



Debating Resource-Driven Development: A Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage on the Pacific Northwest LNG Project in British Columbia

Sibo Chen*

School of Professional Communication, Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, Canada

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Anders Hansen,
University of Leicester,
United Kingdom

Reviewed by:

Andrea Olive,
University of Toronto, Canada
Jennifer Peeples,
Utah State University, United States

*Correspondence:

Sibo Chen
sibo.chen@ryerson.ca

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Science and Environmental
Communication,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Communication

Received: 07 May 2020

Accepted: 23 July 2020

Published: 27 August 2020

Citation:

Chen S (2020) Debating Resource-Driven Development: A Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage on the Pacific Northwest LNG Project in British Columbia. *Front. Commun.* 5:66. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2020.00066

In Canada, the provincial government of British Columbia has been keen on building an export-oriented liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry since 2011. This paper examines media coverage of the Pacific NorthWest LNG project (PNW), which was considered as the flagship proposal leading the BC LNG development, until its abrupt cancellation in July 2017. The paper explores the differences between public, commercial, and independent media in energy reporting by tracing how six Canadian media outlets covered the rise and fall of PNW over a 36 month period. The comparative analysis reveals that when addressing the project's cancellation, fossil fuel advocates repeatedly deployed the "jobs killed by environmentalists" argument via opinion pieces appearing in commercial newspapers. This diagnosis, however, downplayed the far-reaching impacts of falling Asian LNG market conditions prior to the cancellation. By comparison, independent media played an important role in assisting LNG opponents to communicate PNW's fragile economic basis to a wide audience. Overall, these findings shed light upon the significance of independent media in supporting diverse news accounts of energy controversies.

Keywords: shale gas, extractivism, framing, British Columbia, independent media

INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of hydraulic fracturing (commonly known as "fracking") in shale oil and gas extraction has brought significant changes to the global energy landscape. In North America, booming shale gas production has flooded the domestic market excessive supplies since 2010, with Henry Hub spot natural gas prices rarely surpassing \$5/MMBtu (Tertzakian, 2018). Under this market condition, many shale gas rich regions are confronted with increasing competition and falling profitability, which makes reaching out to overseas markets for exports a high priority. Take British Columbia—Canada's Pacific province—as an example: the provincial government has been keen on building an export-oriented liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry since 2011. In the official BC LNG development blueprint, Rich Coleman—the then Minister of Energy and Mines—made the bold claim that "the province has committed to having our first LNG plant up and running by 2015, with a total of three LNG facilities operating by 2020" (BC Ministry of Energy Mines, 2012, p. 2).

Despite near a decade-long of concerted government and industry efforts, however, LNG exports from BC remained a “castle in the air” as of early 2020. Once including as many as 20 project proposals, this ambitious initiative for resource-driven development only has two facilities currently under construction (i.e., LNG Canada and Woodfibre LNG) and both are years away from their planned in-service dates. The most serious setback to the initiative took place in July 2017 when Malaysian energy conglomerate Petronas withdrew its Pacific NorthWest LNG (hereafter as “PNW”) proposal. With an estimated total cost of \$36 billion, PNW was widely considered as the flagship project exemplifying BC LNG’s economic potential. Unsurprisingly, its abrupt cancellation immediately captured the lion’s share of domestic media attention. Pro-industry newspapers such as *National Post* and *Vancouver Sun* offered extensive coverage and opinion pieces, which framed the cancellation as a heavy blow to the Canadian energy sector and claimed that the proposal was killed by environmentalists’ continuous sabotage along with the formation of an “anti-development” New Democratic Party (NDP) minority government after the 2017 BC provincial election. For instance, Rex Murphy—a well-known Canadian conservative commentator—argued in his provocative commentary that the death of PNW only indicated the beginning of how the BC energy sector would suffer from “extreme and irrational” environmentalism.

[Regarding the PNW cancellation] I do think we can blame the continuous agitation against all energy projects that has been a hallmark of BC and particularly Vancouver politics for over a decade. [...] Has there ever been a single energy project—just one—in British Columbia that has not faced protest and demonization? [...] Petronas didn’t close down and flee because a new government—Greens and NDP—was now in charge. Rather they saw the official installation of an anti-energy NDP, partnered with the totally anti-oil, anti-pipeline, anti-LNG Greens, as the perfect capstone to British Columbia’s embrace of pure hard-left environmentalism (Murphy, 2017, para 4–7).

Yet, to what extent does the “jobs killed by environmentalists” accusation reflects the dynamics of public debates over BC LNG? Although these debates have remained largely regional since 2011, its underlying economic, political, and ideological struggles have global implications. Media coverage of energy controversies has been one of the most salient research topics explored by recent environmental communication scholarship. A major factor driving such popularity is a notable increase of fracking operations across countries, which trigger a myriad of competing claims concerning their economic, social, and environmental impacts. In the words of Dodge and Metzger (2017), fracking presents an interpretive problem that is “not only about local siting issues, nor is it merely a technical problem, but increasingly it is also interwoven with fundamental interpretive issues at the nexus between national and transnational environmental, energy, and economic policies” (p. 2). A deeper understanding of the new discursive horizons brought by fracking thus requires for contextualized research that attends to each country’s structural factors. Compared with fracking related controversies elsewhere,

the ongoing LNG debates in British Columbia present an intriguing case, in which the traditional boundary dividing economic and environmental arguments appears blurred, which warrants an in-depth investigation.

This paper traces the rise and fall of PNW via a comparative analysis of its related coverage in six Canadian news outlets. By doing so, it seeks to highlight the crucial role of news discourse in mediating the Canadian public’s rising concerns about the national political economy’s growing dependence upon unconventional fossil fuels. Specific research questions the paper seeks to address include:

RQ1: What were the major points of contention between PNW proponents and opponents as described in related news coverage?

RQ2: How did Canadian news outlets report the policy negotiations and public debates over PNW before its cancellation?

RQ3: In light of the above findings, what are the notable differences between public, commercial, and independent media in mediating energy controversies?

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF PACIFIC NORTHWEST LNG

Before diving into the theoretical and empirical details of the comparative analysis, let us briefly review the broader socio-economic and political contexts surrounding PNW. British Columbia has abundant natural gas reserves in its interior region. Prior to the shale gas boom, the province’s gas sector had steadily supplied regional industrial and household demands for decades, without drawing much public attention. Yet, the situation was overturned by the rapid proliferation of fracking, which pushed domestic gas prices off a cliff and caused huge profit loss to many Canadian gas producers. Citing the chief executive of a major Calgary-based energy trust, a summer 2009 *National Post* market analysis (Pett, 2009) referred natural gas as a “wasted byproduct” to describe the severity of over-supply.

By contrast, during the same period strong demands in countries such as China and Japan made their natural gas prices stayed above \$10/MMBtu, which often doubled the North America prices. This notable price gap prompted growing interests among industry stakeholders and policy makers in exporting North America’s excessive shale gas to Asia. It was in this context that the BC government joined the “LNG to Asia” race, starting by designating LNG as an “employment booster” in the 2011 BC jobs plan (BC Office of the Premier, 2011) and then as a “generational economic opportunity” in the 2012 BC LNG blueprint BC Ministry of Energy Mines (2012).

Yet, three major challenges need to be addressed to realize the trans-Pacific LNG trade envisioned by the BC government. First, it was uneasy to persuade BC’s environmentally wary public to support a significant increase of shale gas production via fracking and the construction of multiple mega fossil fuel projects. British Columbia has a long tradition of environmental activism and is known for its progressive climate policies. In 2008, the province became the first Canadian province with a carbon tax. Under

the pressure of potential political backlash, the BC Liberal Party (the governing party back then) had to walk a fine line between resource-based economic growth and environmental stewardship. Second, almost all planned LNG projects would be built on or adjacent to Indigenous communities, who tended to be strong opponents due to concerns over environmental impacts and sovereignty infringement. BC First Nations are highly politically active. As few treaties were signed during the province's colonial era, most provincial lands are subject to aboriginal title. This situation provides BC First Nations with significant legal and political leverages to resist industrial development pushed by government and industry forces. Third, neither public nor private capitals in Canada could meet the high initial costs of establishing a brand-new LNG sector in British Columbia. The success of the BC LNG initiative thus hinged upon whether the BC Liberal Party could provide proper incentives to secure foreign investments, especially from transnational energy conglomerates.

The presence of these challenges during PNW's business negotiation and environmental review stages shaped related media coverage and public debates in profound ways. PNW first entered public view in February 2013 when the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency received its project description from an international consortium led by Petronas (The evaporation of an LNG project, 2017). Over the next few months, the project emerged from several competitors to become the flagship proposal representing BC LNG, primarily due to its enormous amount of investment. Petronas initially planned to spend up to \$16 billion on PNW (Petronas to spend up to \$16B on BC LNG project, 2013), but an updated project evaluation later skyrocketed the budget to \$36 billion, making PNW the "single largest investment in British Columbia's history" (Coleman, 2013, para 6).

In 2014, PNW began to stall as the BC government and Petronas debated over LNG exports' taxation. The BC government proposed a two-tiered LNG income tax scheme in its annual budget: 1.5% at the start of an LNG facility's production and a later increase to 7% after all the capital costs of construction have been recouped through sales (Lee, 2014). In response, industry stakeholders deemed both rates as unacceptable. In a public statement issued to Canadian media, for instance, Petronas's CEO Shamsul Abbas threatened to cancel PNW, arguing that "rather than ensuring the development of the LNG industry through appropriate incentives and assurance of legal and fiscal stability, the Canadian landscape of LNG development is now one of uncertainty, delay, and short vision" (Petronas may pull out of BC LNG project, 2014, para 3).

