

# GVAT Climate Justice Survey

Responses from Elizabeth May, Green Party, Saanich-Gulf Islands

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?

It has been clear for decades that urgent action is needed to preserve a habitable planet. Clear warnings of the IPCC Special Report on 1.5 Degrees (October 2018) made it clear that the difference between 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees is the difference between preserving a reasonable chance of ensuring the survival of human civilization.

In order to maintain any hope of holding to 1.5 degrees, aggressive and radical action is required.

The IPCC Special report on 1.5 degree C set out clearly: “In model pathways with no or limited overshoot of 1.5°C, global net anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> *emissions decline by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030... reaching net zero around 2050 ...*” (emphasis added)

This key finding is from Chapter 3 of the same report:

The rate of change for several types of risks may also have relevance, with potentially large risks in the case of a rapid rise to overshooting temperatures, even if a decrease to 1.5°C can be achieved at the end of the 21st century or later (*medium confidence*). If overshoot is to be minimized, the remaining equivalent CO<sub>2</sub> budget available for emissions is very small, which implies that large, immediate and unprecedented global efforts to mitigate greenhouse gases are required (*high confidence*). {3.2, 3.6.2, Cross-Chapter Box 8 in this chapter}

<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/chapter-3/>

Please note the word “immediate.” That advice is now nearly three years old. The more recent Sixth Assessment Report of Working Group 1 - IPCC - issued in

August 2021 – makes it very clear that the Special Report on 1.5 degrees underestimated the impacts and, if anything, over-estimated how much time remains to avoid shooting past 1.5 degrees C – forever.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-58130705>

We are losing the possibility of holding to 1.5 degrees with each passing month. We are not acting as though we comprehend the word “emergency” in the climate emergency motion passed by Parliament on June 18, 2019.

Therefore, the urgent steps required are to:

- 1) Adopt an “all of government” approach to the Climate Emergency, create an all-party Cabinet Committee and address the climate issue as a national security threat.
- 2) Adjust our climate target (Nationally Determined Contribution) to at least 60% below 2005 levels by 2030, net *negative* by 2050;
- 3) Cancel the TMX pipeline
- 4) Ban fracking across Canada
- 5) Eliminate all fossil fuel subsidies
- 6) Rapidly expand our electricity grid while decarbonizing all electricity moving through the grid (100% renewable electricity by 2030)
- 7) Regulate the phase out of the internal combustion engine by 2030.
- 8) Invest in a national zero-carbon transportation network of train, bus and transit.
- 9) Announce the phased shut down of all oil sands operations, to be closed by 2030.
- 10) Develop and implement a Just Transition Act to guarantee all fossil fuel sector workers a just transition.

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 causes are multiple, including poor forest management practices in the failure to maintain natural ecosystem processes (as practiced by indigenous people through controlled burns), as well as the huge impact of the pine beetle

and standing dead timber in the interior, ideal as fuel for out of control wildfires. Of course, the pine beetle disaster was itself driven by global warming.

The rapidly warming atmosphere and extreme drought of this summer led to an intense season of wildfires.

The solution starts with ending our use of fossil fuels as soon as possible. We also should be restoring forest ecosystems as quickly as possible with ecologically appropriate tree species.

We must cancel the TMX pipeline and use the Crown Corporation, Canada Development Investment Corporation, changing the name of the subsidiary from Trans Mountain Corporation to Canada Climate Resilience Corporation. That would divert billions of dollars away from expanding fossil fuel infrastructure, while maintaining the jobs in building fire breaks to “fire smart” remote communities while also tree planting.

### 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?

Canada’s forests became net sources of carbon in the late 1990s. Counting carbon from positive feed-back loops from forest fires and carbon released through disease and insect epidemics is complicated under the UN framework known as LULUCF (Land use, Land use change, and Forestry).

And, a note of caution: including LULUCF may have a negative impact on reducing carbon by disguising increasing trends from industrial activity.

