

QUESTIONS

Labour

1. Statistics Canada reports unionized workers enjoy 14 to 20 percent higher wages than non-unionized workers in the same line of work, as well as stronger pensions, superior health and safety standards, longer paid vacation time, better health and drug benefits, and more rights in the workplace. Does your party believe that unions play a positive role in our economy? If so, what policies will your party implement to create a climate that is easier for unions to organize?

Yes, the B.C. Green Party believes that unions play a positive role in our economy. Unions are strong and effective advocates for improving and protecting workers' conditions and health and safety standards. A B.C. Green Government would take steps to ensure an environment in which unions can organize for the benefit of working people. We strongly support the goals of unions, to improve workers' conditions and stand up for workers' rights, and a B.C. Green government will make every effort to ensure that conditions for workers continue to improve.

2. Over the past decade in British Columbia, an average of 150 workers die on the job each year, and 17 workers in the province are permanently disabled from workplace accidents every day. What will your party do to guarantee better health and safety conditions to reduce workplace injuries and fatalities?

The health and well-being of British Columbians is at the core of the BC Green philosophy. The health and safety of British Columbian workers is an essential part of this. We will work with unions and employers to ensure that health and safety standards are fully maintained on all job sites and work places, including non-union job sites. We have committed to modernize labour laws to recognize new and emerging types of work relationships in the emerging economy by introducing a fairer, more responsive and more inclusive code; part of this process will involve a review health and safety standards to ensure that workers are adequately protected and that those who report on non-compliance are protected.

3. While corporate profits, productivity and GDP have all increased consistently during the past thirty years, Statistics Canada reports that both real hourly wages and median family income have been stagnant since 1980. Why do you think this has happened, and what does your party propose to change the situation?

As labour has become more expensive and more dispensable with increasing levels of mechanization, it has become increasingly difficult for workers to extract a fair income from their employers for their labour. It has become easier for employers to replace expensive labour with relatively cheap machines. Partly as a result of this trend, we have seen a significant shift in the balance of power and wealth towards concentration in the hands of large corporations and the wealthy few at the expense of the majority of workers. We have also seen the rise of precarious work, as better paying, more stable jobs have been replaced with lower paying and short-term or contract-based jobs, that lack benefits and financial security.

The B.C. Green Party has a strategy to work on multiple fronts to remedy growing inequality, wage stagnation, and increasing levels of working poverty. The B.C. Green Party supports transitioning to liveable incomes. As a first step, we will establish an at-arm's-length Fair Wages Commission that will be tasked with establishing a new minimum wage and overseeing regular rate reviews. The commission will bring forward recommendations regarding strategies to address the discrepancy between minimum wages and livable wages. This Commission will have as its objective increasing the minimum wage while minimizing harmful effects on employment levels and small businesses. This approach is designed to protect marginal jobs that would otherwise be at risk of being lost through immediately implementing a \$15/hour or higher minimum wage. As part of a shift towards more progressive taxation, detailed below, we will increase the general corporate tax rate to 12%.

The Economy

4. British Columbia has become a deeply unequal province. According to Statistics Canada, the top 20% of income earners enjoy 44.8% of after-tax income, the highest in the country, while the poorest earn only 5%. How will your party reverse this trend and reduce the growing levels of economic inequality in British Columbia?

The B.C. Greens are committed to reducing our growing levels of inequality in B.C. and we will implement a shift towards progressive taxation as one strategy to make B.C. a more equal province. This government has made choices to put the burden on those least able to afford it. A B.C. Green Government will create a progressive tax system where all people are paying according to their ability, and where the burden on lower-income earners is reduced.

A BC Green government will take immediate steps to increase begin the transition to liveable incomes with an increase in all income assistance rates. Rates will increase by 10% effective October 1, 2017, and rise to 50% above the current level on April 1, 2020. This increase will be supplemented by other programming to support those on assistance programs. We will also provide youth ages 18-24 transitioning out of foster care with a basic income support between \$15,000-\$20,000 per year, to help our most vulnerable youth avoid the adverse outcomes they currently experience.

In addition to raising social assistance rates, phasing in a basic income program is also a key priority of the B.C. Greens. We will implement a basic income pilot to test its ability to reduce poverty, and improve health, housing and employment outcomes. We believe we need a new approach to support people and families when they are between jobs, on low incomes, or experiencing other transitions that will occur ever more frequently. Without a modern plan for ensuring income security and reducing inequality as the economy changes, the continuation of current trends will result in ever increasing inequality and the concentration of wealth at the hands of a select few, without adequate supports for most British Columbians.

