



## Comparing Provincial Liberal, NDP and Green Climate Platforms

In April 2017, the BC Greens became the third of BC's political parties to release a climate platform ahead of the provincial election. We've previously compared the BC Liberal and BC NDP plans, and felt that an update that includes the BC Green platform is in order. Overall we give the Greens a B+, the BC NDP a B and the BC Liberals an F.

Does the plan achieve basic climate goals?	<b>BC Liberals</b> (based on a review of the BC Government's <a href="#">Climate Leadership Plan</a> and the recently released <a href="#">BC Liberal platform</a> )	<a href="#">BC NDP</a>	<a href="#">BC Green Party</a>
Reducing BC's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions	<b>D</b> – Current initiatives initiated by the Liberals while in government will not reduce emissions until after 2030.	<b>B</b> – It would result in reductions, although details need to be fleshed out.	<b>A</b> – The Green Party Plan is clear on the need to achieve reductions and adopts key recommendations of the province's Climate Leadership Team as a means to doing so.
Complying with the legal targets enacted by the Legislature	<b>F</b> – After an initially promising start, in which 2012 targets were met, the BC government has failed to meet its 2016 target and <b>will fail</b> to meet the legislated 2020 target. Both the Climate Leadership Plan and the BC Liberal platform do affirm an intention to meet the 2050 target of an 80% reduction in emissions, but neither identifies any path to achieving it.	<b>B</b> – The BC NDP plans to achieve the 2050 target and proposes to establish a new 2030 target, as recommended by the government's own the Climate Leadership Team (40% reductions by 2030). They promise to adopt the Leadership Team's recommendations and to reconvene the Team to help determine how to achieve these targets.  The NDP also takes the additional step (per the Leadership Team's recommendations) of creating new targets for different parts of the BC economy – transportation, industry and buildings/homes – which may assist in planning how to achieve the provincial targets.	<b>A</b> – The BC Green platform, like the NDP plan, pledges to achieve the 2050 target and adopts the new 2030 target recommended by the government's Climate Leadership Team.  In terms of how these targets will be achieved, the Green platform – at least until 2021 – follows the Leadership Team's recommendation to increase the carbon tax by \$10 per year. This was a key tool for the Leadership Team in achieving the targets.

