

Election 2015 Candidate Survey from GSA : Entry # 263

Information about you

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Survey Questions

1. In light of the recent Marathassa oil spill in English Bay, what do you see as the top three priorities for improving marine oil spill preparedness and response on BC's west coast?

We are drastically unprepared for a major oil spill on our coast. As the Marathassa oil spill showed, we lack the operational capacity to coordinate an effective and efficient response for even relatively minor spills in calm and protected waters. With the proposals for huge increases in tanker traffic on our coast, this is simply unacceptable.

As I see it, the top three priorities for improving marine oil spill preparedness and response on BC's west coast are as follows:

1. Reopen the Kitsilano Coast Guard Station and restore full capacity to the many coast guard stations responsible for monitoring marine traffic along our coasts.
2. Restore funding to the Vancouver Environment Canada station of Environmental Emergencies and the Marine Mammal Contaminants Programme within DFO.
3. Bring together relevant stakeholders as well as all levels of government on the issue of spill preparedness for communities at risk of an oil spill so that all emergency personnel are aware of the system and protocol and thus can be an effective part of the system.

I think it's important to acknowledge that the best solution is simply to prevent the risk from escalating in the first place. That is why I will work hard to prevent additional tanker traffic on our coast from occurring in the first place by opposing all new pipelines carrying raw bitumen for export. These projects offer little economic gain, lock us into an unsustainable promotion of the oil sands, and are a danger to our coastal communities.

2. What specific actions can the federal government take to ensure that local communities are meaningfully involved in oil spill planning and response?

The Green Party is advocating for the creation of a new administrative body – a Council of Canadian Governments – to bring all levels of government together, including provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous. The Council would help to ensure that local communities have a say in such important matters as oil spill preparedness and response processes and regulations.

a) The establishment of a Citizens Advisory Council to facilitate citizen input into and oversight of Canada's marine oil

spill preparedness and response regime?

The federal government has been pushing an oil-export agenda on our coast and across our nation without adequate consultation and without obtaining the social licence to do so. I am certainly in favour of more citizen input in the process. Local communities are currently given virtually no voice and are not meaningfully involved in oil spill planning and response processes. A Citizen's Advisory Council is one option that certainly has merit.

b) Federal funding for local governments to ensure that they are adequately prepared to play their part in a coordinated spill response, and manage the impacts of an oil spill on their community?

The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that environmental protection measures are adhered to, and that communities are adequately prepared for disasters such as oil spills. The recent oil spill in English Bay demonstrated the necessity of a coordinated spill response policy and infrastructure. However, the success of this approach depends on the participation of all levels of government as well as adequate funding.

We believe the approach taken by our current government towards oil spill management and preparedness is grossly inadequate. The Green Party will advocate for more funding for oil spill response measures and the implementation of best practices.

3. Do you support or oppose Kinder Morgan's proposed TransMountain pipeline expansion project?

I am fully opposed to this pipeline and tanker proposal and support the Green Party's proposal to halt the expansion of the oil sands. The Green Party is the only party opposed to the TransMountain pipeline itself, as well as the process which is being used to approve it.

Kinder Morgan's proposed pipeline expansion would create a seven-fold increase in tanker traffic along our coast. These tankers would carry diluted bitumen from the oil sands; a toxic mixture that we don't know how to clean up if it spills into our waterways. Currently, we have little understanding how it will react with our ocean if it spills (how much will float, how much will sink) and we are grossly unprepared for any bitumen spill in our waters. The number of jobs this project will create is negligible in comparison to the risk it represents to our local industries and environment. To support such a project, in my view, is simply irresponsible.

More than half of British Columbians say they oppose the Kinder Morgan expansion, including more than three-quarters of young British Columbians. With the exception of the Conservatives, the other parties criticize the process as a way to avoid taking a firm stand on the pipeline itself. The Green Party is the only party standing up for the people and communities threatened by these risky projects.

4. What are your views on the National Energy Board's pipeline review process, including its current TransMountain review?

The foundation of democracy is the voice of its citizens. We must ensure that the review process for all major projects, including those overseen by the NEB, are guided by strong, unbiased project research, evidence and evaluation.

The current National Energy Board (NEB) pipeline review process is completely flawed and its shortcomings have been well elucidated by former intervenor, Robyn Allen. The review of the NEB on this project as it stands is an affront to democracy as well as due process. The recent news that Steven Kelly, a recent Kinder Morgan consultant who submitted key arguments on behalf of Kinder Morgan, was named as a permanent member of the NEB proves how the NEB is certainly not impartial and thus not a credible tribunal. The public must have confidence in the impartiality of tribunal-decision makers such as the NEB, as this is an integral aspect to the administration of justice in our society. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the National Energy Board.

The process we have seen with Kinder Morgan is nothing short of a sham. A critical component of the hearings, the ability for oral cross-examination by intervenors, was removed and the role of intervenors has been reduced to a paperwork exchange while Kinder Morgan's role has been simplified to a box-ticking exercise. For a project of this magnitude and importance, this is simply unacceptable.

