

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 climate crisis is the single greatest threat facing our society, and all societies, across the globe. All Canadians ought to be incredibly concerned that the scientific community has warned us of the catastrophic consequences of undermining the planetary substrate upon which we subsist. The Third Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has suggested that “‘lock-in’ from existing capital, institutions, and social norms” is inhibiting real, meaningful action on the climate crisis.

The Communist Party of Canada stands for the nationalization, public ownership, and democratic control of the energy sector, a just transition for all energy workers, and compensation to indigenous peoples for damages inflicted by extractive industry. The Communist Party of Canada would cancel Energy Saguenay, the TransMountain pipeline expansion, Coastal Gaslink, Line 9, Line 5, Site C and the Muskrat Falls dam in Labrador. These projects do not have real and meaningful free, prior and informed consent and are antithetical to both Canada’ climate change commitments and meeting the real challenge of the climate crisis. The Communist Party of Canada would moreover replace cap-and-trade and carbon tax schemes with hard limits on emissions such as to reduce emissions to zero by 2050.

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 cause of more and more frequent devastating weather events is rapid anthropogenic climate change, which the Chief Justice of our Supreme Court recently called “an existential threat to human life in Canada and around the world.” Re Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (2021), [2021] SCC 11 at para 171. But the fault for rapid anthropogenic climate change is not shared by all equally, and is in fact the fault of an irrational organization of production and exchange in society, ie Capitalism. Large corporation and the wealthy are responsible for an inordinate amount of greenhouse gas emissions, and the richest states, like Canada, are responsible for by orders of magnitude more emissions per capita than states in the global south. The Communist Party is committed to trenching on the private interests of extractive industry such as to keep their activities from exacerbating the already degenerating climactic conditions. Moreover the Communist Party of Canada would institute an absolute ban on the logging of old growth forests, and are committed to working with the Provinces to dramatically expand both wildfire fighting services and social supports for those impacted by and displaced by wildfires.

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?

The Communist Party of Canada will absolutely include net emissions from forests in its accounting of the real factors influencing climate change. The aim of the Communist Party of Canada is to actually confront the reality of the climate crisis in the magnitude that it has been conveyed to us by the successive reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A report by OXFAM recently found that Nations and businesses are "hiding behind net-zero smokescreens" which rely on fuzzy accounting of carbon capture, speculative expectations of technologies which do not currently exist, and accounting in such a way as "to continue dirty business-as-usual activities" and not trench on the private economy. The Communist Party of Canada is resolutely opposed to these kinds of shell-games, fuzzy accounts, and delaying tactics.

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?

The Communist Party of Canada is committed to a broad scale expansion of urban and rural mass transit, to building and funding high-speed rail and transit infrastructure as a superior alternative to highway and roadway expansions. I would personally support the CRD's position against highway expansion, as I personally support the development of next generation public transit infrastructure such as to render private transportation infrastructure more and more obsolete. The Communist Party of Canada supports the nationalization of Air Canada, Bombardier, and CN Rail, and the creation of a publicly owned transportation system such as to deliver affordable, environmentally sustainable transportation of people and goods across Canada, including remote and northern communities.

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?

The Communist Party of Canada absolutely supports massive public investment in public transportation and intelligent urban and rural transportation architecture and design. We support increased federal transfers for these purposes, and are committed to the complete abolition of ridership and user fees for public transportation. The privatization and militarization of fare collection on the Skytrain, for example, cost BC a substantial amount of money under the pretense of curbing fare evasion, while ultimately not increasing revenues. That money could have, and should have, been spent on making public transit free. When the organization of production and exchange in society is oriented solely by profit, services are provided, if at all, only incidentally, insofar as they profit those who already own in society. The Communist Party of Canada believes that transit infrastructure should be publicly owned and structured to serve definite, planned, determinate human and social ends.

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?

First of all, the Communist Party of Canada supports supply management, and would strengthen supply management and work to exit trade deals which do not support Canadian workers and farmers, like the USMCA/NAFTA. Successive Labour and Tory governments in the UK privatized dairy farming and the results were disastrous for UK farmers and consumers. The only interests to benefit were large, primarily American, dairy conglomerates. Supply management is key to Canada's food security and we would like to see it preserved and extended to support other aspects of Canadian food security through rational planning. Such rational planning, through the preservation and extension of supply management would also allow for intelligent ecological and indigenous practices to be integrated into Canadian agriculture such as to ameliorate the climate crisis. We would work with the provinces to also strengthen and expand agricultural land reserves.

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?

The common denominator of all the crises which our society faces is capitalism, that is, private ownership of the largest means of production and exchange, and a concerted absence of political control over economic life. The climate crisis, the pandemic, and the housing crisis, all reveal the irrationality of this laissez faire orientation, and the only possible solution to these multiple and overlapping crises is to trench on the private ownership of production and exchange such as to structure it according to rational, social, and ecological planning. A 'Just Transition' for energy workers to work in the renewable energy sector would be one element of this overarching restructuring of political and economic life, but it would also entail building sufficient social housing such as to trench on the character of housing as a speculative commodity, and rebuilding our domestic manufacturing capacity and public services so as not to be caught flat footed in the event of catastrophic events like the pandemic.

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?

There is a movement towards the acceptance of a standard of 'free, prior and informed consent' for development projects involving indigenous lands on the Federal level, but the real issue is what 'free, prior and informed consent' actually means. The actions of both the Liberals with respect to

TransMountain, and the NDP with respect to TransMountain, Coastal Gaslink, and Fairy Creek indicate that they are not, in fact, serious about 'free, prior and informed consent,' and are merely paying lip service to an ideal they have no intention of making real. When it comes to extractive industry, Canada has a real problem with chauvinism, racism, settler-colonialism, dispossession of indigenous peoples, that flies in the face of the lofty words from well-spoken politicians. When the Communist Party of Canada says 'free, prior and informed consent,' we mean it, and have the record of supporting indigenous movements against extractive industry which lacks such consent to prove it.

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?

Our society definitely faces challenges as great and varied as were present in the early Twentieth Century, and just as they were inhibited and stymied from addressing those challenges by an irrational organization of production and exchange, so, too, are we today. In order to address the housing crisis, the climate crisis, the pandemic, and all of the other multiple and overlapping crises in society, we must needs trench on private interests – not only by taxing them incrementally more to fill public coffers, but by nationalizing and reorganizing vast sectors of the economy, energy, telecommunications, finance, industry, in order to make them serve definite, planned, determinate human and social ends. After decades of privatizations and the hollowing out of public services, working people, indigenous peoples, vulnerable and marginalized peoples have been left impoverished, precarious, and anxious. The Communist Party of Canada proposes a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the political and economic life of Canada to rebuild industrial capacity, social safety, and democratic participation.