From Responsibility to Requirement: COVID, Cars, Climate, and the Future of Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract (300 word limit)

The global COVID-19 pandemic has created considerable challenges and opportunities for the private sector as well as corporate social responsibility programs. Consumer automotive production has been slowed because of supply chain issues caused, in large part, by the pandemic. However, despite varying impacts to manufacturing output, corporate social responsibility programs of automotive firms have still been functioning. Drawing on interviews with major automotive original equipment manufacturers (General Motors and Toyota) and parts suppliers (Linamar and Magna) operating in Canada, this paper seeks to determine whether altruistic corporate responses to COVID-19 will shape long-term corporate social responsibility programs in lieu of constituting one-off crisis management actions. Ultimately, this paper asserts that while Canada's national and provincial pandemic response efforts have benefitted from the voluntary involvement of the automotive manufacturing sector, these efforts lacked overarching coordination and will not materially change the role of the private sector in responding to disasters. To address greater existential risks posed by climate change, the future of corporate social responsibility programs may need to be guided by increased legislated obligations. As a result, the era of voluntary corporate social responsibility may well yield to a period of corporate social requirements.

Recent Publications (minimum 5)

1. Billedeau, D. B., & Wilson, J. (2021). COVID-19 and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Canadian Perspective. In W. Leal Filho (Ed.), COVID-19: Paving the Way for a More Sustainable World. Springer Publishing.
2. Giesinger, K*., Wilson, J., 2021. The System of Economic Development and its Complexity. Economic Development Journal of Canada. http://www.ecdevjournal.com/en/News/index.aspx?newsId=24ad6b28-53d7-4305-96ce-6afe75898a05
3. Cui, S*., Dong, H. Wilson, J., 2020. Grey water footprint evaluation and driving force analysis of eight economic regions in China. Environmental Science and Pollution Research, 27, 20380–20391; doi.org/10.1007/s11356-020-08450-8.
4. ElAlfy, A*., Palaschuk, N*., El-Bassiouny, D., Wilson, J., Weber, O., 2020. Scoping the Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Research in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Era. Sustainability, 12, 5544.



Biography (150 word limit)

David Billedeau (primary author)—a government affairs and policy expert with considerable experience in both the public and private sectors—has assisted in setting effective political outreach and risk mitigation strategies for organizations often found in the headlines. His professional background is bolstered by international experience in South Africa, where he conducted sustainability research and assurance consulting for publicly traded companies. David has completed advanced academic programs with Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, the University of Waterloo, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Harvard Business School. Currently, David is serving as the Senior Director, Natural Resources, Environment, and Sustainability at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce while pursuing a PhD within the University of Waterloo's School of Environment, Enterprise and Development. David also holds a research fellowship from the Energy Council of Canada and the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy.

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Notes/Comments: Note that supporting authors are acknowledged for this support, though only the primary author will provide a presentation.

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