negativity and how this negativity is being framed. This paper has examined news coverage of the oil sands in a quantitative style, however this section will examine the news coverage in a qualitative approach that will shed light on which groups specifically are targets of negativity.

The CBC.ca has a tendency to target oil corporations and oil sands businesses as negative in their coverage. There are a number of stories that were particularly interesting to this study, and demonstrate the CBC.ca's inclination to place causal blame on oil corporations for the oil sands' destruction of the surrounding environment and wildlife. While these stories place blame on oil companies and the problems that are caused by production in the sands, the negativity is framed in a way that also places blame on governments for their poor regulation of oil sands development and for the lack of holding oil companies responsible for the damage that is caused.

This is best exemplified in stories which focus on the oil sands' harm on the environment, and when wildlife becomes affected by oil company operations. Articles titled, "Oilsands not charged enough for cleanup: NDP", "Water expert quits Alberta oilsands panel", "Suncor fined for dumping oilsands effluent", and "Federal lab not testing for oilsands chemicals" place blame on governments for their poor regulation of the sands. These stories focus on oil companies and their harm on the environment; however, much of the blame is placed on improper government regulation. Articles titled "Syncrude to pay \$3M penalty for duck deaths", "Oilsands tailings ponds kill more ducks", "Dead ducks found at Kearl oilsands site", and "Sierra Club, CAPP both claim victory in ad ruling" place direct blame on oil companies or organizations such as Syncrude and CAPP for problems that are caused by their development in the sands. It was found that the CBC.ca targets oil companies in their negative coverage, yet also blames governments for their irresponsible oversight of oil sands development.

## **Nationalpost.com**

The Nationalpost.com was most critical on governments and government regulation of the oil sands in their coverage, which was expected since the newspaper has a tendency to be business and corporate-friendly. What is slightly unusual is the Nationalpost.com's inclination to place blame on environmentalists and activist groups for being unrealistic in their goals or solutions to various oil sands problems such as protecting clean drinking water and preventing bird and duck deaths in tailings ponds. This remedial blame that is occasionally placed on these groups is problematic in that it causes one side of the story to be misconstrued or missing from the coverage. This negativity is framed in a style that allows for little credit to be given to environmental and activist groups who help ensure that oil corporations are held responsible for problems or accidents that are associated with the sands.

This type of coverage is best illustrated in stories that emphasize environmental harm caused by the oil sands, and where environmental and activist groups are quoted. Articles titled, "Comparison of oil-sands tailings to yoghurt deemed not misleading", "Yoghurt fuels oil-sands war", "Climate action no threat to oil sands, Ottawa told", "U.S. environmental groups push delay on oil sands pipeline", and "Ottawa told to establish oil sands monitor" place blame on environmental and activist groups such as The Pembina Institute, and Environmental Defence, and are critical of their actions against oil corporations and oil sands regulation. While the Nationalpost.com places blame on activist groups, they also place blame on governments in these articles for being too harsh on oil companies which operate in the sands. It was found that the

Nationalpost.com has a tendency to target both environmental and activist groups who fight for more regulation of the sands, and on governments for interfering with oil companies and oil sands development.

### **TheGlobeandMail.com**

Similar to the CBC.ca, TheGlobeandMail.com has a tendency to associate negativity with oil corporations and governments in their coverage of the sands. While it was expected that the newspaper would be more critical of oil corporations in their coverage, it was not expected that their articles would be critical of actions taken by governments as well. Comparable to the CBC.ca, the newspaper has a tendency to place causal blame on oil companies for environmental problems or damage that is caused by their presence in the oil sands. This negativity is framed in a style that blames corporations for being irresponsible and negligent, yet also places blame on governments for poor regulation of oil sands development.

TheGlobeandMail.com is similar to the CBC.ca in that blame is placed on corporations directly in the headline. While this was not the case with the Nationalpost.com, it places causal blame directly on the corporation before the reader begins interpreting the article. This was the case with a number of articles, including “Syncrude blames freezing rain for duck deaths at tailings pond”, “Toxic Syncrude tailings pond kills hundreds more ducks”, “The Big Pipe: Enbridge’s plan to connect the oilsands and China divides locals”, and “Total’s high friends in low places”, which feature the name of the corporation and associate it with a negative story. There were, however, other articles that placed direct blame on corporations but did not mention a

name in the headline, such as “Oil sands companies look to clean up their image”, and “Ottawa kept in dark on abnormal fish found in oil-sands rivers”. These stories focus on corporations and problems that are associated with their production in the sands, however causal blame is placed on governments as well.