The pushback from Petronas emerged along with a plunge in Asian natural gas prices beginning in late 2014. As of 2015, the price gap between North America and Asia narrowed down to as little as eight dollars per MMBtu, which drastically reduced the profit margin of trans-Pacific LNG trade. Feeling the threat of capital withdrawal from the BC LNG initiative, the BC government conceded and offered tax breaks to PNW, which convinced the Petronas-led consortium to offer a preliminary investment decision in June 2015. In the decision, Petronas stated that two conditions must be satisfied before the project's final investment decision: the provincial legislature's approval of the

project development agreement and the clearing of the federal environmental assessment review process.

The year 2016 began with two setbacks to BC LNG. In early February, Shell announced that it would delay the final investment decision on the LNG Canada project until the end of 2016 due to difficult market conditions (Hussain, 2016). Likewise, AltaGas shelved its Douglas Channel project merely 2 weeks after Shell's announcement (BC LNG, 2016). Notwithstanding these negative developments, in September the newly elected federal Liberal government still approved PNW, though with 190 conditions covering issues from human health concerns to GHG emissions (Tasker, 2016).

After the approval, however, Petronas was ambiguous about when it would make its final decision. Global natural gas prices rebounded only slightly throughout 2016, which further dimmed the economic prospect of pending BC LNG proposals. In March 2017, public and investor confidence was once again hit by the cancellation of the Prince Rupert LNG project. With another provincial election coming in May, the governing BC Liberal Party downplayed the economic promises they had made 4 years earlier. In a factcheck published 1 month before the election, CBC journalists Rankin and McElroy (2017) reviewed the progress of BC LNG development from 2011 to 2017 and concluded that this mega-promise was not an achievable plan.

The official cancellation of PNW came in late July 2017, shortly after the BC Liberal Party failed to retain its majority status and was then toppled by an NDP minority government. Although Petronas attributed the cancellation to market conditions and insisted that provincial politics did not influence its decision-making (Ghoussoub, 2017), BC Liberals and LNG proponents quickly linked the decision to the likelihood that NDP would introduce development-killing environmental regulations and high taxes. Although the death of PNW did not put an end to British Columbia's pursuit of LNG exports, it did cool down the hype over extractivism in BC public discourse. Accordingly, an empirical inquiry into PNW coverage would offer meaningful insights into the dynamics between news discourse and public perception of extractivism and media discourse.

REPORTING FRACKING

Widespread fracking operations across countries have been viewed in disparate ways. Many ordinary citizens—especially those living in shale gas-rich yet economically depressed regions—consider this unconventional extraction method as a "game changer" that stimulates employment growth, improves energy affordability and security, as well as offers a cleaner alternative to coal. In sharp contrast, environmentalists and concerned citizens deem it as a source of environmental and public hazards such as underground water contamination, methane leakage, and seismic activity increase. The polarization between fracking advocates and opponents has turned into a prolonged public dispute. As numerous studies (see Thomas et al., 2017 for a recent overview) have found, public perceptions of fracking tend to be driven by whether perceived benefits outweigh risks or vice versa. The serious contention between

conflicting views compromises the trustworthiness of expert information. For instance, drawing upon survey results of residences in the Marcellus Shale region, Evensen and Stedman (2017, 2018) and Evensen and Brown-Steiner (2018) have found that the community acceptance of fracking is affected more by projected benefits and risks in relation to socially constructed community “good life” than scientific knowledge concerning shale gas development’s climate impacts. As not all risks associated with fracking are easily visible for public scrutiny, what become pivotal for public deliberation on fracking policymaking are communications “focusing on the shared historical and cultural experiences that shape values and general beliefs” (Evensen and Stedman, 2017, p. 18). Accordingly, media become a major factor actively shaping the public understanding of fracking, given their capacity to direct public attention toward certain aspects of public affairs via information provision, mediation, and public engagement. As Strömbäck (2008) argues, “mediated reality matters more than any kind of actual or objective reality” (p. 239) in public communication.

Media coverage and public responses fracking receives can be quite different from case to case since stakeholder communications could either open up or close down certain ways of understanding it. Amongst the various discursive spaces where stakeholders intervene, the media sphere—consisting of both legacy outlets and social media platforms—is arguably the most crucial one. Previous research on fracking coverage (see Matthews and Hansen (2018) for a recent overview) suggests that relevant news stories and opinion pieces are informed by the public’s contested opinions. For news depicting fracking as an “economic good,” popular topics include job creation, regional investment, and, less dependence on energy imports. In some cases, geopolitical concerns are more effective than economic factors in mobilizing public support for fracking. Bigl’s (2017) analysis of fracking stories in the German press highlight that the potential challenge of securing Germany’s energy supply against the backdrop of the Crimean crisis has played a central role in the construction of unbalanced reporting, with fracking related risks being consistently downplayed. In contrast, news depicting fracking as an “environmental concern” tend to focus on topics such as underground water contamination and its subsequent threat to public health. Driven by the wide circulation of strong anti-fracking sentiment in the documentary *Gasland* (Fox, 2010), water quality has become the most publicized environmental risk of fracking in both North America and Europe (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014; Olive and Delshad, 2017; Buttny, 2019). As noted by Matthews and Hansen (2018), media coverage on fracking tend to present its economic and environmental perspectives as a dichotomy. Readers may learn about fracking as either an economic issue or an environmental issue, but it is rare to see opinion pieces discussing both perspectives comprehensively.

As for factors influencing news framing of fracking, previous research has addressed variations found in the reporting of fracking’s benefits and risks in relation to the ideological stances and socio-political contexts of journalists’ news organizations. Focusing on the UK context, Jaspal and Nerlich (2014) have identified an unfolding debate between left-leaning and right-leaning outlets, with the former side’s skeptical stance having the

upper hand at the time of the study. One insightful observation from their analysis is the important role played by “threat positioning” in the mediated process of fracking deliberation. Whilst left-leaning outlets addressed fracking mainly as a multi-faceted threat to human beings and the environment, right-leaning outlets also used the notion of “threat” but in relation to a different target: the UK’s economic future. They appealed to the scarcity of energy sources and criticized the high cost of renewable energy to portray anti-fracking activities as a threat to employment growth. Thus, inherently vague notions such as people’s desire for security and prosperity could be used as mobilizing factors on both sides of the fracking controversy.

Amongst these competing notions, the most contested one is arguably transition, which reflects the ideological tension over the “bridge fuel” designation of shale gas. Depending on one’s perception of fossil fuels, shale gas could be considered either a facilitator of or a barrier to reduction in GHG emissions. Unlike conventional risk management models which evaluate the environment from the perspective of cost-benefit analysis, debating shale gas in the broad picture of post-carbon transition opens the realm of normative and ideological conflicts (Fischer, 2003; Dodge and Metze, 2017). Socio-political contexts underpinning domestic media discussions on fracking also create certain focal points for media attention. In North America, for example, although both Canadian and US newspapers have prioritized the issue of water quality in their coverage of fracking, beyond this common concern, there are noticeable differences in media focusses (Olive and Delshad, 2017). In comparison to their US counterparts, the Canadian media tend to focus more on fracking’s benefits to a local economy but less on its potential harm to wildlife. Such national variations are even more prominent in Europe due to the region’s complex energy supply and consumption dynamics.

As for the information subsidies offered by fracking advocates and opponents, one question frequently appears in previous research: which side is more effective at influencing media messages? Although fracking opponents have been successful in several places such as New York State, the UK, and the Netherlands, there is emerging evidence pointing to a reciprocal relationship between the business sector and news outlets. Because news production is constrained by general journalistic routines and practices, fracking reporting tends to proportionally favor business and political elites as authoritative and credible sources of news (Matthews and Hansen, 2018). Consequently, the agenda-building efforts of fracking opponents are repeatedly met with discrimination and exclusion. Even in cases wherein anti-fracking actors’ arguments prevail and eventually contribute to moratoria on fracking, this is often caused by high-profile environmental accidents, which trigger the crisis frame of news production and temporarily drive media attention toward environmental concerns. For example, in Buttny’s (2019) analysis of fracking debates in New York State, an important background story on which fracking opponents constructed their narratives was the public disclosure of fracking’s recurring community disruption by the aforementioned documentary *Gasland*. As Matthews and Hansen (2018) summarize, the “jobs versus environment” dichotomy, along which many fracking debates

TABLE 1 | Profiles of target media outlets.