Our historic investments in education, detailed below, will also help us make significant strides towards ensuring more equal opportunity in B.C. from childhood onwards.

5. A recent Environics Research poll showed that 90% of British Columbians think there should be income tax increases for the wealthiest income earners, and 67% believe that major corporations pay less tax than they should. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the wealthiest citizens and businesses have enjoyed tax breaks, supposedly to “create jobs,” yet the unemployment rate in BC is the same today as it was in 2000, at approximately 6%. Does your party believe that those who benefit the most should pay their fair share of taxes?

Yes, the BC Greens believe a fundamental overhaul of taxation is required. Over the past 16 years there has been a steady growth in regressive taxation that harms the less well-off to the benefit of the wealthy. This is compounded as per capita government spending in real terms has fallen, causing cuts to social supports and adequate investment in education and healthcare.

A B.C. Green Government will implement a shift towards progressive taxation. This government made choices to put the burden on those least able to afford it. A B.C. Green Government will create a progressive tax system where all people are paying according to their ability, and where the burden on lower-income earners is reduced. We will begin the transition to tax fairness by increasing the share of taxation contributed by those earning over \$108,460 per year over four years by 1% in 2017/18, rising to 3% in 2020/21. We will also increase the general corporate tax rate to 12%.

In addition to these measures, we will establish a working group to develop proposals for an overhaul of the tax system that will reverse the trend to regressive taxation, streamline and simplify the tax system, and remove perverse incentives and distortionary effects.

6. The resource extraction-only policies have left this province split. Urban areas are seeing growth and opportunities like no other jurisdiction in Canada, while rural British Columbia is seeing negative growth, increasing unemployment and limited job prospects. What plans does your party have to encourage secondary industries to invest in rural British Columbia?

We recognize that major shifts are occurring in our economy. The B.C. Greens’ entire platform is built around the objective of ensuring that people are able to adapt in a changing economic environment. This objective is particularly relevant to rural communities.

One key step toward economic security for all British Columbians is a dynamic economy providing a constant and growing supply of quality employment opportunities. For this we need to ensure that enterprise and innovation are supported and rewarded, whether it is starting a small business, commercializing a new product or applying technology in established industries.

BC’s traditional industries will continue to bring revenue into the province, however the number of people employed in these sectors has declined over recent decades, and automation is set to continue to negatively impact employment numbers particularly in these sectors. If BC is to be able to create jobs that pay living wages, the government must create the conditions that support clean energy, the tech sector, and green industries. The government must support the creative economy, promote value-added industries and innovation in the resource sector. We must also do more to foster entrepreneurship, and nurture small business. The B.C. Greens support distributed electricity generation and small-scale local clean energy development, which will benefit small and rural communities. We will also invest in worker skills, upgrading and retraining, to help those displaced by automation or changing markets to find new

employment.

A B.C. Green Government will also support value-added opportunities in our forestry sector, to maximize the value from our forests for local communities. We will support more community forests, and opportunities for communities to benefit from forestry and value-added wood products. Please see below answers for further details on our forestry plan.

Health Care

7. Medical Service Plan payments are a user fee unlike anywhere else in Canada. This tax unfairly targets low and middle income families. Does your party support scrapping the MSP premiums?

Yes, a B.C. Green Government will eliminate MSP premiums. Such premiums unfairly burden low and fixed income British Columbians with a heavy flat tax. A B.C. Green Government will roll MSP premiums into the income tax system, ensuring that health care funding is part of the progressive tax system and reduce the burden on lower-income British Columbians. The plan is fully costed in the B.C. Green Party platform.

8. Our publicly administered, universal health care system is cherished throughout British Columbia. More of these services, however, are being de-funded and privatized. What policies will your party implement to ensure that health care in the province remains under public control and is accessible to everyone?

We support our universal public healthcare and will take steps to ensure that our healthcare system is adequately funded and accessible to all British Columbians.

A B.C. Green Government will prioritize the provision of primary care across BC. We will allocate \$100 million for the expansion of support for interprofessional, integrated primary care to be provided by physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, midwives, dieticians and other health professionals. This will reduce the need for people to see a general practitioner and potentially avert the need for surgery. Effective interprofessional teamwork is an essential component for the delivery of high-quality care in an increasingly complex health-care system.