Comparable to the CBC.ca, TheGlobeandMail.com also criticizes and places direct blame on governments for their poor regulation of the oil sands and for not holding corporations responsible for problems that arise. Similar to placing blame on corporations, the newspaper has a tendency to place blame directly in their headlines. Articles such as “Its same old, same old on climate change after Prentice”, “Ottawa, Alberta blamed for lax oil-sands oversight”, “Minister vows not to let emissions rules hamper oil-sands investment”, and “Harper’s embrace of ‘ethical’ oil sands reignites ‘dirty’ arguments” focus on poor government regulation and are critical of particular government leaders or groups. TheGlobeandMail.com’s coverage of the oil sands was found to be the most critical out of the three newspapers studied as the articles place direct causal blame on both oil corporations and governments, including directly in the headline.

### Missing Frames

At one time a localized issue, climate change has now become a globalized, world problem that has severe affects on the environment, nature, and human life. While it has been proven time and time again that climate change is a definite problem, it is unclear in Canadian news media how the oil sands are contributing to global

warming. The news media examined in this study were found to favour groups and individuals, such as oil company spokespeople and representatives from the government, who are in the business of defending the oil sands and oil production. This means that different perspectives and news frames are missing from the big environmental picture. While this study examined what can be *found* in Canadian news stories about the sands, it is necessary to discuss what is *missing* from the coverage, and why certain news frames are left out.

After examining news stories from the three Canadian news outlets, it became evident that there is very little news coverage on actual environmental damage that is being caused by the oil sands and large oil companies. The oil sands are being covered in a news frame that does not reflect the numerous environment, health, and wildlife problems that are occurring. In the media examined in this study, it is unclear how the oil sands are harmful and problematic for Canadians, and the contentiousness of this issue is not noticeable in news coverage. Oil companies are rarely held accountable in media coverage for the problems that they cause, and this irresponsibility by Canadian news media to not report on oil sands issues and hold oil companies and executives responsible means that newsreaders are not being given the entire story.

This however is also a reflection of the Canadian government, as they continue to make decisions that benefit oil companies and the oil sands and never seem to take responsibility for choices that are made. Oil companies and government representatives must be held responsible in Canadian news media for the problems that stem from the oil sands, and since these frames are not being covered, newsreaders

continue to read stories that do not reflect the controversial issue that the sands have become. However these are not the only frames that are being left out of the overall news picture. Canadian news media continue to leave out the environmental news frame when covering oil sands-related stories. There are two frames in particular that are missing in news coverage: voices from environmental and activist groups, and voices from scientists and experts that understand the environmental problems that stem from the sands. The CBC.ca, the Nationalpost.com, and TheGlobeandMail.com included voices and opinions from these groups very infrequently in their coverage.

Environmental and activist groups are the enemy of every oil company that operates in the sands. These groups cause companies to reexamine their priorities by bringing oil sands issues to the public's attention. Demonstrations in front of company office buildings and illegally trespassing and occupying oil production plants in Northern Alberta are common tactics that environmental groups employ. This however, is not covered in Canadian news media, and newsreaders are not being given the complete environmental story. Spokespeople from environmental and activist organizations are rarely given an opportunity to express their opinions on the issues that are taking place in the oil sands, and this is problematic for newsreaders that are making sense of the information being presented to them.

Missing voices from scientists and experts who study the environment and can explain the numerous problems that are associated with the oil sands are also not given a fair amount of coverage in Canadian news media. Due to the structure of news organizations, journalists who write oil sands news stories may not fully understand the



environmental problems and risks that are caused by the sands. Environmental issues are not simple to explain and understand, and when news stories heavily rely on voices from oil companies and the government, only one side of the story is being given to readers. This is problematic, as spokespeople do not discuss controversial issues as the companies they represent are in the business of producing oil, which they understand has harmful affects on the environment.

### Harm to Humans

However it is not only environmental and scientist/expert frames and voices that are missing from the coverage. Part of what makes the oil sands such a controversial source of energy is that many toxic chemicals and pollutants are needed to produce and refine the oil, and that there are residential and aboriginal communities that are situated near the oil sands. The problem is that there is extremely little news coverage of these health issues and the harming affects that the oil sands may have on humans.