Name	Type	Profile
CBC News	Public	CBC News is the web portal of Canada's national public broadcaster. As a public media institution, CBC gives high priority to accurate, objective, and impartial reporting. Its content thus focuses on providing factual information rather than siding with a particular camp during political controversies. Besides archiving and providing online access to CBC's television and radio programs, CBC News also publishes original news stories, which are the focus of the current analysis.
Globe and Mail	Commercial	The <i>Globe and Mail</i> is the most read national English daily in Canada. In 2018, the title reported a weekly combined digital and print readership of 6.5 million (Roy, 2018). According to Olive (2016) analysis of Canadian media coverage on fracking, the <i>Globe and Mail</i> provides a relatively balanced reporting on the conflicts between the oil and gas sector and environmentalists.
National Post	Commercial	The <i>National Post</i> is Postmedia's flagship national daily that is in a rivalry with the <i>Globe and Mail</i> . According to A 2016 report estimated its weekly combined digital and print readership as 4.5 million (National Post boosts weekly print and digital readership to 4.5 million, 2016). Postmedia is known for its pro-business stance and close tie to the oil and gas sector (see Gunster and Saurette, 2014).
Vancouver Sun	Commercial	The <i>Vancouver Sun</i> , as the most circulated daily in Metro Vancouver, offers a glimpse into British Columbia's regional opinions. In 2016, its combined digital and print readership was estimated as 1.1 million (Postmedia tops Canadian newspaper groups with highest readership, Sun and Province lead Lower Mainland, 2016). After being acquired by Postmedia in 2015, it has gradually turned into a center-right title keeping step with media conglomerate's pro-industry stance.
Tyee	Independent	Founded in 2003, the <i>Tyee</i> is a progressive online news magazine covering both local and national public affairs. It is amongst the most well-established of Canadian independent media. The <i>Tyee</i> departs from commercial media's business model by rejecting advertising revenue from big corporations. It also makes explicit commitments to participatory and democratic forms of journalism. In 2017, the website reported an average of 300,000 to 400,000 unique visitors per month.
National Observer	Independent	Like the <i>Tyee</i> , the digital news site <i>Canada's National Observer</i> takes a negative stance on advertising revenue and is funded almost entirely by subscriptions. As described in a feature story by Nieman Lab (Owen, 2018), the site "covers issues like government, the environment, health, climate change, and human rights, all with a progressive bent" (para 3). Founded in 2015, the site is a young contender in the Canadian media landscape, but several prestigious journalistic awards have helped it become a notable voice in public debates about Canadian environmental and energy politics. The website claims that it has reached nearly 7 million people since its inception in May 2015.

across countries have evolved, has inherent limits. Accordingly, a key issue this article explores is how this dichotomy was altered in the case of PNW, in which economic and environmental concerns juxtaposed with each other and shaped arguments on both sides.

Lastly, an important yet less studied area is the differences between commercial media and independent media in reporting energy controversies. In the case of the Canadian media sphere, several empirical studies (e.g., Gunster, 2011, 2017; Cross et al., 2015; Hackett and Adams, 2018) have documented independent media's distinctive approach to community resistance to extractivism, which provides "more optimistic and engaged visions of climate politics than the cynical, pessimistic and largely spectatorial accounts dominating conventional news" (Hackett, 2017, p. 114). For example, Hackett and Adams (2018) examined news stories concerning the ongoing political struggles over the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion and their analysis suggested that independent media outperformed commercial media in challenging the "jobs vs. environment" dichotomy by devoting attention to "the economic risks of pipeline development, labor's environmental concerns and commitments, and the opportunities of a low-carbon economy and a just transition to it" (p. 28). The anti-extractivism stance held by Canadian independent media should be understood as more than just a left-wing bias. In direct confrontation with business/industry friendly voices appearing in commercial media, the discursive space constructed by these independent media advocate a radical approach to journalistic objectivity, which prioritizes values-driven journalism and seeks to minimize

corporate influence over news reporting (Gunster, 2017). For environmental reporting, independent media tend to be driven by a shared commitment to mitigating the planetary climate crisis and be suspicious of rosy predictions from government and industry boosters. Thus, in the comparative analysis of PNW coverage below, I am interested in whether the target independent media outlets moved beyond environmental criticism and engaged with broader issues such as structural economic risk and social injustice.

METHODOLOGY

The comparative analysis is based on a careful reading and coding of PNW reports and opinion pieces appearing in six Canadian news outlets between September 2014 and August 2017. September 2014 is chosen as the starting point of data collection because back then Petronas issued its initial threat of withdrawing the PNW proposal, which publicized the deep disagreement between the BC government and the Petronas-led consortium and prompted media speculation over the prospect of BC LNG. The six media outlets in question are: *CBC News*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Tyee*, and *Canada's National Observer*. As shown in **Table 1**, these sample media encompass some of the most influential local and national news sources; yet they are not impartial institutions that merely inform the public about different stakeholder claims. Each outlet has its own biases that makes itself structurally more sympathetic to certain stakeholder arguments.

For the actual data collection process, I used “Petronas” and “Pacific NorthWest LNG” as search terms in Factiva to collect relevant news items published by the target media. Because the web publications of *CBC News*, the *Tyee*, and *Canada’s National Observer* were not indexed in Factiva at the time of writing, I manually searched their websites to collect the relevant news items. The Factiva search found nearly 30% of identical news items shared by the *National Post* and the *Vancouver Sun*, which was unsurprising considering Postmedia Network owns both titles. To avoid repetition, their news items were treated as one media source under the “Postmedia” label. In total, 618 news items were collected, including 67 from *CBC News*, 196 from the *Globe and Mail*, 284 from Postmedia, 44 from the *Tyee*, and 27 from *Canada’s National Observer*.

To address the research questions, I began with a quantitative content analysis. I carefully read and coded each news item for its manifest theme, as determined by its title and beginning paragraphs. I conducted a trial coding of the *CBC News* items to identify news themes that received sustained media attention. The themes I identified fall into three categories: economics, environment, and politics (Table 2). These thematic categories provide a snapshot of the perspectives from which issues related to PNW were reported to the public. The economic category includes items addressing how (1) the Petronas-led consortium negotiated LNG taxation and other policy incentives with corresponding government stakeholders, (2) politicians and grassroots supporters defended LNG’s significance to British Columbia’s regional economy, and (3) changing Asian market conditions and other factors threatened the project’s viability.

In the political category, the “public opinion” theme includes items depicting BC communities’ various responses to PNW. Comments regarding PNW from provincial NDP and Green politicians were coded under the “disputes from opposition parties” theme. When the Petronas-led consortium engaged in intensive negotiations with the BC government between 2014 and 2015, both opposition parties (NDP and Green) were only able to play peripheral roles because the BC Liberal Party held a majority in the provincial legislature. Nonetheless, their stances on LNG remain noteworthy, especially after the BC NDP minority government—which hinges upon Green’s support—inherited unresolved LNG policy challenges in July 2017. Lastly, progressive commentators’ views on extractivism were coded under the “extractivist policy failure” theme, whereas fossil fuel advocates’ aggressive denunciation of environmentalism and government interference was coded under the “conservative attacks” theme.

The environmental category focuses on the conflict attitudes of different stakeholders toward PNW’s environmental impacts. On the one hand, both provincial and federal governments acknowledged the multiple threats of PNW LNG to the local environment and to Canada’s progress in GHG emissions reduction but deemed the threats manageable and outweighed by the project’s economic value. On the other hand, scientists and environmental organizations made repeated calls to reject the project due to its unacceptable environmental harm.

After the initial coding, I conducted an inter-coder reliability analysis by inviting a second coder to code a random sub-sample

TABLE 2 | Coding scheme of news sample.

Economics

- 1.1. Negotiation: business negotiations over LNG taxation and other policy incentives
- 1.2. Economic development: PNW’s economic benefits to the province
- 1.3. Project uncertainty: challenges to the project’s viability

Politics

- 2.1. Public opinion: settler and Indigenous groups’ responses to PNW news
- 2.2. Disputes from opposition parties: B.C. NDP and Green’s views on PNW
- 2.3. Extractivist policy failure: progressive critiques of extractivism and
- 2.4. Conservative attacks: conservative critiques of regulation and environmentalism

Environment

- 3.1. Review and regulation: government agencies’ management of PNW related environmental risks
- 3.2. Alarming impacts: warnings about PNW’s unacceptable environmental impacts

of articles (10% of each media outlet, 64 articles in total). Whilst rather subjective, inter-coder reliability was high (89.1%). The second coder and I discussed and resolved coding differences. I then conducted an additional round of coding, which led to a high intra-coder reliability outcome (95.1%).

The quantitative patterns revealed by the content analysis found three issues that received recurring discussions in the data: (1) the challenges of starting an LNG export sector in BC from scratch, (2) the political implications of divided grassroots responses to PNW LNG, and (3) the contradiction between resource-driven development and environmental regulation. To understand the differences between the sample media in addressing these issues, I undertook a follow-up argumentative discourse analysis (ADA) on relevant news items. The goal here was to explicate the ways in which specific arguments were developed following implicit ideological propositions held by each media outlet. The ADA approach was developed by Hajer (1995) and his fellow environmental policy scholars (e.g., Fischer, 2003; Dryzek, 2013), which primarily attends to macro argumentative features across multiple texts. The news items were analyzed in terms of their definitions of the PNW controversy, depictions of principle actors, and proposed policy actions. Based on these findings, I then assessed each media outlet’s framing of the three issues.

FINDINGS

Quantitative Content Analysis

The quantitative content analysis reveals three different approaches taken by the media outlets in reporting PNW: (1) Postmedia was leaning toward industry stakeholders and on multiple occasions played a 2-fold role as both a cheerleader for extractivism and a conservative critic against LNG opponents; (2) *CBC News* and the *Globe and Mail* also demonstrated slight pro-business leaning, but they tended to be more vocal about PNW’s inherent economic and environmental risks; (3) the *Tyee* and *Canada’s National Observer* sided with LNG opponents by advocating for the rejection of PNW. The analysis of peaks

TABLE 3 | Yearly distribution of PNW news items.

