



Greater Victoria Acting Together



GVAT Climate Justice Survey

Response from **Blair Herbert, Liberal, Cowichan-Malahat-Langford**

1) The UN, in February, 2021 declared a “code red alert” for the planet, warning that the current plans to cut emissions are not enough to curb a global rise in temperatures.

What immediate changes to federal policy would you endorse to address this emergency?

The Liberals have a 64-point climate plan that outlines ambitious actions to get Canada to net zero emissions by 2050. I can’t describe all of its content within these questions, but I encourage you to read it – before you vote (I can send you a copy, email me at voteblair2021@gmail.com).

The former BC Green Party Leader, Andrew Weaver, endorsed the Liberal plan as the “only credible plan put forward by any federal party”.

What I ask people to realize is that big change takes time. Yes, the NDP and Greens have environmental plans calling for radical change, but radical change will create chaos for the economy. The environment and the economy need to move forward together.

2) Wildfires are increasing in intensity, frequency and size, threatening forests, homes and businesses, including in this region.

What do you see as the causes and solutions? What will your party do about it?

The individual causes of wildfires vary from being human caused through to lightning strikes, and they are fueled by dry underbrush and, often, strong winds and little rain. But there is no doubt that the increasing threat from wildfires is a direct consequence of climate change.

The solutions are two fold.

First, we must seriously begin efforts by Canada to contribute to mitigating the warming of our planet. See my answer to the first question.

Second, we must make concerted efforts to address and mitigate, and adapt to the current situation. The Liberals have an Adaptation Plan to Protect Against the Impacts of Climate Change, including fighting wildfires.

A re-elected Liberal government will spend half a billion dollars to train 1,000 new firefighters, and help provinces buy new equipment to battle wildfires, including Canadian-made firefighter aircraft.

We will also provide a new audit program so that homeowners can assess their readiness to withstand extreme weather, and add climate-resilience upgrades to the list of eligible home improvements under existing federal home improvement grant programs.

3) Canada's forests have become net emitters of GHGs.

Will your party count GHG emissions from forests in its overall climate accounting formula? How will your party reduce emissions from forests?

Natural GHG emissions come from many sources including oceans, soils and forests. These naturally occurring GHGs are difficult to quantify and even more difficult to control.

What Canada supports is the Paris Agreement, which limits the GHG emitted by human activity to the levels that trees, soils and oceans can absorb naturally. And, the Liberals commit to continuing this work along with the other countries that have signed on (194 states and the European Union, as of March 2021).

4) In the pandemic and during WWII, Canadian governments shut down things that interfered with achieving essential goals. In July, the Capital Regional District (CRD) board unanimously approved a ground breaking new policy on transportation prioritization in the region, which calls for shifting federal and provincial funding from highway expansion to public transit, walking, cycling and rolling.¹ The 2016 Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate change similarly calls for shifting funds from urban highway expansion to public transit and active transportation.

Will your party stop funding urban highway expansion and instead fund public transit, walking, cycling and rolling infrastructure? Will you personally speak out in support of the CRD's position against highway expansion?

¹ www.capitaldaily.ca/news/opinion-crd-must-push-province-to-fund-rapid-bus-instead-of-expanding-highways

As the population grows in our area, and it will continue to grow, we will need different options for transportation. One of those options could be rail from Langford down to Victoria; with funding, in future years, it could be extended up island.

Public transit, walking, cycling, and rolling are also alternatives and I support funding to develop infrastructure for those alternatives. Since 2015, the Liberal government has invested 13 times more in public transit projects than the Conservatives in their last mandate.

Having said this, to suggest there will be no requirement for vehicle traffic or, by extension, highway expansion is somewhat unrealistic. Walking, cycling and rolling may not be an option for people with disabilities or those that work in Victoria and live elsewhere. We cannot forget about the many that travel when making these important decisions.

5) During the pandemic, the federal government has provided temporary operating funding for public transit. In Canada, federal transit funding has been almost exclusively restricted to capital expenses in the past. Federal operating funding would allow transit agencies to reduce fares and increase bus service, improve HandyDART paratransit service, and provide affordable public highway bus service between communities (such as between Victoria and Port Hardy as well as to smaller communities such as Port Renfrew / Pacheedaht).

Does your party support generous permanent ongoing funding for public transit operations?

Operating public transit in BC is a provincial responsibility and decisions regarding routes, service and fares are decisions made provincially. The Liberal government has supported transit operations as is appropriate to do so from a Federal perspective. As noted in the previous question, since 2015, the Liberal government has invested 13 times more in public transit projects than the Conservatives in their last mandate.