I am citing this short analysis from Climate Action Tracker, an international NGO [<https://climateactiontracker.org/methodology/indc-ratings-and-lulucf/>]:

“Inclusion of LULUCF in targets has the potential to disguise increasing trends of energy and industrial emissions.

When assessing progress towards decarbonisation, the inclusion of LULUCF into a emissions reduction target has the potential to disguise increasing trends of energy and industrial emissions in the country concerned. For example, if LULUCF emissions have a strong decrease over a period of time, as illustrated, for example, by looking at historical emissions from Brazil, the country’s total net emissions may show decreasing trends even if its energy and industrial emissions are still increasing. In order to actually assess decarbonisation trends, it is crucial to

disentangle emissions from LULUCF from emissions from the energy and industrial sectors.”

The principled stand civil society took on Article 3 of the Kyoto Protocol was that governments should not get credit for standing forests, nor emission debits for fires and other carbon losses. I would want to review from a very detailed analysis, considering land back to indigenous peoples and the potential for fraud in adding in forest sources (and sinks) of carbon.

That said, it is urgent that we protect sequestered carbon by banning logging of old growth.

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. 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?

Yes.

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?

Yes. We have an obligation to ensure public transit in all urban areas – and beyond.

We must implement the recommendations of the MMIWG2S+ Inquiry by ensuring affordable, reliable zero-carbon transit options for rural and remote communities.

Ensure access to zero-carbon public transportation, with high-speed rail networks between major cities, and spokes of light rail and electric bus connections across the country.

Guarantee every Canadian safe, reliable and accessible access to affordable, net zero ground transportation by expanding VIA Rail to a rail and bus system.

Enact a VIA Rail Act to ensure the VIA Rail mandate for a national passenger transportation network.

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?

We must revise the policy goals of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to align with ethical agriculture delivering increased healthy and organic local food to Canadians. The current policy (whether stated or not) is to maximize the profits of large industrial agriculture and intensive feedlot, corporate livestock operations to favour export of Canadian food-like products while ensuring low prices to consumers. No health or climate lens applies.

Once the policy is re-aligned, we will set incentives and regulations, working with provinces, to reduce unnecessary regulations of farmgate production, eliminate intensive industrial livestock operations and encourage, through education, the growing of food in every greenspace in Canada – including rooftops, school grounds and front lawns.

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 climate crisis is ALL about the role of government- just as COVID was. For too long, we have bought into the fiction that the climate crisis is the fault of individual choices by billions of people. But the COVID evidence is to the contrary. While billions of people throughout 2020 drove less and flew less, the cumulative impact on global GHG emissions compared to 2019 was only an 8% reduction.

The largest corporations – oil and gas and coal, cement manufacturers, intensive livestock and global transportation of goods – continue to fuel the climate emergency. We must take on the rich and powerful corporate elite. Just Transition is part of the Paris Agreement. It is essential that social justice be aligned with ending the fossil fuel era. Just Transition addresses fairness to workers, but the intersectionality of poverty, the marginalized and inequities in the power structure mean that climate justice must identify, bring into sharp relief and eliminate deep unfairness throughout society. Greens call for a Guaranteed Liveable Income.

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?

From the Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and individual First Nations in Saanich-Gulf Islands, I hear that the number one issue is our assault on Mother Earth. I hear acting to reduce the climate emergency must be our top priority.

Greens renounce the doctrine of discovery and the colonial worldview that underlines it. We must embark on a journey of reconciliation that is indigenous-led. Greens wish to repeal the Indian Act, but in this we must also be guided by sovereign indigenous peoples (some wishing to be described as “nations” and some not -as in the case of the Inuit).

It will be a long road and must engage an intergenerational commitment.

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?

We must amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act to ensure CPP investments are viewed through an ethical and environmental lens. We must divest CPP funds from fossil fuels.

As noted above, we can redirect the Trans Mountain Corporation to climate goals.

We can create a VIA Rail Act to direct VIA Rail to operate trains and buses, across Canada, delivering efficient, affordable, convenient and reliable zero-carbon ground transportation between our major urban centres and rural and remote communities.