	CBC in % (N = 67)	Globe and Mail in % (N = 196)	Postmedia in % (N = 284)	Tyee in % (N = 44)	National Observer in % (N = 27)	Monthly average
2014 (09–12)	7.5	14.8	16.9	9.1	0	21.5
2015	22.4	36.7	39.1	25	14.8	17.75
2016	50.7	33.2	31.3	34.1	37	17.75
2017 (01–08)	19.4	15.3	12.7	31.8	48.2	13.25
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	

in media coverage indicates that initial media attention to PNW was triggered by the negotiations between the Petronas-led consortium and the BC government. Following multiple warnings about the project's environmental impacts in 2015 and afterwards, public contestation over whether it should be approved gradually mounted into a high-profile controversy.

Table 3 presents the yearly distribution of news items featuring PNW in each media source. As the monthly averages indicate, the project received the most intense media attention from September to December 2014, when Petronas issued its first threat of cancellation. The high monthly average of 2014 ($N = 21.5$) consists mainly of articles from the commercial media's business sections. Relevant coverage from *CBC News*, the *Tyee*, and *National Observer* later surged during 2015–2016, even though their numbers of published news items remained considerably smaller than the commercial newspapers. In 2017, the mainstream outlets' attention to PNW dropped considerably compared to the previous 2 years. The independent media, however, did not follow this trend: both the *Tyee* and *National Observer* published substantial proportions of their PNW coverage (31.8% and 48.2%, respectively) in 2017. A closer look at news items published in this year demonstrates a notable surge of independent media stories supporting activists' resistance to the federal government's conditional approval of PNW.

Table 4 outlines the distribution of news items in each content type. In both general and business sections, the surveyed media yielded a mix of news and opinion pieces. They published a total of 618 news items featuring the PNW controversy, with Postmedia being the most prolific ($N = 284$), followed by the *Globe and Mail* ($N = 196$). In the case of Postmedia, its extensive PNW coverage mainly consists of news and opinion pieces appearing in various business sections (e.g., *Financial Post*, *FP Energy*, *FP Investing*, *Western Business*, etc.). The *Globe and Mail* followed a similar distribution pattern, except for one notable difference: it had a substantively higher proportion of PNW coverage (90 out of 196, 45.92%) in general news sections than Postmedia (51 out of 284, 17.96%). Compared with other media outlets, Postmedia published the most business news pieces ($N = 143$), many of which provided detailed updates on Petronas's negotiation with provincial and federal ministries responsible for regulating natural gas development. It also published the most opinion pieces in both general ($N = 69$) and business ($N = 21$) sections, which reflects the determination of its columnists and commentators to intervene in the policy and public agendas of PNW. Overall, the results shown in **Tables 3, 4**

TABLE 4 | PNW news items by content type.

Media	General sections		Business sections	
	News	Opinion	News	Opinion
CBC News ($N = 67$)	54	3	9	1
Globe and Mail ($N = 196$)	90	17	78	11
Postmedia ($N = 284$)	51	69	143	21
Tyee ($N = 44$)	22	22	0	0
National Observer ($N = 27$)	15	12	0	0
Total ($N = 618$)	232	123	230	33

TABLE 5 | Different types of media content over time.

Year	General sections		Business sections	
	News	Opinion	News	Opinion
2014 (09–12)	19	15	49	3
2015	71	39	95	8
2016	94	36	71	12
2017 (01–08)	48	33	15	10
Total	232	123	230	33

suggest a process of politicization wherein intensifying public debates transformed PNW into a political contest outside of business circles.

The frequencies of different media content over time (**Table 5**) reveal two additional patterns. First, PNW stories appearing in general news sections were dwarfed by those in business sections in 2014; however, this steadily shifted over subsequent years. By 2016 and 2017, there were significantly more stories published as general news as compared to business stories. Second, opinion pieces targeting general readers outnumbered those targeting business readers over the 36 month period.

The brief media chronology demonstrates that media peaks concerning PNW were closely related to the project's review and decision-making process. It does not reveal much about news content and focus. Therefore, a thematic analysis was applied to the news items. **Table 6** outlines how the media approached the PNW controversy, as indicated by the frequencies of their publications from economic, political, and environmental perspectives. Whilst *CBC News* and the *Globe and Mail* achieved roughly equal distribution amongst the three perspectives, Postmedia focused heavily on economics, with

TABLE 6 | Distribution of news items by thematic perspective.

Perspective	CBC News in % (N = 67)	Globe and Mail in % (N = 196)	Postmedia in % (N = 284)	Tyee in % (N = 44)	National Observer in % (N = 27)
Economics	34.4	35.7	47.2	20.5	7.4
Politics	32.8	33.2	29.2	63.6	55.6
Environment	32.8	31.1	23.6	15.9	37
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100

TABLE 7 | Thematic distribution of news items.

Theme	CBC News in % (N = 67)	Globe and Mail in % (N = 196)	Postmedia in % (N = 284)	Tyee in % (N = 44)	National Observer in % (N = 27)
Economics					
1.1. Negotiation	13.4	16.9	23.6	0	0
1.2. Economic development	6	9.7	9.9	6.8	0
1.3. Project uncertainty	14.9	9.2	13.7	13.6	7.4
Politics					
2.1. Public opinion	31.4	24.5	16.5	20.5	25.9
2.2. Disputes from opposition parties	0	5.6	5.3	2.3	7.4
2.3. Extractivist policy failure	0	1	0	40.9	22.2
2.4. Conservative attacks	1.5	2	7.4	0	0
Environment					
3.1. Review and regulation	17.9	25	15.1	0	0
3.2. Alarming impacts	14.9	6.1	8.5	15.9	37.1
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100

47.2% of its news items primarily addressing this perspective. By comparison, political issues were the overarching focus of both independent media.

Building upon the results in **Tables 6, 7** provides further details of the frequency of different themes in each perspective. Postmedia's prioritization of economic themes was mainly driven by its extensive coverage ($N = 67$, 23.6% out of 284) of Petronas's prolonged negotiation with provincial and federal governments over LNG taxation and project cost. It also published the most news items attacking government interference and environmentalism ($N = 21$, 7.4% out of 284). As for independent media, both strongly criticized the BC LNG agenda with multiple news items explicating its policy failure (N of Tyee = 18, 40.9% out of 44; N of Canada's National Observer = 6, 22.2% out of 27). Meanwhile, the relatively consistent percentage of news items addressing project uncertainty across the mainstream media point to the persistency of PNW's inherent business risks.

Table 7 also illustrates that public opinion was the most frequent theme featured in political news items. To examine the media's framing of mixed public attitudes toward PNW, I conducted follow-up coding of the "Public Opinion" theme and divided it into three sub-themes: community support, opposition, and division (**Table 8**). Over 50% of media coverage on public opinion focused on public resistance to PNW, especially from Indigenous communities. Postmedia was the

only media source to provide significant coverage (over 30%) of community support for the project. In contrast, both independent media prioritized the reporting of continuing community resistance to PNW, with no attention paid to PNW's community support. Given the notable differences between commercial and independent media identified in **Tables 6–8**, the following sections qualitatively assess their framing of PNW and interaction with LNG advocates and opponents.

Commercial Media: Between Fossil Fuel Advocates and Business Risk Analysts

The *Globe and mail* and Postmedia have embodied three notable features in their PNW coverage. The first is their business sections, which are rich in content and serve the interests of industry and business professionals with specialized information. The elite/expert sources cited in such business stories could be further divided into fossil fuel advocates and business risk analysts. Whilst the former group is concerned mainly with defending the economic interests of Canadian fossil fuel stakeholders, the latter attends to the competitiveness of Canada in global energy markets. Second, the journalistic objectivity followed by the commercial media in news reporting does not apply to their opinion pieces, which in the current case have taken an evident clear pro-industry stance and presented a discursive construction in favor of the fossil fuel industry. Whilst this is hardly a surprise given opinion columns' role in news reporting,

TABLE 8 | Public opinions on PNW.

Public opinion	CBC News in % (N = 21)	Globe and Mail in % (N = 48)	Postmedia in % (N = 47)	Tyee in % (N = 9)	National Observer in % (N = 7)
Support	14.3	22.9	34	0	0
Opposition	66.7	52.1	55.3	88.9	57.1
Division	19	25.1	10.7	11.1	42.9
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100

the concerning issue is the lack of diversity of opinions when most columns in the surveyed commercial media were written by fossil fuel proponents. Third, the commercial media have rejected the notion that many First Nations' resistance to PNW is indicative of extractive sectors' infringement on Indigenous sovereignty and living environment. Instead, many of their reports have implied that the recurring project delays were caused by the "anti-development sentiment" of some Indigenous groups threatened Canada's investment reputation.

In consideration of these features, let us take a closer look at how the commercial media reported PNW from economic, political, and environmental perspectives. To begin with, economic topics were the commercial media's primary concern, and their business sections regularly featured stories discussing the uncertain prospect of PNW in view of changing global LNG market dynamics. Collectively, such stories explicated British Columbia's comparative disadvantages compared to leading players in the global LNG race and cast doubt on the provincial government's promise of a short- to medium-term revenue windfall from LNG export. For example, citing the International Energy Agency's outlook of global LNG market trends, a June 2015 *National Post* report conceded that the intensifying challenges brought by the market downturn had turned LNG exports from BC into a distant prospect:

In one of the gloomiest forecasts yet for British Columbia's nascent LNG sector, the International Energy Agency says prospects for export projects have "darkened" and deferrals are likely. In a 5 year outlook on global demand for natural gas published Thursday, the Paris-based agency throws cold water on the BC Liberal government's hopes of being home to three liquefied natural gas projects by 2020. [...] The curtailed outlook reinforces what BC LNG proponents have feared in recent months—that their window of opportunity to build export projects on the West Coast may be closing. As many as 19 consortiums have proposed export projects, but none has taken a final investment decision (Hussain, 2015a, para 1–4).