Coverage of the oil sands' affects on humans was missing from all three of the news media sources that were examined in this study. On December 15<sup>th</sup> 2010, the CBC.ca published an article titled, "Oilsands not boosting cancer levels: scientists", which detailed a study conducted by the Royal Society of Canada. The study found that there was "no credible evidence" that the oil sands were causing cancer levels to rise in communities that live downstream of the sands, and that the Athabasca River is not currently vulnerable to being contaminated by oil companies. The study did find,

however, that there were significant risks associated with development of the oil sands that are not being examined by either the provincial or federal governments.

While the article does provide some insight into the ‘harm to humans’ issue, most of the blame is put on governments, and not the actual oil companies who are putting individuals and communities in potential danger. Voices from individuals or groups who live in these communities were also missing from this article, giving no voice to the communities who are actually seeing harmful affects from the oil sands. While the CBC did report on the oil sands’ potential harm to humans, this article was the only one that examined this issue during the six-month period. The CBC.ca must report on issues relating to health more frequently in order to provide readers with a clear understanding of health problems that are potentially caused or put in danger by the oil sands.

Coverage of health-related issues was also missing on both the Nationalpost.com and TheGlobeandMail.com. The Nationalpost.com ran two stories titled, “Family challenges TransCanada pipe route”, and “Wooing the aboriginals” that focused on the oil sands’ potential harm to humans and were particularly interesting to this study. The first article focused on an Oklahoma family who launched a lawsuit against Canadian oil pipeline company TransCanada, arguing that the pipeline was not in the national interest. The second article, which focused on disputed land claims between oil companies and aboriginal communities, provides readers with insight on how these communities are being affected by the powerful companies that operate in the sands. The article mentions that aboriginal communities were not equitably compensated for

their land, and that oil companies are not “building classroom’s, developing training processes, ensuring the people from there have an ability to take up those...jobs”.

While the articles are being somewhat critical on decisions made by oil producers and government regulators, the coverage is again very limited for a six-month period.

This trend of limited coverage is further seen in TheGlobeandMail.com’s reports of the oil sands’ harm to residential and aboriginal communities. On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011, TheGlobeandMail.com published an article titled “Professor quits oil-sands panel over lack of aboriginal representation”, which detailed a water policy expert’s decision to quit an oil sands panel over confidentiality rules that would prevent her from speaking to aboriginal communities and groups. While the article is critical of the panel and Canada’s current Environment Minister and provides insight into the relationship between aboriginal communities, oil companies, and governments, the story only accounted for 1.6% of TheGlobeandMail.com’s oil sands coverage. These issues are not receiving enough coverage in Canadian media, and all three of the news sources examined in this study should aim to cover health-related issues in a style that is critical of the industry and the governments who make decisions that affect residential and aboriginal communities.

### Harm to Wildlife

While health related issues that stem from the oil sands are seldom covered in the Canadian news media examined in this study, stories on the sands’ affects on nature and wildlife are also missing from the coverage. The oil sands are located in

Northeastern Alberta, and surround the town of Fort McMurray, which is situated near the Peace River and Cold Lake. There are many species of animals, fish, and birds that are affected by production in the oil sands, however stories on this harm that is caused to wildlife is absent in media coverage of the sands.

During the data-gathering phase of this study, several hundred birds and ducks died after landing in a toxic pool of various chemicals known as a tailings pond that was owned by Syncrude. The event received plenty of coverage, with the CBC.ca publishing five articles, the Nationalpost.com writing three stories, and TheGlobeandMail.com publishing four news stories. While the Nationalpost.com had the least amount of coverage of the incident, all news sources were critical of tailings ponds and held Syncrude responsible for the deaths. Syncrude blamed freezing rain for the bird and duck deaths instead of accepting responsibility, but the company's statements were not heavily mentioned in the articles.

Coverage of Syncrude's tailings pond incident is a prime example of how the oil sands should be covered in Canadian news media. The articles demonstrated how controversial the oil sands have become, and it is problematic that the three news media sources examined in this study are not as critical of the oil sands and the decisions that are made which place real and potential harm on wildlife that live in the region. Besides the coverage of the tailings pond incident, only two other articles were published that focused on the oil sands' harmful affects on wildlife. On November 29<sup>th</sup> 2010, the CBC.ca published an article titled, "Hunters worry wildlife entering tailings pond", and TheGlobeandMail.com ran an article on December 17<sup>th</sup> 2010, titled "Ottawa

kept in dark on abnormal fish found in oil-sands rivers". These two articles were the only coverage of harm that is being caused to wildlife, besides the bird and duck deaths, within the six-month period of study. It is interesting to note that the two articles also framed the story around the oil sands' impact on aboriginal communities that depend on fishing and clean drinking water. The three news sources that have been studied must include more stories of the oil sands' harmful affects on wildlife in their coverage if they aim to cover the sands in a style that is balanced, complete, and reflects the true debated image of the oil sands.

