

Election 2015 Candidate Survey from GSA : Entry # 259

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?

I am committed to improving marine oil spill preparedness and response on BC's west coast. Our priorities include:
A legislated ban on supertankers on B.C.'s coast. With the expansion of the oil sands and corresponding pipeline and tanker schemes, a bitumen spill will be inevitable. As I said at the time, "Let's hope that this is a wake up call. However bad this might be, a bitumen spill would be worse, much worse." Indeed, the best spill response in the world could not save us from being poisoned by the diluents as they evaporate and hang in the air. Nor is there a way to prevent the sinking of toxic bitumen through the water column.

Restore funding for spill response. Over the last few years, the Harper Conservatives have recklessly cut many programs necessary for effective spill response on our coast. The Environmental Emergencies Programme in Environment Canada used to have regional offices in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal, Dartmouth, N.S. and St. John's. Since 2012, they have been replaced with a 1-800 number that rings in Gatineau, Que. and Montreal. We need to restore funding to monitoring and responding to oil spills.

Re-open closed Coast Guard stations. The closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station increased the response time to the oil spill in English Bay in April 2015 to six hours instead of six minutes. The Green Party believes that Canada is overdue to become a responsible coastal state. Cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard have shut down ten operations across Canada. In Kitsilano, Tofino, and Comox, Coast Guard operations have been slashed all along the west coast, resulting in slower response times for spills and search and rescue missions. The Conservatives also plan to close Coast Guard bases throughout Ontario, Newfoundland and Quebec in 2015 and 2016. In addition to the environmental hazard, these cuts will interfere with the critical role played by the Coast Guard in ensuring the health and safety of coastlines and sailors in the Great Lakes, along the St. Lawrence and the dangerous Newfoundland coast.

We need the knowledge of local Coast Guard personnel. Green MPs will advocate to reopen the three bases closed in British Columbia and preventing the closure of bases across Canada.

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

I believe Canada should adopt the model used successfully by Australia to bring together various levels of government to identify specific needs in areas of hazards research and to establish a collective emergency management agenda.

This model involves the Council of Australian Governments acting through the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management (SCPEM). The goals of the SCPEM are threefold:
to promote a coordinated national response to law enforcement and emergency management issues;
to provide a framework for cooperation and shared strategic directions for the policing and emergency services of Australia and New Zealand; and
to encourage and share best practice in police policy and operations and in emergency management across jurisdictions.

This well-structured process for intergovernmental collaboration has resulted in the Australian National Strategy for Disaster Resilience – a comprehensive, long-term, multi-hazard approach to disaster risk reduction that integrates all risk considerations, with a focus on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction. The Strategy was introduced as a response to a fractured system in which disparate policy agendas and competing priorities resulted in gaps and overlaps in natural hazard preparedness and management.

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?

I would support the establishment of a Citizens Advisory Council to facilitate citizen input into and oversight of Canada's marine oil spill preparedness and response regime. While oil companies stand to make a profit from pipelines and tankers, it is citizens that too often pay the price for a spill. The Green Party will support initiatives like a Citizens Advisory Council that give citizens a voice in oil spill preparedness and response.

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?

I will redress the real fiscal imbalance facing the municipal level of government. Green Party MPs will work to greatly increase funding through Public Safety Canada and the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) for projects that implement municipal, territorial, and provincial emergency preparedness plans, including: public education and training programs and local emergency infrastructure, such as adequate oil spill response systems.

We need to simplify the Public Safety Canada application process and expand the eligibility criteria for funding through the JEPP. Green MPs will work to increase funding for emergency preparedness training programs for emergency responders, including the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College.

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

I unambiguously oppose the Kinder-Morgan TransMountain pipeline expansion project. The Greens are the only federal party opposed to all existing proposals to expand major fossil fuel infrastructure. We stand firmly against the expanded use of pipelines (or any other means) to deliver raw bitumen (dilbit) from the oil sands to port. These projects will dramatically increase the number of oil tankers along the British Columbia coast, threatening local ecosystems and economies. The Green Party strongly opposes any such increase in tanker traffic, and has advocated for a legislated ban on supertankers on the British Columbia coast.

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

As the review process has shown, the NEB's pipeline review process is broken. In Bill C-38, the disastrous omnibus budget bill, Stephen Harper repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and placed pipeline environmental assessment reviews in the hands of the NEB – an organization that's denied the public access and refused to include climate change as an issue of concern.

