A STRONG LINK BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND LARGE VEHICLES SALES SHOWN IN A NEW STUDY BY ÉQUITERRE

While Canada is not on track to meet either its greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets or its zero-emission vehicle sales targets, the number of light trucks on the road (SUVs, pickup trucks and vans) is skyrocketing. A new report from Équiterre highlights the power and influence of automotive advertising in Canada, including advertising for large fuel-inefficient vehicles, which represented 79.9% of new personal vehicle sales in 2020. This proportion has been growing steadily for nearly a decade.

**CANADIAN CONTEXT**

Canada is one of the largest per capita GHG emitters in the world, and emissions from its transportation sector are on the rise. Responsible for a quarter of the country's emissions, it is a key sector in the collective effort to meet the country's climate targets.

**AUTOMOTIVE ADVERTISING**

**PART OF THE PROBLEM**

Key findings on the automotive industry’s advertising practices:
- Domination of the environment is often displayed by depicting off-road vehicles in natural settings;
- Vans are barely seen in ads, indicating that SUVs have replaced them on the market;
- Highly attractive financing terms are very often featured.

None of the ads mention the vehicle's fuel consumption and/or CO2 emissions, and less than half of them display its retail price.

**DISPROPORTIONATE INVESTMENTS**

In newspapers and magazines, light-duty trucks are represented in abundance compared to smaller cars: they appear in 79% of car ads.

The automotive sector was the largest investor in digital advertising; in 2018, its share stood at 21%.

**PERMISSIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

**THE INCREASE IN LIGHT-DUTY TRUCKS HAS ESCAPED CANADA’S ADVERTISING FRAMEWORK**

Canada has no federal legislation in place to regulate automobile advertising before it is released.

**ÉQUITERRE’S SOLUTIONS**

In order for Canada to move effectively to carbon neutrality by 2050, it is imperative that governments take an active role in aligning the regulatory framework for automobile-industry advertising with the country’s climate goals, as well as in shifting consumer transportation choices.

Équiterre’s key recommendations to the federal government:

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE INCREASE IN LIGHT-DUTY TRUCKS IS A PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE.**
2. **ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT, MULTI-SECTORAL PANEL OF EXPERTS TO ADVISE AND ACCOMPANY GOVERNMENTS.**
3. **DRAW ON EXISTING ADVERTISING RESTRICTIONS (TOBACCO, SPEEDING, ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN) AS A MODEL.**
4. **GRADUALLY INCREASE THE REGULATION OF AUTOMOTIVE ADVERTISING AND SPENDING.**
   - **CREATE A CANADIAN AUTOMOTIVE CODE OF ADVERTISING**
     - Requirement to display CO2 emissions or fuel consumption as well as the full retail price, and restrictions when depicting nature.
   - **ESTABLISH A MECHANISM TO VALIDATE THE CONTENT OF AUTOMOTIVE ADVERTISING PRIOR TO RELEASE.**
5. **UNDERTAKE CAMPAIGNS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY.**