



GVAT Climate Justice Survey

Responses from Tyson Strandlund, Communist Party, Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke

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 Communist Party is committed to the urgent implementation of a wide range of emergency measures to ensure we are able to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. That said, simply imposing carbon taxes in the form of increased fuel prices would impose enormous costs on working people, not on the profit-driven corporations responsible for over 70% of GHG emissions. A much more comprehensive policy is needed to reduce Canada’s carbon footprint, including public ownership and control of our natural and energy resources. Instead, we would replace cap-and-trade and carbon tax schemes with strict legal limits for pollution and hard caps on emissions, especially from industrial sources, as well as on vehicles.

Additionally, we would immediately cancel the Coastal Gaslink, Trans Mountain Expansion, and other pipeline projects based on the expansion of tar sands extraction, and halt all fracking operations. There is a huge opportunity to put a just green transition at the centre of our economic recovery and growth policy, and for this reason, we propose to invest heavily to create jobs through renewable energy and conservation programs, while phasing out coal-fired plants.

Our Party would act rapidly to close the Alberta tar-sands, while guaranteeing jobs and wages for laid-off workers in renewable alternatives, in addition to freezing all energy exports. What we need is a People’s Energy Plan, including public ownership and democratic control of all energy and natural resources, including extraction, production and distribution, to provide for people’s needs, not corporate greed.

Any political party or organisation moreover which fails to prioritise peace is not serious about tackling climate change. Even amidst environmental crisis and the global pandemic, all of the major parties in Canada continue to push for increases to Canada’s military budget, despite the enormous carbon footprint related to the deployment of fighter-bomber jets, the naval fleet, and other military activities. The Communist Party in contrast is demanding an immediate 75% reduction to the military budget, with these funds to be redirected towards the creation of

conservation programs and investment in renewables and green jobs, including the construction of one million units of public and affordable green housing.

Corporate executives responsible for reckless environmental destruction for personal profit should immediately be faced with fines and jail terms.

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?

There are those who would blame humanity broadly for the climate crisis which increasingly threatens life on this planet, including the heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and other climate events with all their devastating effects. It is clear however that capitalism and the insatiable greed of the world's richest individuals and corporations plays the leading role, while many Indigenous peoples had long managed resources sustainably. The UN has recognised that socialist countries like Cuba and China meanwhile are some of the only countries in the world to be meaningfully tackling this crisis, and as long as our economy is dominated by private interests and corporations, we cannot possibly hope to fight climate change. The best we can hope for is a coat of green paint as is being offered by the corporate capitalist parties like the Greens, NDP, and Liberals – the Conservatives of course do not even pretend to care.

In the words of American historian and political scientist Dr. Michael Parenti, “The essence of capitalism is to turn nature into commodities and commodities into capital. The live green earth is transformed into dead gold bricks, with luxury items for the few and toxic slag heaps for the many. The glittering mansion overlooks a vast sprawl of shanty towns, wherein a desperate, demoralized humanity is kept in line with drugs, television, and armed force.”

Until Canadians grasp the political root of this problem and recognise capitalism as an unyielding and eternal enemy of life on this planet, there can be no progress in this struggle. The rich can afford to move to higher ground, to places with cleaner air, and even try to profit from environmental crises, while many of our livelihoods from agriculture to tourism to conservation rely on the sustainable management of our resources and climate. The effects of climate change are not equal on all of us. The fight against climate change is part of the class struggle.

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?

Of course, we consider it necessary to consider all sources of GHG's. Our Party calls for an immediate ban on all logging of old-growth forests, and massive investment in conservation programs as part of a shift away from unsustainable forestry.

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?

Yes. The Communist Party is committed to a massive historic shift towards public transit and away from highway expansion – so much so that we hope to make this a centerpiece of our economic strategy. Our Party is committed to significant investments in public transit – but not corporate profit. We would nationalise Canada's steel industry to provide steel for rail production in nationalised and retooled factories dedicated to the production of urban and inter-urban rapid transit vehicles, and a massive expansion of CN Rail – which will also be nationalised – in order to provide an essential public service, not subsidies for corporate greed.

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?

Absolutely. The Communist Party would build and fund high-speed rail as a superior alternative to highways and airlines, substantially expanding urban mass transit while not just reducing, but eliminating bus and transit fares entirely. But as stated above, there is no reason for Canadian tax dollars to be used to subsidise corporate profits. Canadian operations of the Big 3 US automakers can and will move their operations out of the country to low wage areas at any time – these should be nationalised, including the machinery and equipment, with factories retooled to produce urban and inter-urban rapid transit vehicles and an electric car that's affordable and environmentally sustainable.

Air Canada, Bombardier, and CN Rail should also be nationalised in order to develop a publicly owned transportation system with the goal of delivering affordable and environmentally sustainable transportation of people and goods across Canada, including to remote and northern communities. Bombardier could easily be retooled towards the production of trains and public transit vehicles operating on renewable energy.

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

We are also fighting for the introduction of a bullet train, beginning with the Montreal to Windsor corridor, which is the busiest corridor in Canada for moving people and goods, to be expanded from there and eventually across the entire country.