<p>Specific measures based on science and expert advice on how to achieve climate goals</p>	<p><b>C-</b> – Although the BC government appointed an expert “Climate Leadership Team” amid a media frenzy, the government ended up rejecting the majority of the panel’s recommendations. As noted, the final “plan” does not state how it will achieve its goals.</p> <p>That being said, both the plan and the BC Liberal platform do make some pledges related to funding transit and increasing renewable energy. In their platform, the BC Liberals represent their commitment to the construction of Site C as a climate commitment (notwithstanding that currently much of the dam’s electricity is intended to power the LNG industry).</p> <p>Far from explicitly promising to base climate action on science, the BC Liberal platform pledges that future climate action will ensure “principles of affordability, competitiveness, and revenue neutrality” and that “British Columbia decides the best way forward to meet our climate goals.” It does not identify any measures or process based on science or expert advice about how to achieve the climate goals.</p>	<p><b>B</b> – The BC NDP commits to implement the “full scope and intent” of the Climate Leadership Team’s recommendations – <b>BUT</b> it seems clear that this does not include the controversial recommendation to increase the carbon tax by \$10/tonne (or about 2 centres per litre) each year starting in 2018. Since the Leadership Team relied heavily upon this increase in the carbon tax to achieve the legislated goals, the NDP will need additional policies to achieve the legislated targets. This gap resulted in <a href="#">a Twitter exchange</a> between the party’s Environment Critic, George Heyman, and BC Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver. The NDP promises to reconvene the Leadership Team to determine how to achieve the targets.</p>	<p><b>B+</b> – As noted, the BC Green platform draws heavily on the recommendations of the BC Climate Leadership Team, including the controversial proposal to increase the carbon tax by \$10/tonne. In addition, the BC Green platform would extend the carbon tax to fugitive emissions, and provides examples of a broad range of other initiatives intended to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Other than the commitment to raise the carbon tax, the platform does not firmly indicate which actions it would take – instead listing “examples” of the types of initiatives it would employ. When I asked for an explanation, BC Green staff explained that the intent was to consult the civil service and stakeholders on which initiatives to implement and how. It is fair for an opposition party to develop details after being elected – but somewhat ironic given Andrew Weaver’s <a href="#">criticism of the NDP</a> for not having a fully developed plan.</p> <p>Finally, the platform does not commit (as recommended by the Climate Leadership Team) to reconvene an independent team of experts to recommend next steps.</p>
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<p>Reducing subsidies to fossil fuel companies</p>	<p><b>F</b> – BC’s Climate Leadership Plan must be one of the only in the world that proposes to <b>increase</b> subsidies to fossil fuels in the name of climate action, through cheap electricity and infrastructure for LNG and other oil and gas operations.</p> <p>The BC Liberals’ platform is less specific, pledging only to “promote electrification in the LNG sector to reduce greenhouse gases.”</p>	<p><b>D</b> – The BC NDP plan does not mention fossil fuel subsidies.</p>	<p><b>C</b> – The BC Green platform does not mention fossil fuel subsidies. However, it does pledge to impose a carbon tax on industrial fugitive emissions, which are currently not taxed and this could be viewed as eliminating a current subsidy.</p>
<p>Ensuring that increases in the carbon tax will play a significant role in reducing GHG emissions</p>	<p><b>D – Warning: The government’s policy on this is confusing.</b></p> <p>The government acknowledges that a carbon tax needs to increase over time to be effective and has committed, in line with the Canadian climate framework, to increase the carbon tax from \$30/tonne to \$50/tonne by 2022. These increases are expected to result in only minimal changes in GHG emissions, and other policies would need to supplement the carbon tax.</p> <p>However, the Premier also claims – <a href="#">misleadingly</a> – that BC could still choose to refuse to increase the tax, based on a review in 2020. In fact, BC’s choice in 2020 would be between increasing the tax, as promised, or adopting an equivalent or greater price on carbon through a new system.</p> <p>Similarly, in the party’s platform, the</p>	<p><b>C</b> – The BC NDP climate plan would also increase the carbon tax from \$30/tonne to \$50/tonne by 2022 – the equivalent to an increase of about 4.4 cents per litre at the gas pump over the current carbon tax. However, the BC NDP would start phasing in the increase in 2020, instead of 2021, as required by the national carbon price.</p> <p>As with the BC government plan, these increases are far below what was recommended by the Climate Leadership Team and will result in only modest greenhouse gas reductions.</p> <p>However, the BC NDP proposes to divert the carbon tax funds collected from corporations towards transit, retrofitting buildings and other programs that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby enhancing the impact of the tax.</p>	<p><b>A</b> – The BC Green platform will see the \$30/tonne carbon tax increase in line with the Climate Leadership Team, by \$10/year, starting in 2018 and increasing to \$70/tonne by 2012. In addition, the BC Green platform places a fee on fugitive emissions (emissions escaping from industrial operations which are currently not taxed).</p> <p>Although the platform could be clearer on this point, the BC Greens have indicated that their increases in the carbon tax would not be revenue neutral and would go towards funding the transition to a sustainable energy economy.</p> <p>Interestingly, the BC Green platform would also redefine “carbon neutral government” to remove a requirement that public bodies purchase offsets for their emissions, and allow them instead to invest in reducing their emissions.</p>