Citizens of BC must have a definitive say about the proposal to dramatically increase bitumen-loaded tankers through our waters. Elizabeth May is an intervenor in the Kinder-Morgan National Energy Board hearing process and she has appealed to the board to include cross-examination in the hearings. However, the process has been reduced to largely a paper exercise, by eliminating the opportunity for oral cross-examination, the weakness of Kinder-Morgan's evidence may escape public exposure.

It is no surprise that the review is currently suspended due to a conflict of interest.

Science tells us that we must not expand the oil sands. Given that without oil sands expansion, we do not need new pipelines to transport diluted bitumen to port. What we need more than a repaired approval process is a government with the integrity to call for a moratorium on all new fossil fuel infrastructure until we have a national energy strategy in place that includes full consideration of all impacts, including the climate.

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

1. Halt oil sands expansion. Given climate realities and volatile international oil prices, expanding oil sands production is simply not on. Most of the bitumen in the Alberta oil sands must remain in the ground. We will invest in retraining for those working in high carbon industries and will provide them with the resources they need to move into the post-carbon economy. We can do better to create high-paying quality jobs and move our economy to a more resilient future.

2. Implement a National Energy Strategy that includes a price on carbon. Climate and energy are two sides of the same coin. We urgently need a comprehensive, science-based national climate strategy to address rising sea levels, drought, extreme weather events, changing rainfall patterns, increased forest fires, melting permafrost and crumbling Arctic infrastructure.

A robust Canadian Climate and Energy Strategy begins with eliminating all fossil fuel subsidies. Canada currently provides more than \$1 billion dollars a year in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, meaning, on a per capita basis, Canadian taxpayers provide more handouts to the fossil fuel industry than almost every other country in the G20.

Next, we must work together to put a national price on carbon. In the complete absence of federal leadership, the provinces have taken up the challenge of climate change on their own. Although some progress has been made, notably in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, this patchwork of climate strategies is an inefficient way to tackle an issue that faces all Canadians.

The Carbon Fee and Dividend Plan is the smartest, most efficient, and most effective way to shift away from burning fossil fuels. We will place a fee on carbon, and pay the funds it generates directly to every Canadian over age 18 in the form of an annual carbon dividend. This plan will defend our climate, diversify our energy mix, grow our economy, and ensure energy security for Canadians.

3. Invest in an infrastructure that promotes renewable energy, and a more robust east-west electricity grid to promote renewable energy transmission between provinces, while reducing the enormous waste in our energy systems. We still waste more than half the energy we use. It's time to save money and reduce pollution by going after waste.

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?

Yes. The Green Party will support a cumulative effects assessment for all proposed fossil fuel projects both in the Georgia Strait region and nationally.

7. How should the federal government address the chronic problem of derelict vessels spilling fuel and releasing other

contaminants into the marine environment?

As Paul Manly, Green Candidate for Nanaimo-Ladysmith, wrote:

Derelict and abandoned vessels pose a serious threat to the environment of B.C.'s coastal communities but the federal government has been reluctant to act.

The Transport Canada Ship-Source Oil Pollution Fund can only be used for clean-up after a spill has occurred. That's too late.

The Green Party stands by the principle that polluters must pay and be held responsible for their actions. Registration, insurance and vessel safety codes should be in place to ensure that boat owners are in compliance with the standards necessary to protect our coastal waters.

We also stand by the precautionary principle and would empower the Canadian Coast Guard to take action in situations where vessels have been abandoned in substandard conditions and pose a threat to the environment.

Our local economies depend greatly on the vital role played by our harbours in the fishing, tourism and transportation industries. They must be protected with the full force of federal legislation.

The Green Party will support legislation that holds owners of derelict vessels responsible but which also empowers Transport Canada and the Coast Guard, providing the necessary funding to be proactive and deal with derelict and abandoned vessels before they cause environmental disasters.

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

I will commit to restoring evidence-based decision making and ensuring unfettered access to public science. Public science belongs to the people. It is not for the communications specialists in the Prime Minister's Office to decide what publicly funded information becomes known.

In June, 2015, Elizabeth May introduced the Public Access to Science Act to make all publicly funded scientific research publicly accessible by law. As Ms. May said at the time: "My bill will ensure that no prime minister can ever bury government science again. While this problem is not new, the Harper years have seen a shocking burial of evidence into places where Canadians will never see it. The work our scientists do is too important to be hidden from view, simply because it is inconvenient to the Prime Minister's agenda. The challenges we face require an open and transparent engagement with the facts."

We need to lift the cloud of darkness recently placed on the federal public service, where scientists have been forbidden from sharing their findings with the public. The challenges we face are existential. We need all the evidence we can muster to design the best possible policies to meet them. It is irresponsible to hide evidence because it is inconvenient.