This initiative to enhance and support interprofessional health care will enable patients to benefit from the full scope of knowledge and expertise of qualified health practitioners, reduce the burden on medical practitioners, and reduce wait times for treatment. The goal is to optimise the system to ensure that early intervention at the right level avoids more costly treatment at a later stage, thus reducing the need for more invasive treatment. The B.C. Greens will work with all stakeholders to make this happen, including doctors, nurses and hospital workers, health authorities and other health-care professionals.

A B.C. Green Government will also address the high cost of prescription drugs. We will develop a proposal to implement an essential drugs program beginning in 2019, designed to reduce the costs of prescription drugs and ensure the cost of drugs is not a barrier to health management.

9. There are thousands of people in the province on waiting lists for surgery, home care, and finding a family doctor. What will your party do to fund more doctors, nursing positions and hospital beds throughout the province, and ensure that our health care system is there for us when we need it?

The B.C. Greens believe that government has one job that is more important than anything else: promoting the health and well-being of the people it serves. The B.C. Green Party recognizes that it is absolutely essential to reduce surgical wait times and enable more British Columbians to access primary care and find a family doctor. We have several strategies to achieve these goals.

We will invest in the provision of integrated primary care, increasing access to nurse practitioners, doctors, and other health professionals, as detailed in the above answer.

A B.C. Green government will also establish an Innovation Task force to promote the application of best practices to reduce surgery wait times across the province. For many years, chronic shortages in hospital beds have resulted in the cancellation of elective surgeries, creating a backlog of patients which increases wait times.

To solve this problem, a B.C. Green government will provide more residential care beds and better home health care to seniors. We will invest \$40 million in new long- term care facilities, which will increase the number of beds in acute care facilities. An increase in the number of beds in acute care facilities means that they have the capacity to hold more patients recovering from surgery at once, helping to reduce wait times. We will also invest \$35 million over four years in home care to enable seniors and other people who need assistance to stay in their own homes. This plan will free up hospital beds currently occupied by seniors due to the lack of community alternatives.

Centralizing the management of waitlists and the referral of patients to the first available surgeon, and modernizing and integrating the information systems to support waitlist management strategies, will also help to expedite surgical wait times.

Education

10. One of the most important policies for creating a better education system is reducing class sizes. With the recent court ruling in favour of smaller class sizes, what specific policies will your party implement to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes in primary and secondary schools in British Columbia?

The B.C. Green Party is committed to ensuring adequate funding of public education. Our public education system is chronically underfunded. This isn't just tough on kids and families, it also ignores that education is the best investment society can make.

A B.C. Green government will increase funding for public schools, beginning in 2017/18 at \$220 million and rising to \$1.46 billion in 2020/21, to allow schools and school districts to invest in every child and prepare students for the emerging economy, and to invest in innovation and technology. This is in addition to the \$330 million committed by the B.C. Liberal government to address the recent Supreme Court ruling on class size and composition.

We will invest \$140 million in teacher professional development to train teachers in delivering the new curriculum. A B.C. Green government will work with Indigenous leaders, teachers, universities and colleges to develop policies and strategies to attract highly qualified teachers to the profession, and

support recruitment and retention. Special attention will be paid to increasing the number of Indigenous teachers.

We will also review the funding model for the K-12 public education system with a view to ensuring equitable access for students. This will address targeting funding to public schools with the greatest need and increasing local autonomy regarding funding priorities and distribution.

11. As a result of cutbacks to post-secondary education over the past two decades, average tuition fees in the province increased four-fold between 1990 and 2010, adding to the already-record levels of student debt. What will your party do to lower tuition fees and reduce student debt in the province?

We are committed to ensuring more equitable access to post-secondary education for British Columbians of all backgrounds. To reduce the burden of tuition fees and provide greater access to education for economically disadvantaged students, a B.C. Green government will implement needs-based grants for post-secondary students.

A B.C. Green government will also offer tax forgiveness of up to \$2,000 a year for up to five years to assist qualifying graduates to repay outstanding debt incurred for tuition fees. This initiative will enable students with existing loans to become debt free more quickly.

We will also set up a task force on postsecondary education funding with a mandate to identify ways to make postsecondary education more relevant, accessible and affordable. The task force will present its report by July 2018.

