

Business · Analysis

Oil and gas know-how looks to alternatives in a business-led push to address climate change

Slow government action not stopping private sector in Alberta, Saskatchewan

[Don Pittis](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 20, 2020 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: 4 hours ago



Banff, Alta., has a population of 8,000, but summer crowds swell visitor numbers to 4.2 million. A business group is planning to cut traffic and go zero-carbon within 15 years — just one in a series of private sector-led projects in Alberta and Saskatchewan aiming to address climate change. (Andy Clark/Reuters)

Too many cars is exactly what launched Jan Waterous and her company, Liricon Capital Ltd., on a private sector-led plan to make Banff, Alta., its businesses and the entire Banff National Park net carbon free within 15 years.

Backed by her husband Adam's oil investment and finance skills ([Waterous Energy Fund](#) remains active in [oilsands expansion](#)), Liricon has gathered the support of Banff's biggest employers in a bold plan, [just released online Thursday](#).

It aims to solve traffic congestion caused by 4.2 million annual visitors to the historic park resort while cutting carbon output at what research shows is the most greenhouse gas intensive park in North America.

Car problem not a people problem

The Waterouses and their fellow 8,000 permanent Banff residents had watched the number of cars and buses increase over the years until, during peak tourist season, the town had become less like a pristine park resort and more like one big traffic jam.

"The question we were all asking in our community was: 'What are *they* going to do about it?'" Jan Waterous said. The couple and other business leaders decided it was time to join the "they" and do something themselves.

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- [ANALYSIS Mark Carney says smart money needs better tools to measure climate risk](#)

The ambitious plans for the longer term include a new rail service to the disused train station, including a new train line on the existing rail corridor with engines run on hydrogen. But other parts of the plan can be started more quickly.

Modelling themselves on the mountain towns of Zermatt in Switzerland and Zion National Park in Utah, the first stage involves providing out-of-town "Intercept" parking with shuttles to the business district and park attractions.



Tourists enjoy the view on the Matterhorn mountain at the Gornergrat in Zermatt, Switzerland, where being car-free increases visitor satisfaction. (Denis Ballbouse/Reuters)

"What you found in both places was that visitor satisfaction went up exponentially," Waterous said, pointing out that Banff has a car problem, not a visitor problem.

Not only that, but by reducing the number of cars driving from site to site, the park can make a sharp cut in greenhouse gas emissions.

"We're starting with transportation GHGs because it's 50 per cent of the pie, and that's where we can really make tangible improvements quickly," she said.

Until recently, management of Banff has been seen as a tradeoff between the environment and economic success. But under this plan, it is not a tradeoff at all, which Waterous said may turn out to be a useful example for the country as a whole.

"We want to show that we can do this, we're solutions-driven, versus this kind of, you know, the Paris Agreement, you know, 'Net zero 2050' and everyone says 'that sounds great,' and then they get back to doing what they always do."

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