



October 14th, 2020

Attn: Sean Cain, [media@ccu-csc.ca](mailto:media@ccu-csc.ca)

Thank you for your inquiry into how the B.C. Greens will support workers and unions in our province. Please find our response detailed below.

Sincerely,  
The B.C. Greens

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## Labour

**1. The COVID-19 pandemic has put workers in numerous industries at enormous risk. For those lucky enough to have kept their jobs, many report wage cutbacks or reduced working hours. While those suffering from unemployment created by the pandemic are surviving on the bare minimum. What actions will your party take to protect working people and keep them safe from COVID-19, both on and off the job?**

We recognize the huge impact of COVID-19 on British Columbians of all backgrounds. There is an immediate need to provide people with well-paying, meaningful jobs, especially for those who have lost their jobs during this pandemic, and for workers in industries in transition. People are worried about their health and safety, their kids going back to school, and the future of their jobs and the economy. To address these concerns, we need to build a stronger, more resilient province so that people can be safe and secure in their communities. We proposed a number of solutions in our platform to provide greater income security and wellbeing for working people.

As one example, we proposed establishing a clean jobs program to help us recover from COVID-19 and get people back to work immediately. This program would create thousands of jobs enhancing B.C.'s natural assets, tree planting, habitat restoration, remediating environmental liabilities, as well as climate adaptation and improving community resilience to climate change.

We also feel that we need to take this time to learn lessons from COVID-19 and strengthen our social safety net. As we rebuild, we can't afford to go back to our old patchwork of social supports that weren't meeting the needs of people. We would begin a transition towards basic income through making our network of supports more generous and less onerous and stigmatizing for those who need them.

In our platform we also proposed establishing a permanent Fair Wages Commission to recommend consistent and predictable increases in the minimum wage and reduce political interference in wage policy.

**2. Statistics Canada reports unionized workers receive higher wages than non-unionized workers in the same line of work, as well as stronger pensions, safer working conditions, longer paid vacation time, better health and drug benefits, and more rights in the workplace. Does your party believe that unions play a positive role in our economy? If so, what policies will your party implement to create a climate that is easier for unions to organize?**

The B.C. Greens believe that unions play an important role in upholding worker's rights and have paved the way forward for industry standards towards employer-employee expectations. We passed legislation with the NDP to improve employment standards and modernize the Labour Code to allow for a fairer organizing environment, and we would consult with unions and other stakeholders across sectors to make sure that our legislation is meeting the needs of British Columbians and supporting workers.

As we stated in our platform, we need to start looking more seriously at an issue faced by all jurisdictions: the fact that we have large multinational corporations operating here, paying less than livable wages while they hand out massive profits to shareholders abroad. That's a problem that contributes to the cycle of poverty in our province, even amongst those with full time jobs. As we grow new sectors of our economy, we need to make sure we're keeping a balance. To achieve this we would establish a task force with broad representation to advise on modernizing employment standards and reducing inequality in modern employment relationships.

**3. Over the past decade in British Columbia, an average of 150 workers die on the job each year, and 17 workers in the province are permanently disabled from workplace accidents every day. What will your party do to guarantee better health and safety conditions to reduce workplace injuries and fatalities?**

We are committed to continuously improving worker safety on the job and doing everything we can to keep every worker safe. This summer we passed changes to the Workers Compensation Act to improve the system for workers. Through consultation and reviewing relevant policy recommendations, including in the Patterson report, we will work towards a province where we have stronger health and safety conditions and each worker goes home safe from their job every day.

## **The Economy**

**4. A recent Environics Research poll showed that 90% of British Columbians think there should be income tax increases for the wealthiest income earners, and 67% believe that major corporations pay less tax than they should. Does your party believe that those who benefit the most should pay their fair share of taxes?**

The growth of B.C.'s economy has not benefited people equally in this province. Many British Columbians were feeling left behind and left out of the benefits of our prosperity well before COVID-19. Now, COVID-19 is exacerbating existing inequalities in our society and expanding the number of people facing economic insecurity. Modernizing the structure of taxation in B.C. and Canada is an important way to halt the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and the rise of inequality through the increasing concentration of wealth. This is a fundamental issue facing our society, as inequality hurts everybody and damages our communities. We believe more action needs to be taken to reduce inequality and ensure that everyone is contributing fairly to our society.

**5. The resource extraction-only policies have left this province split. Urban areas are seeing growth and opportunities like no other jurisdiction in Canada, while rural British Columbia is seeing negative growth, increasing unemployment and limited job prospects. What plans does your party have to encourage secondary industries to invest in rural British Columbia?**

The B.C. Greens strongly believe that we can create a low-carbon, sustainable economy that provides family-supporting jobs. For too long, we have been allowing foreign-owned multinationals to ship minimally processed resources out-of-province, while rural communities shed thousands of jobs, and we suffer the environmental consequences of a model of unsustainable resource extraction. Instead we need to generate far more jobs and revenue from what we harvest or extract from our environment.