We would additionally push for the creation of a publicly owned bus service, fueled by renewable energy, which would replace and expand the services previously provided by Greyhound and other for-profit operators. This bus service could be combined with our expanded inter-urban rail service to meet the needs of rural and remote communities. The Communist Party would also guarantee rapid transit for municipalities, paid for by the federal and provincial governments, and completely free to users, with dedicated lanes and right-of-ways to increase efficiency and encourage ridership.

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?

The Communist Party is committed to significantly improving Canada's food sovereignty through policies that benefit family farms and fishers, including income supports, and an end to bankruptcies. However, Canada's supply management system is currently threatened by anti-democratic so-called "free-trade agreements" like the USMCA and others, which we need to remove ourselves from in order to raise farm incomes and to protect food safety and security.

Since its abolishment, our Party has fought to restore the Canadian Wheat Board elected by prairie farmers, and to re-establish single-desk grain sales, and that remains a demand in this election. We would additionally reduce rail freight rates to promote trade in Canadian products and reduce reliance on US and trans-national suppliers.

An essential part of our food sovereignty strategy must be to curb the power of agro-industrial monopolies, and to set price controls to reduce the cost of farm inputs and shift to environmentally sustainable methods of agricultural development and food production.

The Communist Party further demands support be given to organic farming, reductions in the usage of antibiotics, fertilizers, pesticides, and other potentially harmful farm inputs, and a ban on "terminator" seeds in Canada. Our program is demanding that labelling of genetically-modified food products be a legal and strictly enforced requirement as part of a broader strategy to ultimately reduce the scale of the GMO food system. Our Party would moreover halt the construction of the Site C dam development in BC, the Muskrat Falls dam in Labrador, and other corporate megaprojects which are destroying good agricultural land for corporate profits.

Many Indigenous peoples still harvest local food products from the land and waters today, and we view it as essential that Indigenous Treaty fishing and hunting rights in NS and across

Canada be respected and enforced. For Northern and Indigenous communities, we would also implement strict price controls on food products.

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?

Economic progress and tackling climate change have often been presented as a dichotomy – a zero sum game. But as stated earlier, our Party sees no contradiction between these things, and in fact recognises in a Just Transition an opportunity to create jobs and build homes utilising green materials and manufactured goods produced in Canadian factories. Our Party is proposing the development and implementation of a comprehensive full employment strategy based on massive public investments to increase value-added jobs in environmentally sustainable manufacturing and secondary industry.

The responsibility to solve this problem is not on individuals, but rests on the shoulders of the federal government, which we believe must invest heavily in the creation of jobs in renewable energy and conservation. Private corporations and the bourgeois parties have proven themselves loyal to profits for the rich, not to working people and the planet – its time that energy and natural resources be nationalised and put under democratic control, which will enable us to rapidly transition to green alternatives while also ensuring that the massive profits taken from working people through these rackets remain in the hands of working people. Workers in unsustainable sectors such as coal and gas should be retrained and provided jobs with equal pay in green energy and elsewhere.

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?

Indigenous nations offer an immense wealth of information on the lands they have inhabited since time immemorial, and their knowledge and leadership must be used towards the sustainability and conservation that all working people rely on. The environmental strategy and Indigenous sovereignty go hand in hand, which is why a socialist government under the influence of the Communist Party would immediately recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples to national self-determination, up to and including the right to secession. We further call for the recognition and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, as

well as the Calls to Action set out by the Truth & Reconciliation Commission and by the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The Communist Party demands that Indigenous rights to full, free, prior and informed consent over all development, including resource extraction and pipelines on or affecting their land or livelihoods, be guaranteed and defended. We must remove vestiges of colonialism from all federal legislation, as well as to act now for just settlement of land claims, including natural resource-sharing agreements, without extinguishment of inherent Indigenous title. Indigenous peoples and communities affected by the tar sands should be compensated.

We believe that it is an urgent necessity to draft and adopt a new, democratic constitution based on a new equal and voluntary partnership of the Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), Québec, the Acadian people, and English-speaking Canada – all the nations trapped unequally within Canada. This would include the abolishment and replacement of the undemocratic and unelected Senate with a House of Nationalities comprised of an equal number of elected representatives from the nations within Canada. Only self-determination, the foundational principle of international relations upheld by the UN, can guarantee justice and equality for Indigenous nations who for too long have been denied this basic right and subjected to genocidal policies and devastating environmental abuses of their lands.

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?

As stated throughout this document, Canada's resource and energy industries must be nationalised. Crown corporations however fail to live up to what is required and what is possible for the working class of this country, which is why we call not for crown corporations, but for industries put under public and democratic ownership and control. Only then will we be able to adequately direct economic development sustainably and to the benefit of the working class and Indigenous peoples rather than for corporate profits. With a People's Energy Plan, we could easily guarantee the production, distribution, transmission and a bulk electricity system market, designed to ensure affordable, safe and reliable power supply for industrial and residential use.

During WWII, those who disrupted military production and the government's war plans were severely punished and imprisoned – or worse. Similarly, our Party believes that heavy fines and jail terms should be implemented against irresponsible polluters and corporate executives who willfully and negligently carry out destructive practices such as clear-cutting, in-ocean factory fish farming, deep-sea dragging, as well as any and all other transgressions of environmental laws and regulations.