6) The pandemic exposed Canada's vulnerability in the global food system. We rely heavily on global supply chains run by transnational mega corporations. Consumer demand for local food production is growing. Strengthening local, diverse agri-food systems will be key to increasing food security and our resilience and could reduce GHG pollution.

How should the federal government support local and diversified farming in Canada and lower GHG emissions from food and agriculture?

This is a complex question. In order to lower GHG emissions from food and agriculture, agriculture practices such as no-till cropping, running livestock and using cover crops need to be incorporated into agriculture practices. These practices come with their own unique set of challenges such as weed control and the cost to care for livestock.

Research is needed to determine the best way forward. Beyond research, supports would need to be provided for farmers to adopt different practices for agriculture and food production.

7) Emergency mobilizations require social cohesion, but inequality undermines such collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic has further lifted the veil on the inequities in our society.

How do you propose to tackle the climate crisis and these inequities at the same time? One required element of doing so is referred to as Just Transition – what is the role of the federal government in ensuring no one is left behind in the grand decarbonization transition before us?

This question couldn't be more timely.

The role of the Federal government is to bring together the best ideas on how to tackle the climate crisis and these inequities at the same time. And, this is exactly what the Liberal government is doing – right now.

Climate change is happening now, changing our communities and forcing us to change and adapt with it. The need to transition to a cleaner economy is urgent, and the need for a prosperous economy is always there. The future success of our economy hinges on our ability to compete in an increasingly green, low-carbon global economy. The Liberals want to work with partners to ensure a just transition for all Canadians and to be successful in transforming to a low-carbon future. No worker or community can be left behind. We cannot reach net zero without the participation, know-how and innovative ideas of all Canadians.

The Liberal government wants to hear your views on:

- **People-centred just transition principles that put workers and communities at the centre of the government's policy and decision-making processes on climate change action.**
- **A Just Transition Advisory Body to provide the government with advice on regional and sectoral just transition strategies that support workers and communities.**
- **Other aspects related to just transition – what's working, what isn't, and how do we move forward in advancing equity, diversity and inclusion as we move toward a low-carbon economy.**

Ideas are being accepted by email until September 30, 2021. Through virtual sessions (by invitation), the Liberals also plan to engage broadly with workers, communities, provinces and territories, Indigenous Peoples, businesses and stakeholders.

8) The path forward has to be one of true cooperation and partnership, and one that honours and respects Indigenous title and rights. We need a path forward that seeks to make right the

injustices of the past and fundamentally breaks with the colonial practices that have marked so much of our politics and economic development for centuries.

What are you hearing from Indigenous communities about the climate crisis? How can you and the federal government walk a path forward on climate that respects and honours Indigenous title and rights?

The Indigenous communities' concerns regarding the climate crisis are not unlike all Canadians – rising temperatures, warming waters, drought and the impacts these are having on our natural resources and their traditional ways of life.

The Liberal government has funded Indigenous leadership in nature conservation, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and establishing the Indigenous Guardians programs which supports Indigenous peoples' connections with their traditional lands, waters, and ice.

The path forward to tackle climate change must be paved with the same actions as any other issue impacting Indigenous titles and rights – a commitment to communication and collaboration. For example, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has responsibility for safeguarding our waters and managing fisheries and oceans. This role is critical to ensure health and sustainable aquatic ecosystems through habitat protection, based on sound advice. Part of the DFO's responsibility is to consult First Nations on matters of interest and concern. Consultation is important to good governance, sound policy development and decision-making.

9) During World War Two, in order to meet the military production and social needs of its population, Canada created 28 new crown corporations. Within two years, Canada increased manufacturing of aircraft 25 fold. Before the war, shipbuilders numbered only 2000, at the end of the war, there were 30,000 shipbuilders.

Given the scaling up that is necessary to combat the climate crisis, how can the federal government create new institutions to get the job done and/or leverage existing institutions?

The Liberals are already doing this work. For example, the Liberals invested over \$400 million to retool two steel plants in Hamilton so that they use electricity and natural gas in their operations instead of metallurgical coal. This investment created good middle-class jobs, strengthened the economy and cut pollution, the impact of which was the equivalent of taking 1,000,000 cars off the road!

Liberals have a plan to accelerate the transformation of Canadian industry to net-zero. We call this the Net Zero Accelerator. It will invest \$8 billion to accelerate green jobs and Canada's green industrial transformation. This will include \$1.75 billion toward supporting the aerospace sector in the transition. It is expected that these investments will reduce our GHG emissions by up to 6 million tonnes per year.