The report continued by noting that falling Japanese LNG prices since 2014 had seriously weakened the economic prospect of projects like PNW. Meanwhile, as global LNG supply was projected to "rise 40 per cent during the next 5 years" (Hussain, 2015a, para 8), British Columbia would be in fierce competition with countries like the United States and Australia. With no operating LNG facility, it had already fallen behind in the race. The combined influence of both factors, the report noted, significantly eroded international investors' confidence. The International Energy Agency's outlook received similar coverage

in the *Globe and Mail* (Hume, 2015) and the *Vancouver Sun* (Penner, 2015). Later, reports released by energy consultancies such as Wood Mackenzie (Hussain, 2015b) and RS Energy Group (Synder, 2016) reiterated market changes' persistent damage to BC LNG.

Although these reports by energy analysts represent global energy capital's interest and are dismissive of British Columbia's socio-political reality, they offer informative insights into the growing economic challenges confronting energy conglomerates. Yet, such challenges are rarely exposed by Canada's domestic LNG proponents, whose voices dominated the commercial media's business sections. In their narratives, there was a paucity of criticism about the BC Liberal Party's aggressive decision to make LNG its economic priority. Under the "project uncertainty" theme in **Table 7**, only seven commercial media stories problematized British Columbia's excessive policy focus on resource extraction.

Domestic LNG proponents proposed three solutions by which British Columbia could accommodate bleak market realities and high infrastructure costs: (1) streamline the lengthy review process to catch the window of opportunity, (2) offer more incentives to boost foreign investors' attention, or (3) adjust the BC LNG agenda in wait for a future price recovery. When proposing these solutions, they often cited the quick take-off of LNG exports in the United States. For example, a June 2016 opinion piece by *National Post's* business columnist Claudia Cattaneo accused Canada's lengthy and ineffective regulatory process of making PNW lose contracts to US competitors:

As recently as 3 years ago, Canada was largely viewed as leading the race to export LNG from North America because of its more efficient regulatory process. Then the delays started happening [...] whereas U.S. LNG proponents, already enjoying the advantage of having infrastructure previously built for LNG imports, kept moving forward. In February, Cheniere Energy Inc., using its Sabine Pass facility in Louisiana, was the first U.S. company to ship LNG. The first LNG shipment from Canada is not expected until after 2020 (Cattaneo, 2016a, para 11–12).

Echoing Cattaneo's attack on Canadian environmental regulation, another notable pro-LNG argument emphasized resource extraction's irreplaceable role in the BC economy, 2 months before Cattaneo's piece, two senior analysts from the Fraser Institute published an opinion piece in the *Vancouver Sun* which framed PNW's economic benefits as too important to lose:

[The] non-development [of PNW] will come with substantial economic costs. A recent Fraser Institute study found the cost of

delay imposed upon LNG investments in BC, defined as export revenues forgone, is substantial at \$22.5 billion per year in 2020, rising to \$24.8 billion per year in 2025. [...] The National Energy Board's recent Canada's Energy Future 2016 report also shed some light on what LNG means for Canada's natural gas industry. In a scenario where no LNG exports occur between 2015 and 2040, Canadian natural gas production might only experience two per cent growth compared to 19 per cent growth in a scenario with LNG exports (Green and Jackson, 2016, para 6–7).

In sum, LNG proponents' concern over competitiveness aimed at persuading government stakeholders to create a better investment environment through deregulation and subsidy. The absence of any serious inquiry into the boom-and-bust mechanism underlying falling Asian LNG prices reinforced the pro-LNG storyline. The commercial media did not translate energy analysts' warnings about global LNG oversupply into either the narrow concerns over British Columbia's fiscal stability or into broader critiques of neoliberal extractivism's negative socioeconomic impacts. Instead, these warnings were adapted by LNG proponents to demand sustained and coordinated support from the provincial and federal governments to secure shale gas expansion. From a critical perspective, the fundamental goal of such demands for an extractivist state is to covertly increase private capital gain under the guise of public interest.

The commercial media's active defense of extractivism also manifested in their framing of community responses to PNW. In the news sample, the most prevalent opposition claims came from the Lax Kw'alaams First Nation who rejected a \$1 billion offer from Petronas in exchange of their consent to locate PNW on Lelu Island, their traditional territory. Before Lax Kw'alaams' high-profile rejection of the PNW offer, several First Nations had already signed LNG benefit agreements, which enabled the BC government to boast about its partnership with Indigenous communities in resource development. Consequently, when Lax Kw'alaams emerged as a political obstacle, it presented a watershed moment in the disruption of the pro-LNG storyline (Hunter, 2015).

In response, the commercial media adopted counter-narratives by LNG proponents to undermine the demands of Lax Kw'alaams for Indigenous sovereignty and self-governance. In an opinion piece published shortly after the Lax Kw'alaams rejection, Brian Crowley, who led the conservative think tank Macdonald-Laurier Institute, downplayed the rejection's political implications by suggesting that it signaled merely many Indigenous people's desire for reasoned resource development:

Those who have concluded from the Lax Kw'alaams' decision on PNW that they are dealing with a people implacably opposed to development [...] missed a different recent announcement by the community. The Lax Kw'alaams have endorsed the Eagle Spirit oil pipeline proposal to bring Alberta oil to the West Coast through their territory. [...] The evidence is that many aboriginal people and communities, including the Lax Kw'alaams, want reasoned development. They need to be clear and consistent in articulating what they want, and governments and project proponents need to get used to the idea that there will be no substitute for respectfully

involving aboriginal communities in project planning from the earliest concept stage (Crowley, 2015, para 9–11).

In line with Crowley's standpoint, the commercial media also published interviews and opinion pieces that framed Lax Kw'alaams as an exceptional case that misrepresented many Indigenous communities' receptive attitudes toward resource extraction. Using their own communities as examples, Indigenous LNG proponents promoted a carefully woven narrative asserting that PNW and other LNG projects would actually function as effective means of reconciliation and empowerment. Although news pieces promoting this narrative were outnumbered by those covering legal challenges and Indigenous protests, their circulation by the commercial media directed public attention to First Nations' internal divisions, thereby underplaying the scope and intensity of local opposition. One prominent Indigenous LNG proponent was Karen Ogen from the First Nations LNG Alliance. In her opinion, the best way for First Nations to fulfill environmental stewardship during resource development was to form partnerships with the state-corporate alliance. As she claimed in an opinion piece appearing in the *Vancouver Sun*:

While we acknowledge First Nations are stewards of the land, the concern for the environment is widespread among industry proponents and governments as well, and they are doing their due diligence. It is only through participating in the assessment of these projects together that we can ensure the highest environmental standards will be applied. If these projects proceed, we also must fight to ensure our people have real and meaningful benefits flowing directly to our communities throughout the duration of the projects (Ogen, 2016, para 6).

Claims like Ogen's should be read with caution given their understatement of two important facts. First, Indigenous organizations such as the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and Coastal First Nations were vocal opponents of LNG expansion. Second, the majority of First Nations that signed benefits agreements were small inland bands with limited sources of income and negotiating power. Despite both facts, Indigenous pro-LNG claims remained ideologically compelling since they granted moral legitimization to grassroots LNG supporters, many of whom were laid-off workers with high hopes for the substantial employment boost promised by LNG. Many rural communities' embrace of LNG as a solution to their entrenched poverty formed the populist basis of extractivism, whose voices tended to be amplified by the commercial media.

One notable blind spot in the commercial media's coverage was their failure (or refusal) to address the unity between First Nations and local settler communities in resisting LNG. When environmentalists were quoted, they were represented by either scientists or spokespersons from civil organizations. The perceived liberal elitism underlying these figures allowed LNG proponents to escalate populist attacks on the democratic and normative foundations of environmentalists. For example, an August 2017 opinion piece by Murphy (2017) made

the provocative case that PNW was killed by an “extreme and irrational environmentalism allegedly pervading the BC public sphere.”

As shown in **Tables 7, 8**, however, PNW opponents’ persistent efforts forced the commercial media to devote considerable attention to the subjects of community opposition and PNW’s environmental impacts. The escalating political tension eventually transcended the provincial level in 2016 when the fate of PNW was in the hands of Justin Trudeau’s federal government. As the Trudeau government had come into power in 2015 with the promise of reforming the National Energy Board’s flawed review process, PNW, as well as other controversial energy projects under review, became a test for Trudeau’s climate policies. In January 2016, the Trudeau government disappointed LNG proponents with a new regulation mandating that (1) energy corporations engage in additional consultations with First Nations and (2) new climate tests for proposed energy projects like PNW (McCarthy, 2016). The regulation led to mixed reactions in the commercial media. Whilst the *Globe and Mail* simply reported it and avoided making overtly negative speculations on PNW, Postmedia sided with LNG advocates and circulated their complaints. Prominent amongst such complaints was the claim that the extension of the review process diminished British Columbia’s chance to catch the LNG boat. This claim was in a *National Post* report published on the front page of its 8 March business section. In this feature report, Cattaneo (2016b)—citing an anonymous source from Petronas—suggested that the Petronas-led consortium was losing patience due to its worry that “the [Trudeau] cabinet, which has final say, will keep stalling instead of handing down a decision while the project continues to burn cash [...] and market conditions for LNG are deteriorating” (para 7–8).