## Conclusion

The oil sands' impact on the environment, humans, and wildlife is becoming a problematic issue for Canada. With uncertainties over the amount of oil remaining in the ground that is suitable for production, the sands will only become a larger issue for consumers, oil companies, environmental groups and governments as they attempt to exploit the sands to feed our growing demands for energy. As the oil sands become a larger threat to the environment and human health, news coverage of the sands will likely increase across many different mediums. One can read news stories of the sands and find out basic information, but it is what is missing from the news coverage and what newsreaders are not reading that is problematic.

This study has found that the CBC.ca, the Nationalpost.com, and TheGlobeandMail.com do not report on the oil sands in a style that gives readers the complete story on what is actually occurring in the sands. While the three news sources

were somewhat neutral in their coverage, they did not cover stories that may be controversial or which may cause debate. The articles were also not critical of oil companies who place harm on the environment and nearby communities that are affected by production. The journalists and editors who set the standard for how the sands should be covered should reevaluate the trend of oil sands-related issues not receiving a fair amount of coverage in Canadian news media. The contentiousness of the issue is not noticeable in news media coverage, and the media examined in this study should report on the oil sands in a style that gives readers the complete and controversial picture of what is taking place in Northeastern Alberta.

## Appendix A

### **CBC.ca Search Results October 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 – March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011**

1. Oilsands water concerns focus of panel  
By CBC News  
Friday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
2. Halt oilsands production: climate expert  
By CBC News  
Tuesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010
3. Alberta oilsands water panel named  
By CBC News  
Thursday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010
4. Shell drops plans for upgrader expansion  
By The Canadian Press  
Friday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010
5. 'Fundraising agendas' won't shape oilsands plan: PM  
By CBC News  
Friday October 8<sup>th</sup> 2010
6. A tale of two panels  
By CBC News  
Friday October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
7. Regulate oilsands development, report urges  
By CBC News  
Wednesday October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010
8. Clinton tackled for oilsands comments  
By The Associated Press  
Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
9. Syncrude to pay \$3M penalty for duck deaths  
By CBC News  
Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
10. Ducks land on Syncrude tailings pond, again  
By CBC News  
Tuesday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010
11. Oilsands tailings ponds kill more ducks  
By CBC News  
Wednesday October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010
12. Tailings ponds' duck death toll rises  
By CBC News  
Wednesday October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010

13. Dead ducks found at Kearn oilsands site  
By CBC News  
Friday October 29<sup>th</sup> 2010
14. EU delegates to visit oilsands  
By The Canadian Press  
Monday November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
15. European politicians praise oilsands  
By CBC News  
Wednesday November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010
16. Alta. oilsands pond sludge oozes into bush  
By CBC News  
Monday November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
17. Alta. tailings pond to get federal inspection  
By CBC News  
Monday November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
18. Tailings pond plans not part of public hearing  
By CBC News  
Wednesday November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010
19. Alta. tailings pond OK'd by federal inspectors  
By CBC News  
Wednesday November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010
20. Feds, Alberta fight foreign climate laws: report  
By CBC News  
Monday November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
21. Hunters worry wildlife entering tailings pond  
By CBC News  
Monday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010
22. Husky approves new oilsands project  
By CBC News  
Monday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010
23. Sierra Club, CAPP both claim victory in ad ruling  
By CBC News  
Tuesday November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010
24. Oil industry condemns Greenpeace satire  
By CBC News  
Saturday December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010
25. Ad mocks Alta. oilsands at UN climate meeting  
By CBC News  
Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010



26. Federal lab not testing for oilsands chemicals  
By CBC News  
Tuesday December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010
27. Oilsands not boosting cancer levels: scientists  
By The Canadian Press  
Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
28. Oilsands report welcomed by Alta. minister  
By CBC News  
Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
29. Oilsands water monitoring to change  
By CBC News  
Monday December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010
30. Oilsands panel recommends critical fixes  
By CBC News  
Tuesday December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
31. Suncor fined for dumping oilsands effluent  
By The Canadian Press  
Wednesday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
32. Prentice was ready to curb oilsands: WikiLeaks  
By CBC News  
Wednesday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
33. Oilsands to be 2011 target: enviro groups  
By The Canadian Press  
Tuesday December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010
34. N.S. job seekers look to Alberta oilsands  
By CBC News  
Thursday December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010
35. Explosion, fire at Alberta oilsands site  
By CBC News  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
36. The Horizon Oil Sands site  
By CBC News  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
37. Oilsands blast ignored internationally  
By CBC News  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
38. Alberta oilsands explosion probed  
By CBC News  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