There are tools the government can use to incentivize secondary industries to play a broader role in our economic development across B.C. For example, in forestry, we can prioritize ensuring that small producers have access to fibre, incentivizing and procuring value-added wood products and non-traditional uses of wood fibre, and establishing revenue-sharing with First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts. We can use tax measures to encourage companies to invest in manufacturing equipment, and to discourage the raw export of our natural resources without adding value in B.C.

We have a broader plan to ensure clean, sustainable jobs for British Columbians in communities across B.C. This is exemplified in our commitment to create a \$500 million fund to support sustainable jobs. Our immediate actions to get there include implementing a just transition program for workers in the oil and gas sector and other industries in transition, establishing a clean jobs program in response to COVID-19 that gets people back to work immediately, and expanding the CleanB.C. Better Buildings program. Workers in our traditional natural resource sectors have skills and experience that are extremely valuable and transferrable to other areas of our economy. Building retrofits is one area with potential for significant expansion of jobs benefits - we would expand our retrofits program and make it a true jobs creator by increasing the short-term incentives offered to stimulate retrofits, accelerating the requirements of the building code to strengthen the business case, and partner with colleges, technical institutes

and private organizations to develop the training programs to expand employment in the green retrofit space. We think programming needs to focus on supporting those sectors impacted by COVID-19, as well as support the just transition program for workers in the oil and gas sector. Our clean jobs program would create thousands of jobs enhancing B.C.'s natural assets, tree planting, habitat restoration, remediating environmental liabilities, as well as climate adaptation and improving community resilience to climate change.

**6. Most economies throughout the western world have been on a general five-day workweek for almost a century. Yet with the COVID-19 pandemic, some governments are considering legislating a four-day workweek to protect workers, create jobs and free up time for the overworked. What is your party's view of moving the B.C. economy to a four-day workweek?**

Unions have been the drivers of significant improvements to working conditions, including shorter working weeks. But as you mention in the question, we haven't changed how we work in any significant way in almost a century. Most workers still work 40 hour, 5-day weeks, despite the fact that productivity has increased substantially over the last number of decades, and technology has made huge gains. We think it's overdue that we begin to consider reduced workweeks and flexible working arrangements including a four-day workweek. Studies in other jurisdictions have shown that productivity, worker health, and overall wellbeing increased when switching to a shorter workweek, in addition to improving a work-life balance. In consultation with business, labour and other stakeholders, we commit to exploring options for reduced work weeks and flexible working hours. This includes encouraging employers to adopt a 4-day work week. We need to ensure that our jobs do not dominate our lives to the detriment of families or our health and wellbeing.

## **Health Care**

**7. Our publicly administered, universal health care system is cherished throughout British Columbia. What policies will your party implement to ensure that health care in the province remains under public control and is accessible to everyone?**

We fully support a public healthcare system for all British Columbians and continuing to invest to ensure that our system remains high quality and accessible to all. We've made a number of commitments in this area, including investing substantially to expand our healthcare system to including mental healthcare. We have also committed to move away from for-profit ownership in our long-term care homes, instead building a mix of public, non-for-profit, community-based services and co-ops.

**8. There are thousands of people in the province on waiting lists for surgery, home care, and finding a family doctor. What will your party do to fund more doctors, nursing**



**positions and hospital beds throughout the province, and ensure that our health care system is there for us when we need it?**

British Columbians rightfully take pride in how our healthcare system and our frontline healthcare workers responded to COVID-19. As we begin to look ahead, we must balance remaining vigilant to this pandemic while bringing back surgeries and opening up our healthcare to non-COVID-19 care.

One of the more important priorities we must tackle is the family doctor shortage in B.C. The B.C. Greens will continue to work with physicians and other stakeholders to improve incentives for doctors to set up family practices in B.C., including opportunities for qualified foreign-trained physicians to provide services in our province through work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

In the last government, the B.C. Greens helped champion the creation of primary care networks. These interprofessional and integrated teams are providing more access to physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, midwives, dieticians and other health professionals, helping alleviate the burden on doctors, increasing their ability to take on new patients.

The B.C. Greens released a plan for primary care that focuses on expanding the accessibility of healthcare services while expanding access to family doctors. We propose to create an essential drugs program beginning in 2022 that is designed to reduce the costs of prescription drugs and overcome cost-related health management barriers. We will establish a task force to develop a balance between acute and preventative care; this task force will review the funding and range of services covered by the health care system to ensure that they meet treatment and prevention needs, delivering recommendations to government by 2022. Furthermore, we will consult with physicians and other stakeholders to improve efficiency and incentivize General Practitioner practices.

## **Education**

**9. One of the most important policies for creating a better education system is reducing class sizes. What specific policies will your party implement to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes in primary and secondary schools in British Columbia?**

With a focus on ensuring that the money needed to address the current school year is in place, the B.C. Greens education plan is based on bringing the age of scarcity in our education system to an end. There is an immediate need to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on our education system, and the B.C. Greens commit to fully funding operating grants for school districts received in the 2019/2020 school year to ensure that enrollment during COVID-19 does not compromise the quality of education, nor the ability of schools to retain current teachers or education assistants.