The backlash turned out to be unnecessary. Notwithstanding repeated environmental warnings from environmental and Indigenous groups, in September 2017 PNW received conditional approval, which, according to the Trudeau cabinet, came out of thorough consideration of economic and environmental factors. Delighted by this milestone, LNG proponents reversed earlier conservative attacks and spoke highly of the Trudeau government’s economic pragmatism. For example, an opinion piece by *National Post* columnist Michael Den Tandt praised Trudeau’s centralist approach to controversial energy projects and even deemed it as a key factor driving the federal Liberals’ landslide victory in the 2015 federal election:

The gambit [of Trudeau’s energy strategies] needed to appeal to economic pragmatism. [...] The solution they arrived at was both novel and obvious: cast Justin Trudeau as a champion of resource development, within an environmentalist frame. [...] It worked [...] rather well—until, early in the 2015 federal campaign, Trudeau Co. perceived an even more tantalizing opening in the NDP’s pledge of balanced budgets, and zigged sharply to their left, promising deficits and spending (Tandt, 2016, para 3–5).

The ceasefire between LNG proponents and the federal government only lasted for less than a year. Following the cancellation of PNW in July 2017, these proponents returned

to their attacks on environmental regulation and declared the balanced approach to the “jobs vs. the environment” conundrum dysfunctional. In an August 2017 opinion piece in the *National Post* published shortly after PNW’s cancellation, former minister of natural resources Joe Oliver accused the Trudeau government of politicizing and delaying the process, which dislodged foreign investors like Petronas:

When I was minister of natural resources, our Conservative government legislated ‘one project, one review’ in a defined time period, a significant regulatory improvement. Later, we provided an accelerated capital allowance for the project’s facilities and extended export licenses. In contrast, the Liberal government denigrated the National Energy Board (NEB), politicized, duplicated and lengthened the consultation and review processes and broadened their scope. It is now considering the addition of social and cultural impacts, which would exacerbate uncertainty and delay (Oliver, 2017, para 3).

Taken together, the above quotes present a synopsis of the commercial media’s shifting attitudes toward Trudeau’s energy politics, which, like their coverage of competitiveness, demonstrates the division between government and industry stakeholders. Facing growing political pressure from both conservative and progressive sides, both the Clark and Trudeau governments hewed to a progressive version of extractivism (Pineault, 2016), with the hope that this balanced approach would reposition Canada as a climate leader whilst simultaneously boosting oil and gas exports. Yet, declining market conditions significantly constrained the scope of this policy maneuver.

Independent Media: No Wealth, No Justice in British Columbia’s LNG Fiasco

Despite commercial media’s systematic pro-LNG bias, PNW opponents still managed to engage with the public. A key venue for such engagement was independent media the *Tyee* and *Canada’s National Observer*, which served as vital communication channels for anti-LNG discourse by privileging and circulating the voices of PNW critics, who were largely marginalized or absent from commercial media. Specifically, the most novel aspect of both independent media’s critical engagement with PNW was the tough questions they raised concerning British Columbia’s economic growth path. Although neither of them could compete with commercial media in terms of readership size and publication frequency, their analysis of BC LNG’s inherent economic risks outperformed commercial media’s blind boosterism of resource extraction. As early as October 2014, an opinion piece by the *Tyee*’s columnist Rafe Mair (who also co-founded the environmental blog *Common Sense Canadian*) warned readers about the exaggeration of LNG’s true economic benefits, given the ambiguity surrounding permanent jobs, royalty fees, and taxes:

What are the permanent jobs left over? The evidence is that they will be minimal. [...] What is British Columbia going to make out of this by way of royalty fees and taxes? [...] Companies will resist unto death a tax on the gross profits, meaning that whatever

percentage the government and a company agree upon may well be illusory (Mair, 2014, para 14–16).

In July 2015, the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) released a research report arguing that the BC government intentionally overestimated LNG's job-creation potential. The commercial media downplayed the report's significance by either ignoring it or countering it with rebuttals from prominent government and industry stakeholders (e.g., Jang, 2015). The *Tyee*, by contrast, recognized the CCPA's warning as part of a growing body of evidence rejecting the business case for BC LNG. It strove to make the case that dissidents of the LNG prosperity rhetoric consisted not only of analysts from progressive civic societies but also government and industry insiders. As Andrew Nikiforuk remarked in a *Tyee* opinion piece:

When Lee released his findings last year the government immediately attacked the CCPA report as 'misguided and poorly researched'. A freedom of information request, however, has revealed, once again, that email exchanges between civil servants largely supported Lee's version. One email thread confirms that the Petronas Pacific NorthWest LNG project will launch only "330 long-term operation careers". Clear-headed analyses by the industry around the world also confirm Lee's realistic job assessment and question the government's credibility. The International Monetary Fund, for example, recognizes LNG as a capital-intensive industry with a poor record of job creation (Nikiforuk, 2016).

The principal dispute between the *Tyee* and the commercial media lay in their interpretations of falling LNG prices in Asia. While the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* recognized this trend as a market fluctuation, the *Tyee* framed it as a key revelation suggesting that British Columbia had failed in the global LNG race and that the hype surrounding LNG export had turned out to be politically driven exaggeration. Citing Carbon Tracker, a non-profit group of financial analysts, Nikiforuk (2015a) argued that it makes little economic sense to develop shale gas projects outside of the United States since these projects "need higher prices to be justified, and also that there is Russian gas that is cheaper to supply" (para 9). Likewise, in his opinion piece published by the *Tyee*, Gillis (2015), co-founder of the *Common Sense Canadian*, predicted that with the Asian LNG market in freefall with no sign of recovery on the horizon, it would be extremely challenging for the proposed BC LNG projects to break even. In this circumstance, the BC Liberal Party were doomed to break their election promises of LNG-driven prosperity.

Whilst extensively discussing PNW's fragile economic basis, both independent media also offered detailed coverage of PNW's local and global environmental impacts. By doing so, they functioned as intermediaries, assisting the public understanding of complex scientific information. Such coverage frequently quoted environmental experts' dire warnings about PNW at length and then drew upon these warnings to problematize the official environmental assessment of PNW. Consider, for example, their coverage of PNW's threat to the salmon habitat near Lelu Island. In one report on featuring a petition letter

penned by ecology scientists and Indigenous leaders from communities throughout the Skeena River watershed, the narrative began with a detailed explanation of why PNW's environmental harm would spread far beyond the mouth of the Skeena River:

The proposed Pacific Northwest LNG project and related pipelines located at the mouth of the Skeena River in northern British Columbia would affect more than 40 different salmon populations harvested in at least 10 First Nation territories. [...] That is twice the number of First Nations groups that industry proponents identified as needing to be consulted about the impacts of the project. [...] Simon Fraser University professor Jonathan Moore, an aquatic ecologist, explained that 'this little local spot [Flora Bank] supports all of these fish from all around', and the LNG terminal could 'affect populations of salmon 10 kilometers away or 400 km away in the headwaters' (Nikiforuk, 2015b, para 1–7).

The narrative continued by elaborating the economic and cultural bonds between the Lax Kw'alaams First Nation and the Skeena River, which added a humanitarian perspective to the abstract scientific findings. Such contextualization also appeared in other environmental stories from the independent media. The commercial media, however, did not adopt this approach and retained a detached language style when reporting PNW-related scientific findings (e.g., Jang, 2015).

Finally, the most prominent cluster of arguments in both independent media was on political themes, which transformed discussions of PNW's economic and environmental challenges into a radical indictment of the persistent resource-dependency mindset in Canadian economic policymaking. This indictment consists of two key claims. First, British Columbia's pursuit of extractivism violates Indigenous rights and intensifies the social and political injustice already experienced by vulnerable communities. Both independent media did not treat Lax Kw'alaams' struggle against PNW as a mere political spectacle; instead, they contextualized it as exemplary of the existential significance of nature to Indigenous life and culture. Accordingly, their stories on protests against PNW constantly pushed for a broad public conversation on the true meanings of reconciliation and decolonization. The *Tyee's* report (Gill, 2015) on why Lax Kw'alaams turned down Petronas's one-billion-plus offer explicitly stressed that many band members felt the risks PNW posed to wild salmon would do irreversible damage to Lax Kw'alaams' ancient customs and endanger their constitutional rights to healthy fish populations. Such concerns were echoed by *Canada's National Observer*. When analyzing the Trudeau government's Indigenous policies, journalist Linnitt (2016) provided a strongly worded criticism that the Trudeau government had broken its promise to renew Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples by allowing controversial projects like PNW to proceed without Indigenous consent.

The second claim concerns the connection between extractivism and government corruption. Both independent media amplified the public concern over oil and gas lobbying and revealed a powerful corporate influence over British Columbia's political system. According to their analyses, fossil fuel cash

explains why the provincial government is willing to support a barely profitable shale gas sector with low royalties and taxpayer-funded subsidies (Nikiforuk, 2016). For example, citing research conducted by CCPA, *Canada's National Observer* reviewed policy decisions by the BC Liberal Party in mining, fossil fuels, and climate change and reached the conclusion that these decisions suggested “a pattern of favoritism toward industry that we found increasingly distressing and worthy of much more investigation” (Wood and Hatch, 2017, para 16). In another collaborative investigation with *Discourse Media* (Jang, 2017a,b), *Canada's National Observer* expressed its concern that some BC Indigenous chiefs are increasingly part of the corruption scheme, which further weakens Indigenous activism.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The above findings offer a systemic and detailed analysis of six Canadian media's coverage on PNW—the now-defunct flagship project of BC LNG—between September 2014 and August 2017. By tracing how these media reported the rise and fall of the project, the analysis has revealed several differences between commercial and independent media, which expands the analytical frameworks of previous research. This paper also complements existing scholarship on fracking communication by offering a detailed and longitudinal study on tracing the discursive dynamics concerning LNG in Canada.