39. Oilsands blast survivor thankful to be alive  
By CBC News  
Monday January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011
40. Investigators to interview blast victim  
By CBC News  
Tuesday January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011
41. Oilsands mine approval condemned  
By CBC News  
Friday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011
42. Oilsands water monitoring inadequate: panel  
By The Canadian Press  
Monday January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011
43. CNRL allowed back on coker blast site  
By The Canadian Press  
Tuesday February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011
44. Water expert quits Alberta oilsands panel  
By The Canadian Press  
Thursday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011
45. Sour gas leak in Alberta under investigation  
By CBC News  
Wednesday February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011
46. Sask. professor named to oilsands panel  
By The Canadian Press  
Thursday February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011
47. Damaged Alta. oilsands plant to resume production  
By CBC News  
Tuesday February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011
48. Oilsands not charged enough for cleanup: NDP  
By CBC News  
Monday February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## Appendix B

### **Nationalpost.com Search Results October 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 – March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011**

1. B.C. municipalities oppose Enbridge pipeline  
By Carrie Tait  
Friday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
2. Total ready to meet with Fort Hills partners  
By Scott Haggett  
Friday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
3. The oil sands win a convert  
By National Post  
Friday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
4. Poster child for oil sands  
By National Post  
Monday October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010
5. Oil sands junior says takeover avoidable  
By Carrie Tait  
Tuesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010
6. Stop pursuing 'fool's gold' in the oilsands, says NASA scientist  
By Sheila Pratt  
Tuesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010
7. Shell cancels plans to build second upgrader  
By Carrie Tait  
Friday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010
8. Alberta Finance Minister Ted Morton on the oil sands  
By Mary Vallis  
Thursday October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010
9. U.S. cash vs. oil sands  
By Vivian Krause  
Friday October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
10. Oil sands mean money, Morton insists  
By Scott Stinson  
Friday October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
11. Federal government failing to meet legal obligations regarding oil sands: report  
By National Post  
Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
12. Judge finds Syncrude \$3.2M over duck deaths  
By National Post  
Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

13. Analysis: Court victory helps push pipeline ahead  
By Kevin Liben  
Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
14. Syncrude mired in another tailings pond incident  
By National Post  
Wednesday October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010
15. Ducks fly at their own risk  
By Scott Stinson  
Thursday October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010
16. Stop the studies, start the cleanup  
By Don Martin  
Friday October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010
17. Operational woes hit Canada oil sands producers  
By Jeffrey Jones  
Monday November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
18. Harper cited as obstacle to ending fossil fuel subsidies  
By National Post  
Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010
19. Canada and the U.S.: Partners in energy security  
By National Post  
Monday November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
20. Ottawa targets oil-sands opponents  
By Mike De Souza  
Monday November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
21. Thailand makes first buy in oil sands  
By National Post  
Tuesday November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010
22. Korea fund buys stake in Canada oil sands developer  
By Scott Haggett  
Wednesday November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010
23. Ontario raises the bar for clean energy  
By Matt Hartley  
Wednesday November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010
24. Asian investments in Canada oil sands  
By Scott Haggett and Jeffrey Jones  
Wednesday November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010
25. China said ready for big oil sands move  
By National Post  
Saturday November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010

26. Comparison of oil-sands tailings to yoghurt deemed not misleading  
By Carrie Tait  
Wednesday December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
27. Yoghurt fuels oil-sands war  
By Kevin Libin  
Thursday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
28. Asia muscles into Canada oil sands  
By Jeffrey Jones  
Thursday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
29. Climate action no threat to oil sands, Ottawa told  
By National Post  
Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010
30. Oil sands firms team up on tailings study  
By National Post  
Monday December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010
31. Reclamation, regulation lag in the oil sands: study  
By Jeffrey Jones  
Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
32. What the #!%\*?: Oil sands report  
By Tamsin McMahon  
Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
33. Ottawa told to establish oil sands monitor  
By Paul Vieira and Carrie Tait  
Tuesday December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
34. Suncor slapped with \$200,000 fine over waste water spill  
By Dan Healing  
Wednesday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
35. Tories slow fixing 'dirty oil': Prentice  
By Norma Greenaway  
Thursday December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010
36. Boosting the oil sands  
By National Post  
Monday January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011
37. Injuries reported at northern Alberta oil sands fire  
By Ryan Cormier and Jana G. Pruden  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
38. Three hurt in Alberta oil-sands blaze  
By Postmedia News  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011