It is important to note that as it now stands, the final recommendation for environmental approval will be made by the National Energy Board, and the federal Cabinet must approve its recommendation. The Province of British Columbia must then issue a number of licenses and permits to enable the projects to go forward. It will be up to federal and provincial representatives of British Columbians to clearly advocate for citizens' position on this project and to ensure that the federal cabinet respects these wishes. As British Columbians, we depend on our local MPs to represent us in the final decision-making processes, and therefore need a clear understanding of their positions on pipelines and megaprojects affecting our communities.

5. What are the three most important steps the federal government should take to tackle climate change?

The climate crisis facing our society and our planet is the most urgent challenge of our times. A piecemeal approach to tackling climate change will simply not work. We need to see leadership at the federal level to help transition our society in a responsible and effective way into a 21st century economy that leads the way in a clean-tech and green-tech led economy.

To do this, we first of all need to stop supporting fossil fuel development. We are actively subsidizing development of the oil sands, as well as other fossil fuels in this country, which is entirely counterproductive to reducing our emissions. Eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels is the first step the government should immediately take, and stop encouraging the raw export of unprocessed bitumen and the continued expansion of oil sands. Support for pipelines in order to 'get the product to market' effectively facilitates a massive increase in oil sands development for decades to come. We are not advocating for a sudden shutdown of the oil sands industry, understanding its impact on our economy and on the thousands of people who are employed by it. However, we can stop its expansion and shift our focus and economic subsidies toward clean renewable energy sources.

The federal government also needs to implement a robust and effective national climate and energy strategy. To do so, the government needs to partner with the provinces to create a national carbon pricing system - we are advocating for a fee and dividend model that will be effective, efficient and equitable to Canadians.

Thirdly, we need to rapidly phase out coal-fired electricity in Canada, stop the export of thermal coal from our shores and put in place significant economic incentives to promote the use of renewable energy and encourage sustainable home and building renovations. The Green Party has the most ambitious plan to transition our society through sound economic policy and investing in local and sustainable infrastructure needs. You can read more at:

<http://www.greenparty.ca/en/platform/bold-climate-action>

6. Would you support a cumulative effects assessment to provide information on the combined impacts of all oil, coal and LNG projects currently proposed for the Georgia Strait region?

I would be certainly in favour of such an assessment. The rate of development and new proposals that could significantly affect the Georgia Strait is staggering. A cumulative effects assessment is sorely needed.

7. How should the federal government address the chronic problem of derelict vessels spilling fuel and releasing other contaminants into the marine environment?

It is time to address derelict and abandoned vessels and marine sites. I would support the idea of having a single body responsible for derelict vessels. For years, British Columbians and Canadians have demanded that our governments do something about marine waste. The fish cannery in Namu, BC is the latest of many slow-moving environmental disasters. The Chilcotin Princess, a large ship moored to the decaying former BC Packers facility is dangerously close to sinking and adding to the mess.

Our current governments are trying to obtain the social license to push pipelines (both for diluted bitumen as well as natural gas) across British Columbia to the coast. Yet, they have been largely absent on their responsibility to deal with the more nagging, “minor” marine issues such as derelict vessels, or more generally, marine pollution. We need to draft legislation and provide adequate funding to manage derelict vessels and marine waste that has been largely absent from both the federal and provincial governments marine priorities.

8. Do you have any additional comments or activities you would like to share with our supporters?

I have been a journalist for the last 37 years, a path I chose with both a political science and journalism degree in order to have positive impact on our society. A firm believer in the principle of neutrality in journalism, this has meant that I could not take a public stand on many issues in order to report on them from an unbiased position. I chose to be a journalist in order to inform people about issues that mattered, regardless of their “market appeal.” I developed a reputation of fairness and integrity. I did my research. I used a critical mind. I made great effort to ensure that all voices were heard, not just those who were shouting the loudest. As a radio interviewer for 20 years, I took pride in people feeling they would be heard and their opinions respected when they were being interviewed by me.

My career as a journalist has prevented me from being able to point to work I have done with environmental or activist groups. One of the great gifts of taking on this new role has been the ability to let my own voice be heard. I have been honoured to speak out in recent months about issues that matter to me: C-51, tankers and pipelines, LNG, public broadcasting (something I could not address from within the CBC), the democratic deficit and First Nations issues. As a candidate, I’ve had the privilege of helping individuals with issues they are facing, including poverty, immigration and health policy.

I am proud to say that I am the mother of four children who are good citizens with small global footprints, each making a positive impact in the world. I have been a successful small business owner and served my community by volunteering with my union and with charitable organizations whenever it did not put me in a conflict of interest.

I have loved my career as a journalist because of how it allowed me to have a positive influence on our society. To present different viewpoints on pressing issues, and promote the discussion and debate of ideas that is absolutely essential to a healthy democracy. My decision to leave my job as a journalist so I could take a more public stand on the issues was not taken lightly, but I felt I could no longer work on the sidelines. I hope my decision to run for office speaks to the urgency I feel as we approach this election.