Briefly speaking, the commercial media framed the PNW controversy primarily in a “jobs vs. the environment” dichotomy and, to a lesser extent, a series of divergent opinions held by laid-off workers, Indigenous peoples, and environmental activists. In line with previous research (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014; Bigl, 2017), in the commercial media coverage voices celebrating the economic and environmental benefits of LNG overwhelmed those addressing the serious threats posed by PNW to the environment and Indigenous sovereignty. For casual readers of LNG news—especially those primarily subscribe to Postmedia, the commercial media's PNW coverage was likely to distort their perception of it. Although readers of the *Globe and Mail* might learn more about the environmental concerns over PNW, they were not sufficiently exposed to critical views on Canadian extractivism's inherent economic risks.

By comparison, the independent media confronted the topical homogeneity held by government and industry stakeholders in the BC public sphere. Their PNW coverage highlighted widespread public fears of business–government co-optation and a lack of democratic accountability, which expanded the contestation over PNW beyond economic and environmental concerns. The foreground of Indigenous sovereignty also boosts the relevance of anti-LNG arguments to ordinary citizens because of Canada's growing public consensus of decolonization. The current study thus confirms previous research's (Gunster, 2017; Hackett and Adams, 2018) observation that independent media make vital contributions to ongoing public conversations about climate changes and energy transition.

The findings reveal two recurring discursive strategies deployed by LNG proponents to obfuscating widespread PNW

opposition: (1) emphasizing the internal division amongst First Nations, and (2) framing economic development and environmental protection as a stark dichotomy. Both strategies were implemented primarily by conservative ideologues, whose opinion pieces channeled the political ambiguity of rural BC communities toward participating in extractive activities on Indigenous lands. In this regard, not only did the commercial media facilitate the oil and gas industry's efforts to put prevailing public discussions on reconciliation under the control of settler colonialism, but they also strengthened the tenacious mindset of staples dependency in Canadian public discourse.

Another concerning issue emerging from the findings is Postmedia's structurally leaning toward industry boosters' advocacy for a “business-friendly environment” that puts a perpetual demand on the state to subsidize as well as deregulate the fossil fuel sector. The presumed necessity of heavy state intervention here reflects two important political economic realities. First, there has been a continuing decline of public consent for neoliberal governance since the 2008 global financial meltdown, which forced the provincial and federal governments stepping away from a *laissez-faire* approach to LNG development. In recognition of growing public demand for climate leadership, both Christy Clarke and Justin Trudeau settled on a progressive version of extractivism as their guiding policymaking scheme. Second, the call for an extractivist state by LNG proponents indicates an underplaying of free market fundamentalism, which exposes the fragile economic basis of extreme carbon. Without substantial state subsidies, it is almost impossible to build any extreme carbon infrastructure in the current economic environment. Although energy analysts were well aware of this vulnerability, their repeated warnings were exploited by industry boosters to demand more policy incentives. Nevertheless, these warnings also found an unexpected audience: independent media's contributors who reformulated this body of knowledge into novel anti-LNG arguments.

As Pineault (2016) suggests, the emerging “progressive extractivism” paradigm in Canada needs to be understood as a set of policies as well as their associated rhetoric. Central to it is the promise of using royalties from fossil fuel extraction to finance public goods and services, support liberal social policies, and, most importantly, facilitate decarbonization. Yet, many critics have pointed out that the prevalence of progressive extractivism is likely to further grow the fossil fuel industry's economic and political power. In their assessment of the Trudeau government's energy policies, MacNeil and Paterson (2018) are highly critical of its middle position on the antagonism between climate change mitigation and bitumen's further expansion, which has resulted in the federal approval of the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion in trade for Alberta's support of a nationwide carbon price. They argue that such a position reflects a prevailing political fudge that yields to the structuring effect of the (resource) dependency mindset in Canadian nationalism.

Thus, progressive extraction is by no means a strong rebuttal to the dominance of neoliberalism in Canadian energy policymaking. In the case of PNW, progressive extractivism guided both the federal and provincial government to approach it with increased government intervention, which restored

administrative rationalism as the guiding ideology for mediating the contentious relationships between resource development and environmental protection. This regulatory structure granted stronger discursive authority to scientists, environmental activists, and First Nations. Nevertheless, these groups still had no veto power. If a project's economic stake was deemed high, then environmental risks would be tolerated and mitigated in the name of national economic interests. The disadvantage of LNG opponents was further amplified by mainstream media's authority bias toward official sources. Although commentators recognized Trudeau's energy politics as economic pragmatism, a more appropriate diagnosis of it would be political pragmatism: through making heavy concessions to the fossil fuel industry, Trudeau's federal Liberals made a strategic abandoning of green voters as they sought to expand voter base in the prairie provinces. The major implication of this political choice is that the Canadian economy will continue to grow more dependent on natural resources, and there will be more revelations of the socio-political impacts of extractivism.

In short, progressive extractivism presents a renewed manifestation of the staples bias in the age of unconventional carbon. In the words of Pineault (2016), it "implies that the imperative of transition is co-opted by the capitalist pressure to extract, and that our obligation to the planet is trumped by our economic alliance with those corporations that hold extractive rights on buried sunshine" (para 20). Progressive extractivism is deliberately ambiguous about the timeline set for decarbonization. Another fundamental fallacy of it is whether a compromise that leaves ample growth room for unconventional fossil fuels is capable of unhooking Canada's economic development from resource dependency.

Ideologically, the most alarming aspects of progressive extractivism is the sense of inevitability it seeks to establish, which undermines public confidence in economic alternatives to resource development. In the current case, LNG was framed as the only viable path for struggling rural BC communities. This argument was constructed by emphasizing provincial and federal governments' efforts to mitigate local and climate-related environmental impacts; by reinforcing a division between workers and resource-dependent communities on the one hand and LNG critics on the other; by amplifying conservative ideologues' attacks on environmentalism and government regulation; and, finally, by celebrating LNG's regional economic development as enabling a form of economic reconciliation. Largely concealed, however, were the devastating climate and ecological impacts of large-scale LNG development as well

as ongoing violation of Indigenous rights and title to their traditional territories.

That said, progressive extractivism is far from invincible. The comparative analysis of commercial and independent media indicates two weak points which it has difficulty reconciling. First, in conjunction with the volatile nature of global LNG markets, high infrastructure costs mean that BC LNG has a fragile economic basis. Accordingly, critiques exposing PNW's poor economic potential and delaying tactics targeting the short window of opportunity became effective. Second, the LNG proponents' desperate call for foreign investment contradicted their national/regional populist arguments. Throughout the PNW controversy, the federal and provincial governments were beholden to both the myths of free trade and the interests of foreign conglomerates. This presented a sharp contrast to Canada's first trial of LNG exports during the 1980s, when the federal government stood behind national interests by strictly limiting the use of non-domestic materials and workers.

In conclusion, the current study has demonstrated independent media's significance to environmental reporting. Although low capitalization constrains their access to a broader readership, they still manage to outperform commercial counterparts in providing critical analysis of the limits and inherent risks of PNW and its underlying progressive extractivism. Given commercial media's inherent vulnerability to fossil fuel capital and corporate ownership, independent media provide a crucial discursive space for climate activism. Without question, there is considerable political momentum to be mined from this space, but how to deliver green economy messages beyond the progressive circle remains an acute challenge for environmental communicators.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SC conducted the study and wrote the manuscript.

FUNDING

This research was supported by the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

REFERENCES

- (2013, June 11). Petronas to spend up to \$16B on BC LNG project. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca> (accessed May 18, 2018).
- (2014, September 25). Petronas may pull out of BC LNG project. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news> (accessed May 18, 2018).
- (2016, February 25). BC LNG: AltaGas shelves Douglas Channel project near Kitimat. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca> (accessed May 18, 2018).
- (2016, July 26). National Post boosts weekly print and digital readership to 4.5 million. *The Financial Post*. Retrieved from: <https://business.financialpost.com/> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- (2016, July 26). Postmedia tops Canadian newspaper groups with highest readership, Sun and Province lead Lower Mainland. *The Vancouver Sun*. Retrieved from: <https://vancouver.sun.com/> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- (2017, July 25). The evaporation of an LNG project. *The National Post*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/> (accessed May 19, 2018).