39. Three injured as massive fire closes oil-sands plant  
By Ryan Cormier and Jana G. Pruden  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
40. Harper applauds job creation, defends oil sands  
By Louise Egan  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
41. More questions than answers after CNQ's Horizon oil sands fire  
By Jonathan Ratner  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
42. Four injured at northern Alberta oil sands fire  
By Ryan Cormier and Jana G. Pruden  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
43. Horizon fire damage less than feared  
By Dan Healing  
Monday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011
44. Safety the new albatross for oil sector  
By Claudia Cattaneo  
Tuesday January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011
45. Optimism over upgrader restart  
By Dan Healing  
Tuesday January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011
46. Spinning Alberta's oil sands disaster  
By Helene Walsh  
Saturday January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011
47. How Shale gas can trump oil sands  
By Carrie Tait  
Saturday January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011
48. Family challenges TransCanada pipe route  
By Jeffrey Jones  
Tuesday January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011
49. Canada oil sands may benefit from BP spill: Rothschild  
By Pav Jordan  
Wednesday January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011
50. Western Business Roundup: Oil sands CO2 emissions decline; ConocoPhillips raises oil sand reserves  
By Claudia Cattaneo  
Tuesday January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011
51. Challenge to reach emission goal  
By John Ivison  
Wednesday January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011

52. Statoil's Canadian unit produces first oil from oil sands project  
By Claudia Cattaneo  
Thursday January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011
53. Former TransCanada CEO to lead oil sands environmental monitoring panel  
By Reuters  
Friday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011
54. Egypt crisis opens door for oil sands  
By John Ivison  
Thursday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011
55. Proposed Canadian oil sands pipeline stirs U.S. debate  
By Sheldon Alberts  
Sunday February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
56. Keystone pipeline has Washington buzzing  
By Sheldon Alberts  
Monday February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
57. Wooing the aboriginals  
By Claudia Cattaneo  
Friday February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011
58. Canadian Natural, partner to process Alberta's oil  
By Scott Haggett and Jeffrey Jones  
Tuesday February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011
59. U.S. environmental groups push delay on oil sands pipeline  
By Sheldon Alberts  
Wednesday February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011
60. EU to take stand on oil sands: sources  
By Pete Harrison and Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck  
Wednesday February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011
61. Chaos in Arab world could be bonanza for oil sands  
By Sheldon Alberts  
Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011
62. First Nation chief stands her ground for water and fish  
By Claudia Cattaneo  
Friday February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011
63. The oil sands: Sorting fact from fiction  
By Todd Hirsch  
Monday February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## Appendix C

### **TheGlobeandMail.com Search Results October 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 – March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011**

1. Canada's new energy play: The old oil fields  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Friday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
2. SilverBirch new kid on the oil sands block  
By The Globe and Mail  
Monday October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010
3. Oil sands should be left in the ground: NASA scientist  
By Bob Weber and Sylvia Strojek  
Tuesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010
4. How to fill a pipeline  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Tuesday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010
5. We have to run out of oil we can afford to burn  
By Jeff Rubin  
Wednesday October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010
6. Canada not ready for shale gas boom  
By Shawn McCarthy  
Thursday October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010
7. An oil sands eco-saviour may also be a profit machine  
By Fabrice Taylor  
Thursday October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010
8. Athabasca Oil Sands board chairman buys big  
By Ted Dixon  
Friday October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
9. Can Canada afford the oil sands?  
By Jeff Rubin  
Wednesday October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010
10. 'Dirty oil' worry takes back seat to U.S. oil thirst  
By David Ebner  
Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
11. Syncrude to pay \$3M for duck deaths  
By Josh Wingrove  
Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
12. Birds again land at Syncrude tailings pond  
By Patrick White  
Tuesday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010



