

## Talking about our campaign

A vast majority of Vermonters support climate action, reducing fossil fuel usage and energy independence. However, to those unfamiliar with the concept, a policy designed to achieve these goals – putting a price on carbon pollution – can be met with skepticism or knee-jerk opposition.

That skepticism evaporates, however, when people understand that our campaign shares many of their same goals and concerns and that three fundamental principles undergird our efforts. We are committed to pursuing a policy that:

- 1) grows jobs and the economy
- 2) protects low- and middle-income Vermonters and
- 3) substantially reduces polluting carbon emissions.

*How* we introduce this concept, and talk about it as a tool to realizing these goals, is critical to success. We cannot simply rationalize or explain our proposal—we **have to connect with people, understand what’s important to them and shape this policy in line with their values and goals.**

Based on conversations, research and feedback — we know the top messages that resonate with Vermonters as it relates to this effort are **SAVINGS, INDEPENDENCE** and **LEGACY.**

Together—these three themes form a messaging triangle (below). In conversations with other Vermonters, strive to frame our plan in these terms and work to incorporate at least two of these themes into your discussion.

### SAVINGS

- People want to save money on their energy costs by weatherizing their home, going solar, etc. These cleaner, more efficient energy technologies are available right now, and people are already taking advantage of them.
- But there are many people who want to make these upgrades today but feel shut out by the up-front costs. This plan gives all Vermonters access to these money-saving energy options.
- And we’ll prioritize low Vermonters—putting them first in line. **A low-income family that gets free weatherization services could save almost \$800 per year in home heating costs.**
- We can also save by making these same investments on public buildings like schools, police stations and town halls.

### INDEPENDENCE

- Vermonters value their independence and believe in self-reliance. This is a chance to put our energy choices in the hands of Vermonters instead of large fossil fuel corporations.
- **We send almost \$1 billion per year out of state to big oil and gas companies.** We can change that—and give Vermonters more options and more control over our energy future.
- Picture a Vermont where we’re producing almost all of our energy cleanly and locally — keeping more money in state, creating jobs here, growing a sustainable local economy, and bringing low-income earners along in the transition.

### LEGACY

- Vermonters want a healthy economy and environment for generations to come. This plan embodies those values—**our campaign is one of stewardship.**
- While this plan alone will not solve global warming, it’s a big step in the right direction and an opportunity for us to do our part
- Carbon pollution pricing is an investment in Vermont’s future. It’s something that can produce savings and benefits right now—but also leaves a substantially better Vermont for years to come.

## Tips for communicating:

- ⇒ **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE** - Think about who you are talking to. Do they own a business? Do they have children? Grandchildren? Where are they from? Are they a lifelong Vermonter? These can be important clues to the values they hold and shape what messages you want to highlight in your conversation. It's likely someone with children values legacy. You might want to explain how this plan will reduce emissions and keep harmful pollution out of the air we breathe. A small business owner on the other hand would likely be interested to hear about how our plan emphasizes keeping more dollars in the local economy.
- ⇒ **ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN** - If you don't already know your audience, find out what concerns/ motivates the person you're talking to. This doesn't mean you need to probe the person - simply asking where they're from or what they do can help you understand a little bit about their values. And listen for the cues that they offer up. They might explain that they've looked into going solar but can't afford it. Or that they're worried about the impact of the plan on low-income Vermonters. *Hear* what they're saying.
- ⇒ **ACKNOWLEDGE CONCERNS/RESIST ARGUING** - If someone does express reservations or concerns, avoid arguing. Acknowledge the concern and try reframing that concern in the context of the themes we know resonate. If someone talks about affordability (as it relates to energy, or just generally) speak to them about savings—and demonstrate that shared value. That person might be more interested in efficiency than clean energy or reduced fossil fuel usage — so talk to them about that. Similarly, you may encounter someone who thinks this doesn't go far enough in addressing climate change. Acknowledge that a lot more needs to be done—but reframe it as an opportunity for Vermont to be part of the solution, take a big step forward in addressing carbon emissions here and leave our state better and cleaner in the future (legacy).
- ⇒ **CONNECT THE THEMES** - The themes best resonate when used together. So if you talk about legacy and a cleaner Vermont, connect it to the cleaner energy options that are available today—and the savings associated with that. Or if you're talking about energy independence, talk about what that means to you and how an energy independent Vermont is a legacy we can be proud of.
- ⇒ **SHARE PERSONAL STORIES** - This is probably the most important thing you can do. Sharing stories of your own (or even others) that highlight these values is more powerful than just trading facts. Share examples of Vermonters who are already saving money and using cleaner energy - and connect that to our campaign's plan to make that a reality for everyone. Or if you have kids, talk about how that impacts your support for the campaign, and encourage the person you're talking to to do the same. Make the discussion relatable and personal.

## Telling our story

### The importance of personal narratives

*“The power of your story may not lie in its drama, but in its absolutely perfect relationship to your cause.”*

- **John Capecci** and **Timothy Cage**, Living Proof: Telling Your Story to Make a Difference

One of the most effective ways of bringing new supporters into this campaign is by connecting our plan to real-life situations and personal stories that demonstrate what energy independence means.

When people hear from other Vermonters who have gone solar, or weatherized their homes — they want to learn more. When people hear from other Vermonters who wish they could do more to reduce fossil fuel usage, but feel they don’t have the ability to do so — they understand that. When people hear from Vermonters who think it’s possible to build a more sustainable future for their kids or grandkids — they connect with that.

**So how do we do get these stories? We go out and talk to people!**

You can do this at farmers markets, community gatherings, or get-togethers you organize in your own home! Get in touch with our organizers and **we’ll provide whatever support you need.**

#### Tips for story Collecting:

- ◇ **Keep it brief. Short stories are easier to share and get in front of more people.**
- ◇ **Look for variety. We want to hear from people who are both achieving energy independence and those who aspire to it. This campaign is about making energy independence an opportunity for everyone.**
- ◇ **Think about how and where to share them. Images are powerful—especially on social media. See our tips on collecting photo and video!**

#### SAMPLE STORY:



**I am a single senior living in my own home in Barre.**

**I have investigated the options for placing panels on my own south facing roof, but the budgetary limits of many of us seniors throughout the state often make that difficult, if not impossible.**

**For very low income folks, it's out of the question. Many of us in this position want to be part of this important energy transition, but need more financial help to do so. **We all should be in this together.****

**And as soon as I am able to make this happen, in my own way, I ||šũũ**

**— Islene Runningdeer, Barre, VT—**