	<p>BC Liberals blast the NDP for pledging to increase the carbon tax to \$50/tonne, while characterizing their own commitment to the same increase (on a slightly slower time-frame) as a pledge to “maintain the carbon tax freeze until 2021.”</p>		
<p>Ensuring that the carbon tax does not negatively impact ordinary British Columbians</p>	<p><b>C+</b> – The BC Liberal platform promises to maintain the carbon tax’s “revenue neutrality,” meaning that the funds collected result in corresponding tax cuts. In theory, this means that British Columbians should not be worse off as a result of a carbon tax, whether it be \$30/tonne, \$50/tonne or a larger amount (as recommended by the Climate Leadership Team). That being said, the <a href="#">Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives</a> has pointed out that 2/3 of the funds raised are currently used to support tax cuts for corporations, raising questions as to whether ordinary British Columbians get their fair share.</p> <p>In addition, the BC Liberals do not address the fact that climate change will result in new climate impacts and higher infrastructure needs for ordinary British Columbians and their communities. An entirely revenue neutral carbon tax may mean increased property taxes as municipalities struggle to pay for the costs of preparing for climate change.</p>	<p><b>B+</b> – The BC NDP plans to reduce corporate tax breaks associated with the carbon tax, and to ensure that about 80% of households receive a climate rebate – at least some of that in the form of an actual cheque rather than a reduction in other taxes. This is similar to the <a href="#">carbon fee and dividend</a> system which has been proposed by the <a href="#">Citizen’s Climate Lobby</a>. (Note that the BC NDP apparently does not propose to reverse individual income tax cuts).</p> <p>As noted above, by increasing the tax for corporations, it appears that the BC NDP does propose to end revenue neutrality, instead investing the revenue in government actions that will actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That being said, with personal rebates being increased, it is not clear exactly how much new government revenue from corporate tax payments will be available.</p>	<p><b>D</b> – The BC Green platform does not address whether and how it will protect lower income families from increases in the carbon tax. In separate correspondence with the party, I was assured that low income families will continue to receive a tax rebate, and that the party had various other proposals to reform the tax system to make it fairer, including: “eliminating MSP premiums and rolling them into the income tax system [and] other separate initiatives to make life more affordable for low income people to be released soon.”</p>

## Job Creation

In addition to climate goals, both the BC Liberals and BC NDP put a lot of emphasis on job creation in their climate plans. The BC Climate Leadership Plan, developed by the governing Liberals, goes to the extent of estimating job creation associated with each element of the plan, while the NDP plan makes job creation a key principle of its plan – referring to a [Clean Energy Canada study](#) that estimates that climate leadership could result in 900,000 new jobs. Each party criticizes the jobs claims made in the other’s plans.

So how do they do on job creation? In our view, the assumptions behind the parties’ approaches to job creation are worth highlighting.

	<b>BC Liberals</b>	<b>BC NDP</b>	<b>BC Greens</b>
Does the plan maximize the job creation opportunities from climate action?	<p><b>D</b> – The Liberal plan assumes that job creation lies in conventional industries, and does not fully realize the job creation potential of moving towards a sustainable economy. Consequently, we have a “climate” plan that expects to create far more jobs through natural gas (4,043 jobs) and forest development (19,942 jobs) than through retrofitting buildings to make them more energy efficient (230 jobs). While transportation, including transit, is estimated to provide 41,525 jobs, many of these appear to be associated with expanding highway infrastructure (ie. the plan includes replacing the George Massey tunnel with a bridge, <a href="#">estimated to result in 9,000 jobs</a>).</p> <p>While the Liberal plan may or may not result in the promised jobs, many, perhaps most, of those jobs are not the result of ambitious climate action.</p>	<p><b>B</b> – The BC NDP plan clearly recognizes the synergies between building a new type of economy and job creation, promising to divert carbon tax revenue into “job-creating infrastructure and projects that actually reduce carbon pollution, like new transit and transportation, renewable and clean technology, and energy efficiency upgrades.”</p> <p>Clearly the NDP plan is not as fully developed, costed or modelled as the government’s plan. However, the NDP plan identifies where funding will come from and the job-creation potential associated with transit, building retrofits, etc.</p>	<p><b>No Grade</b> – The BC Greens, quite appropriately, do not suggest that their climate plan is a job creation plan.</p> <p>See the party’s <a href="#">“Strategy for the New Economy” Platform</a> for more information on the BC Greens’ plans related to job creation.</p>