13. Syncrude blames freezing rain for duck deaths at tailings pond  
By Patrick White  
Tuesday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010
14. Toxic Syncrude tailings pond kills hundreds more ducks  
By Patrick White  
Tuesday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010
15. Oil sands giants post big profits  
By David Ebner  
Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010
16. Oil sands companies look to clean up their image  
By Simon Hought  
Thursday November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010
17. It's same old, same old on climate change after Prentice  
By Jeffrey Simpson  
Wednesday November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010
18. Athabasca sees potential for major oil find  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Friday November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010
19. Thai company makes \$2.28-billion foray into oil sands  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Monday November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
20. Thai purchase a new vote of confidence in oil sands  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Tuesday November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010
21. Oil patch yogurt ad not misleading, council says  
By The Globe and Mail  
Tuesday November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010
22. Alberta group calls for Avon boycott  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Wednesday December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010
23. Asian buyers increasingly eye the oil sands  
By Jeffrey Jones  
Thursday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
24. Canadian Oil Sands gets booed  
By David Berman  
Friday December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010
25. Labour crunch looms in oil sands  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Friday December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

26. Oil sands players join forces on tailings cleanup  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010
27. Beneath the surface of Canadian Oil Sands cost troubles, value lurks  
By Fabrice Taylor  
Wednesday December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010
28. Oil patch pricing carbon tariffs into new projects  
By Shawn McCarthy  
Wednesday December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010
29. Oil companies finalize pact to share tailings research  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Monday December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010
30. Oil-sands report criticizes all stakeholders  
By Josh Wingrove  
Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010
31. Ottawa kept in dark on abnormal fish found in oil-sands rivers  
By Josh Wingrove  
Friday December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010
32. Ottawa, Alberta blamed for lax oil-sands oversight  
By Shawn McCarthy  
Tuesday December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
33. Governments vow to overhaul environmental monitoring of oil sands development  
By Shawn McCarthy  
Tuesday December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010
34. Former environment minister threatened to impose new rules on oil sands  
By Shawn McCarthy  
Wednesday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010
35. Oil sands firms look at outsourcing  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Sunday December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010
36. The Big Pipe: Enbridge's plan to connect the oilsands and China divides locals  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Monday January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011
37. Minister vows not to let emissions rules hamper oil-sands investment  
By Steven Chase  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
38. Fire breaks out at Alberta oil sands mine  
By The Globe and Mail  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011

39. Production halted at Alberta oil sands mine after fire breaks out  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
40. Ezra Levant and the image makeover of the oil sands  
By Steven Chase  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
41. Peter Kent's green agenda: Clean up oil sands' dirty reputation  
By Steven Chase  
Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011
42. Harper's embrace of 'ethical' oil sands reignites 'dirty' arguments  
By Steven Chase  
Friday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
43. If shale gas is a game changer, why do producers seek oil?  
By Jeff Rubin  
Wednesday January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011
44. Encana takes a new look at oil  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Friday January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011
45. Meet Harper's oil-sands muse  
By Jane Taber  
Friday January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011
46. Is Suncor's merger with Petro-Canada about to pay off?  
By Larry Macdonald  
Monday January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011
47. How sustainable is growth with triple-digit oil?  
By Jeff Rubin  
Wednesday January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011
48. The face of the oil sands bears his scars proudly  
By Gordon Pitts  
Wednesday January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011
49. Does Peter Kent even care about emissions?  
By Jeffrey Simpson  
Wednesday January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011
50. Total's high friends in low places  
By Christopher Helman  
Thursday January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011
51. CBC oil-sands doc needs to wade deeper  
By John Doyle  
Thursday January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011

52. Tougher rules needed to meet greenhouse gas emissions target, Kent warns  
By Shawn McCarthy and Trevor Melanson  
Friday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011
53. Professor quits oil-sands panel over lack of aboriginal representation  
By Josh Wingrove  
Wednesday February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011
54. Energy regulator okays Alberta's ninth open-pit oil sands mine  
By The Globe and Mail  
Thursday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011
55. A little town on the oil sands prepares for \$100 oil and a new boom  
By The Globe and Mail  
Friday February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011
56. Why oil (not cars) drives the economy  
By Barrie McKenna  
Monday February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011
57. CNRL preparing to resume oil sands production after fire  
By Nathan Vanderklippe  
Monday February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011
58. Environmentalists step up attacks on oil sands pipelines  
By Shawn McCarthy  
Wednesday February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011
59. Oil sands row threatening to spoil Canada-EU trade deal  
By The Globe and Mail  
Monday February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011
60. Alberta budget pins hopes on oil-sands boom  
By Josh Wingrove  
Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011
61. In the oil patch, Alberta hopes to ride the next wave of prosperity  
By Josh Wingrove  
Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## Works Cited