Over the long-term, the B.C. Greens commit to working with education partners on a long term plan for how B.C. can improve its per student funding. We will address the continued disparities in wages, class size and composition between districts. This is in line with our commitment to develop a 21st-century funding model for education that continues to move us forward.

Furthermore, we strongly believe that a strong education begins in early childhood. The B.C. Greens will begin with providing \$300 million in new funding to begin the phase in of up to 25 hours of free early childhood education programs per week for three and four year olds, rising as capacity expands. We will provide a further \$100 million in new funding to create a new capital program in the Ministry of Education to fund renovation and additions to existing schools to support early childhood education space.

**10. As a result of cutbacks to post-secondary education over the past two decades, average tuition fees in the province are far higher than they were 20 years ago, adding to the already-record levels of student debt. What will your party do to lower tuition fees and reduce student debt in the province?**

The B.C. Greens believe that ensuring equitable access to post-secondary education is an important issue that has impacts on inequality and lifelong health and wellbeing outcomes. The student loan burden, added to the housing affordability crisis and the cost of childcare, adds up to significant economic stress for younger British Columbians. For the first step within the broader goal of making post-secondary education more affordable, we have committed to doubling the funding of the B.C. Access Grant to help support post-secondary part-time students, and those enrolled in multi-year programs.

### **The Environment and Resources**

**11. Each year, millions of raw logs and other natural resources are shipped to value-added industries in other countries. What specific plans does your party have to prevent this and instead create high-value secondary industries in British Columbia?**

The B.C. Greens are committed to ending the export of raw logs. We believe in fostering a new era of B.C. forestry where we generate more jobs and revenue from what we harvest. We will ensure that small producers have access to fibre and incentivize value-added product innovation, including non-traditional uses of wood fibre including bio fuels, and productive uses of residual fibre. We will further ensure that the benefits of our forest resources flow to local communities by directly sharing more resource revenues with local First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts. There is an urgent need for better support for forestry workers and communities, including through expanding investments into retraining and support finding new job opportunities. We will investigate opportunities to diversify milling and secondary manufacturing to better use existing timber, as well as promote more sustainable development of forest resources, including investing in tourism opportunities and low-carbon economies.

**12. British Columbians care deeply about our environment and believe that climate change is a major issue. What will your party do to reduce our carbon footprint and help lower greenhouse gas emissions?**

Climate change is one of the core forces shaping our society and economy, and the B.C. Greens have a comprehensive plan to transition our province into a sustainable, green economy and actually meet our climate commitments. We'll do this by supporting innovation and the development of clean industries in B.C., providing the tools and incentives needed to meet our targets, and ensuring a just transition for those workers impacted by the ending of the fossil fuel economy.

The B.C. Greens commit to making our province carbon neutral by 2045, matching California. We will set sectoral targets to ensure industry is contributing their fair share to emissions reductions, and develop a robust strategy to close the 25% gap in CleanB.C. to meeting our 2030 climate targets and set an interim target for 2025 to make sure the government is on track to 2030. We will immediately end oil and gas subsidies and redirect that money to spur innovation, to help grow businesses in B.C. and help us meet our climate commitments. We will prioritize natural climate solutions, protecting and restoring our forests and wetlands to maximize their potential as carbon sinks. We will apply the carbon tax to slash-pile burning to reduce carbon emissions from our forestry sector and ensure that we use residual materials.

We will provide \$100 million over 4 years to fund climate adaptation initiatives in our communities, including the development of a coordinated approach with First Nations and other levels of government to disaster risk reduction. We need to build capacity in communities so they can respond safely and effectively to extreme weather and natural disasters - and so they can recover quickly when the threat has passed.

**Indigenous Peoples**

**13. Where does your party stand in relation to Indigenous rights? What plans do you have to ensure meaningful discussions about the integration of Indigenous peoples into the forestry and mining sectors and areas of the economy that flow from their traditional lands? How will your party work to end the many social injustices faced by Indigenous people from across B.C.?**

The passage of the Declaration *on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) was a historic step in the fight to recognize and affirm Indigenous rights. We believe that we're at the beginning of a long journey of reconciliation and the next steps are to put the legislation into practice and apply UNDRIP to the laws of British Columbia.

DRIPA has created a new framework for which all new legislation and amendments must be evaluated. This Act requires the free, prior, and informed consent of First Nations, and is applicable to all proposed amendments and bills including those relevant to the current mineral



tenure system. The B.C. Greens commit to holding government to account on ensuring the spirit of DRIPA is met with all legislation.

Systemic racism exists across the B.C. government and is consistently upheld in practices to this day. The B.C. Greens acknowledge that to fully address systemic racism, we must listen, ask questions, and implement change within every aspect of government, including within the Legislature. Change must come from a cross-government approach that includes extensive consultation with Black, Indigenous and People of Colour to create a comprehensive and actionable plan. This is a systemic issue requiring systemic solutions and a commitment to addressing it over the years and decades to come. We commit to doing that work.