- BC Ministry of Energy and Mines (2012, February 3). Liquefied natural gas: a strategy for British Columbia's newest industry. *British Columbia*. Retrieved from: <https://vufind.llbc.leg.bc.ca/> (accessed May 15, 2018).
- BC Office of the Premier (2011). *Canada Starts Here: The BC Jobs Plan*. Retrieved from: <https://vufind.llbc.leg.bc.ca/> (accessed November 15, 2019).
- Bigl, B. (2017). Fracking in the German press: securing energy supply on the eve of the 'Energiewende' – a quantitative framing-based analysis. *Environ. Commun.* 11, 231–247. doi: 10.1080/17524032.2016.1245207
- Buttny, R. (2019). Debating hydrofracking: the discursive construction of risk. *Front. Commun.* 4:5. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2019.00005
- Cattaneo, C. (2016a, June 1). Zapped: how Canada's energy patch got scooped by the U.S. *The National Post*, A9.
- Cattaneo, C. (2016b, March 8). Petronas losing patience on LNG. *The National Post*, FP1.
- Coleman, R. (2013, December 23). Progress on LNG in 2013 paves way for investment. *BC Government News*. Retrieved from: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/> (accessed May 02, 2018).
- Cross, K., Gunster, S., Piotrowski, M., and Daub, S. (2015). *News Media and Climate Politics: Civic Engagement and Political Efficacy in a Climate of Reluctant Cynicism*. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved from: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca> (accessed May 12, 2018).
- Crowley, B. L. (2015, May 15). BC First Nation will accept LNG project – on their terms. *The Globe and Mail (Breaking News)*. Retrieved from: <http://global.factiva.com> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- Dodge, J., and Metzke, T. (2017). Hydraulic fracturing as an interpretive policy problem: lessons on energy controversies in Europe and the U.S.A. *J. Environ. Policy Plann.* 19, 1–13. doi: 10.1080/1523908X.2016.1277947
- Dryzek, J. S. (2013). *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses, 3rd Edn.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Evensen, D., and Brown-Steiner, B. (2018). Public perception of the relationship between climate change and unconventional gas development ('fracking') in the US. *Clim. Policy* 18, 556–567. doi: 10.1080/14693062.2017.1389686
- Evensen, D., and Stedman, R. (2017). Beliefs about impacts matter little for attitudes on shale gas development. *Energy Policy* 109, 10–21. doi: 10.1016/j.enpol.2017.06.053
- Evensen, D., and Stedman, R. (2018). 'Fracking': promoter and destroyer of 'the good life'. *J. Rural Stud.* 59, 142–152. doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.02.020
- Fischer, F. (2003). *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/019924264X.001.0001
- Fox, J. (2010). *Gasland [Motion Picture]*. Brooklyn, NY: International WOW Company.
- Ghossoub, M. (2017, July 25). Pacific NorthWest LNG project in Port Edward, BC, no longer proceeding. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca> (accessed May 18, 2018).
- Gill, I. (2015, May 9). No wealth, No justice in \$1 billion LNG offer to First Nation band. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetyee.ca> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Gillis, D. (2015, December 21). Three fibs Premier Clark uses to sell LNG dream. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetyee.ca> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Green, K. P., and Jackson, T. (2016, April 07). BC's snoozing while others realize our dream of LNG exports. *The Vancouver Sun*, A13.
- Gunster, S. (2011). Covering Copenhagen: climate politics in BC media. *Can. J. Commun.* 36, 477–502. doi: 10.22230/cjc.2011v36n3a2367
- Gunster, S. (2017). "Contesting conflict? Efficacy, advocacy and alternative media in British Columbia," in *Journalism and Climate Crisis: Public Engagement, Media Alternatives*, eds R. A. Hackett, S. Forde, S. Gunster, and K. Foxwell-Norton (New York, NY: Routledge), 120–143. doi: 10.4324/9781315668734-6
- Gunster, S., and Saurette, P. (2014). Storylines in the sands: news, narrative, and ideology in the Calgary Herald. *Can. J. Commun.* 39, 333–359. doi: 10.22230/cjc.2014v39n3a2830
- Hackett, R. A. (2017). "From frames to paradigms: civic journalism, peace journalism and alternative media," in *Journalism and Climate Crisis: Public Engagement, Media Alternatives*, eds R. A. Hackett, S. Forde, S. Gunster, and K. Foxwell-Norton (New York, NY: Routledge), 94119. doi: 10.4324/9781315668734
- Hackett, R. A., and Adams, P. R. (2018, December 19). Jobs vs the environment? Mainstream and alternative media coverage of pipeline controversies. *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*. Retrieved from: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca> (accessed May 12, 2018).
- Hajer, M. A. (1995). *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hume, M. (2015, June 04). BC LNG facilities may not be built until after 2020, report says. *The Globe and Mail (breaking news)*. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>
- Hunter, J. (2015, May 10). Lacklustre support from BC First Nations signals trouble for LNG facility. *The Globe and Mail (Breaking News)*. Retrieved from: <http://global.factiva.com> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- Hussain, Y. (2015a, June 4). British Columbia's LNG prospects 'darken,' IEA says. *The National Post*, p. FP1.
- Hussain, Y. (2015b, September 4). Canada's shot at LNG over: Report; 'Opportunity closed'. *The National Post*, p. FP1.
- Hussain, Y. (2016, February 5). Shell delays B.C. LNG decision; 'enormous uncertainty'. *The National Post*, p. FP1.
- Jang, B. (2015, August 6). BC's LNG project poses threat to salmon habitat: study. *The Globe and Mail (Breaking News)*. Retrieved from: <http://global.factiva.com> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- Jang, T. (2017a, February 10). Investigation traces flow of public money into hands of BC chiefs in exchange for LNG support. *Canada's National Observer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Jang, T. (2017b, February 13). BC government scared of 'informed consent' from First Nations, says expert. *Canada's National Observer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Jaspal, R., and Nerlich, B. (2014). Fracking in the UK press: threat dynamics in an unfolding debate. *Public Underst. Sci.* 23, 348–363. doi: 10.1177/0963662513498835
- Lee, M. (2014, April 30). Path to prosperity? A closer look at British Columbia's natural gas royalties and proposed LNG income tax. *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*. Retrieved from: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/> (accessed May 12, 2018).
- Linnitt, C. (2016, November 17). After Canada fought for Indigenous rights in the Paris Agreement, what will it do at home? *Canada's National Observer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- MacNeil, R., and Paterson, M. (2018). Trudeau's Canada and the challenge of decarbonization. *Env. Polit.* 27, 379–384. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2018.1414747
- Mair, R. (2014, October 13). Four questions about LNG that demand answers. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetyee.ca> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Matthews, J., and Hansen, A. (2018). Fracturing debate? A review of research on media coverage of "fracking". *Front. Commun.* 3:41. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2018.00041
- McCarthy, S. (2016, June 25). Ottawa to mandate climate tests for proposed pipelines, LNG terminal. *The Globe and Mail (Breaking News)*. Retrieved from: <http://global.factiva.com> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- Murphy, R. (2017, August 5). The very mean Green machine. *The National Post*, A13.
- Nikiforuk, A. (2015a, July 22). Nine LNG questions for British Columbians to ask their Politicians. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetyee.ca> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Nikiforuk, A. (2015b, August 13). LNG project would affect 'Grand Central Station' for Salmon, researchers say. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetyee.ca> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Nikiforuk, A. (2016, March 16). Four more whoppers about LNG in British Columbia. *The Tyee*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetyee.ca> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Ogen, K. (2016, September 8). LNG slowdown an opportunity for engagement. *The Vancouver Sun*, A16.
- Olive, A. (2016). What is the fracking story in Canada? *Can. Geogr.* 60:3245. doi: 10.1111/cag.12257
- Olive, A., and Delshad, A. B. (2017). Fracking and framing: a comparative analysis of media coverage of hydraulic fracturing in Canadian and U.S. newspapers. *Environ. Commun.* 11, 784–799. doi: 10.1080/17524032.2016.1275734
- Oliver, J. (2017, August 2). Smothering petronas to death. *The National Post*, FP9.
- Owen, L. H. (2018, January 17). "We stepped in and started doing it": how one woman built an award-winning news outlet from her dining room

- table. *Nieman Lab*. Retrieved from: <https://www.niemanlab.org/2018/01/we-stepped-in-and-started-doing-ithow-one-woman-built-an-award-winning-news-outlet-from-her-dining-room-table/> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Penner, D. (2015, July 2). Energy market shift adjusts LNG time frames. *The Vancouver Sun*, D1.
- Pett, D. (2009, July 4). Swimming in natural gas. *The National Post*, FP9.
- Pineault, É. (2016, May 18). Welcome to the age of extractivism and extreme oil. *Canada's National Observer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com> (accessed May 14, 2018).
- Rankin, E., and McElroy, J. (2017, April 11). Fact check: promises, promises — last election's 'epic fail'. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca> (accessed May 18, 2018).
- Roy, G. (2018, January 25). Globe readership grows, most read in Canada. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- Strömbäck, J. (2008). Four phases of mediatisation: an analysis of the mediatisation of politics. *J. Press Polit.* 13, 228–246. doi: 10.1177/1940161208319097
- Synder, J. E. (2016, October 1). Petronas assets may be a hard sell: analyst. *The National Post*, FP2.
- Tandt, M. D. (2016, September 30). Template for pipelines: approval for BC LNG shows Liberal strategy. *The National Post*, A5.
- Tasker, J. P. (2016, September 27). Federal government approves liquefied natural gas project on BC coast with 190 conditions. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca> (accessed May 18, 2018).
- Tertzakian, P. (2018, September 12). Why natural gas—not renewable energy—has been the biggest disruptor in energy markets. *Financial Post*. Retrieved from: <https://business.financialpost.com> (accessed May 19, 2018).
- Thomas, M., Pidgeon, N., Evensen, D., Partridge, T., Hasell, A., Enders, C., Harthorn, B. H., and Bradshaw, M. (2017). Public perceptions of hydraulic fracturing for shale gas and oil in the United States and Canada: public perceptions of hydraulic fracturing. *Wiley Interdiscip. Rev. Clim. Change* 8:e450. doi: 10.1002/wcc.450
- Wood, L. S., and Hatch, C. (2017, March 9). Time for a corruption inquiry in BC. *Canada's National Observer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalobserver.com/> (accessed May 14, 2018).

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2020 Chen. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.