- Baron, D.P. "Persistent media bias." *Journal of Public Economics* 90 (2006): 1-36.
- Boykoff, M.T. "We Speak for the Trees: Media Reporting on the Environment." *The Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 34 (2009): 431-57.
- Brooks, R., and Gadher, D. "BBC Report Damns Its 'culture of Bias'." *The Sunday Times*. Times Newspapers Ltd, 17 June 2007. 12 Feb. 2011.  
<<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article1942948.ece>>.
- Christen, C. T., and Huberty, K. E. "Media Reacher, Media Influence? The Effects of Local, National, and Internet News on Public Opinion Inferences." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84.2 (2007): 315-34.
- Daley, P., and O'Neill, D. "Sad Is Too Mild a Word: Press Coverage of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill." *Journal of Communication* 41.4 (1991): 42-57.
- Detenber, B., Chew P., Quek P., Tan D., and Tay, P.L. "The Nature of Reach and Perceptions of Media Bias in an Online Context." *Mass Communication Division of the International Communication Association* (2008): 1-38.
- Dispensa, J. M., and Brulle, R. J. "Media's Social Construction of Environmental issues: Focus on Global Warming - A Comparative Study." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 23.10 (2003): 74-105.
- Entman, R. M. "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power." *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007): 163-173.
- Erfle, S., and McMillan, H. "Determinants of Network News Coverage Of the Oil Industry During the Late 1970s." *Journalism Quarterly* 66.1 (1989): 121-128.
- Friedman, S. "And the Beat Goes On: The Third Decade of Environmental Journalism." In Senecaah, S; Depoe, S; Neuzil, M; and Walker, G, *The Environmental Communication Yearbook, vol 1* (2004): 187-200.
- Gavin, N. T. "Addressing Climate Change: a Media Perspective." *Environmental Politics* 18.5 (2009): 765-80.
- Gentzkow, M., and Shapiro, J.M. "Media Bias and Reputation." *Journal of Political Economy* 114.2 (2006): 280-316.
- Hansen, A. "Media and Environmental Change." *Media Development* 2 (2009): 1-8.

- Kline, S. "National Perspective and News Bias: A Comparison of National News Broadcasts." *Canadian Journal of Communication* (1980): 47-70.
- Krippendorff, K. H. "Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology." Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, California (2004).
- Matthews, J. "Creating a New(s) View of the Environment." *Journalism* 8.4 (2007): 428-48.
- Mills, E. "SpinSpotter Lets Readers Edit out Bias in Online News." *CNET News*. 9 Sept. 2008. 12 Feb. 2011. <[http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939\\_109-10036998-2.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-10036998-2.html)>.
- Molotch, H., and Lester, M. "Accidental News: The Great Oil Spill as Local Occurrence and National Event." *The American Journal of Sociology* 81.2 (1975): 235-260.
- Mullainathan, S. and Shleifer, A. "The Market for News." *Harvard University – Department of Economics* (2003): 1-36.
- Murphree, V., and Aucoin, J. "The Energy Crisis and the Media: Mobil Oil Corporation's Debate with the Media 1973-1983." *American Journalism* 27.2 (2010): 7-30.
- Peacock, S.E., and Kunemund, H. "Senior citizens and Internet technology." *European Journal of Ageing* 4.4 (2007): 191-200.
- Roll-Hansen, N. "Science, Politics, and the Mass Media: On Biased Communication of Environmental Issues." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 19.3 (2011): 324-342.
- Schwender, C., and Kohler, C. "Introducing Seniors to New Media Technology: New Ways of Thinking for a New Target Group." *Technical Communication* 53.4 (2006): 464-470.
- Sinclair, Stefan. "Voyeur Tools: See Through Your Texts." *Hermeneuti.ca – The Rhetoric of Text Analysis*. 02 Apr. 2009. <<http://hermeneuti.ca/voyeur/>>.
- Sum, S., Mathews, M.R., Pourghasem, M., Hughes, I. "Internet Technology and Social Capital: How the Internet Affects Seniors' Social Capital and Wellbeing." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14.1 (2008): 202-220.
- Sutter, D. "Can The Media Be So Liberal? The Economics of Media Bias." *The Cato Journal* 20.3 (2001): 431-451.

Walters, S. "We Are Biased, Admit the Stars of BBC News." *The Daily Mail*. Associated Newspapers Ltd, 21 Oct. 2006. 12 Feb. 2011.  
<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-411846/We-biased-admit-stars-BBC-News.html>>.

Weingart, P., A. Engels, and Pansegrau, P. "Risks of Communication: Discourses on Climate Change in Science, Politics, and the Mass Media." *Public Understanding of Science* 9.261 (2000): 261-83.