We will also restore funding to adult basic education, cut by the BC Liberals in 2014. Currently, adults wanting to upgrade their high school courses in order to pursue post-secondary studies are burdened with tuition. This prevents adults who desire to train for jobs in the emerging economy and sectors that are experiencing job growth, like health care, from getting the qualifications they need to fill those jobs. We will remedy this problem and remove the tuition burden for adults seeking to upgrade their basic education.

The Environment and Resources

12. Each year, millions of raw logs and other natural resources are shipped to value-added industries in other countries. What specific plans does your party have to prevent this and instead create high-value secondary industries in British Columbia?

The Liberal government policy of shifting forest tenures to 5 large corporations has effectively formed a powerful oligopoly that controls most of the timber supply in B.C. Compared to secondary manufacturing, expanding raw log export requires very little capital investment; therefore, it is much more profitable to the timber oligopoly to export raw logs. Without investment in maintenance and upgrade, many BC mills have been closed while raw log exports have grown substantially in recent years. Local economies are suffering due to significant job loss.

A B.C. Green government will ensure resilient forests and sustainable forestry, maximizing the value from our forests and ensuring their sustainable long-term management. We will protect old growth forests from further logging, curb the export of raw logs, and implement legislation to sustainably manage our

forests and rangelands. We will promote value added enterprises in the forest industry, and maintain and expand markets for B.C. forest products. Through all of our policies, we will ensure that forestry is supporting First Nations and rural communities.

We will place further restrictions on the export of raw logs, while recognizing that raw log exports are a symptom of a struggling value added forest industry and not the cause. Innovative encouragement and enhancement of value added enterprises and wood processing will be implemented to increase demand in BC for currently exported logs.

A B.C. Green Government will establish a Forest Opportunities Panel mandated to identify opportunities for promoting innovation, value added production, independent regional operations and indigenous enterprises. And, effective October 1, 2017, we will remove the PST from purchases of machinery and equipment for modernization, upgrading and new investment in sawmills and other value added wood processing.

13. British Columbians care deeply about our environment and believe that climate change is a major issue. What will your party do to reduce our carbon footprint and help lower greenhouse gas emissions?

Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions benefits the environment, takes advantage of new business opportunities and increases the efficiency of our traditional resource industries. We have an ambitious strategy to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets. We will amend the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act to reflect an interim target of 40% reduction below 2007 levels by 2030 . To reach our targets, we will progressively increase the carbon tax \$10 per year for four years beginning January 1, 2018, and expand the scope of the carbon tax to apply to vented and fugitive emissions.

We will act to facilitate behavior change, by expanding the provision of public information regarding ways to reduce carbon emissions and promote choices with a lower carbon footprint. We will support the transition to low carbon fuels and materials, in part by revisiting the mandate of B.C. Hydro to optimise support for clean energy development, including grid storage for community or privately generated power. We will also enhance our carbon sinks, implementing a forest carbon strategy to take full advantage of the opportunities created by forest sinks.

First Nations

14. Where does your party stand in relation to indigenous rights? What plans do you have in place that ensure meaningful discussions around the integration of indigenous peoples into the forestry and mining sectors, as well as other areas of the economy that flow from their traditional lands? How are you going to help with social issues facing many indigenous people on reserves across this province?

The B.C. Green Party recognizes that it is time to fundamentally change the dynamic between Indigenous people and the Provincial government. Natural resources are a major source of income and employment to communities across B.C., including Indigenous communities. However, to date, development of

resources without proper engagement with local communities, particularly including Indigenous People, has been a major source of conflict and missed economic opportunities.

A B.C. Green Government will recognize First Nations as equals in land management and establish a co-management stewardship model with Indigenous people for the development of provincial resources. We will engage in meaningful consultation and engagement that respects Indigenous resource rights and title, and collaborate with First Nations to build economic, environmental and social opportunities and commercial partnerships in our natural resource sectors. We intend to build a resilient forestry sector that supports First Nations and Rural communities.

We also recognize that there is an urgent need to address the economic and social conditions that weigh down so many Indigenous people and communities. A B.C. Green Government will, as part of a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, identify strategies to address all aspects of child poverty in the province, including specific actions to address poverty affecting Indigenous children and families. A B.C. Green government would, in cooperation with the First Nations Leadership Council, implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We will work in collaboration with First Nations and front line service delivery agencies to implement the recommendations of Grand Chief Ed John's report on Indigenous child welfare.