

BC Election `96: Survey of Environmental Issues



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Highlights

The Issues

1. Global warming. The NDP government has done more than other provinces. Still, the Party's claims exceed its track record in terms of practical steps while in power. The Liberals are new to the issue, but do acknowledge that the province must meet the stabilize-by-2000 commitment even though the commitment was made by the federal government.

2. Water Act. All the parties support regulating both the quantity and quality of groundwater. Action on this is long overdue. Action is also overdue on protection of instream flows (not giving licences for all the water without leaving some left for the fish). All the parties expressly support it, except for the Liberals, who talk a lot about rivers, but are vague about instream flows.

3. Biodiversity. All the parties are committed not to delete any current provincial parks (good to have on the record). The NDP has an excellent record of moving toward protecting 12% of the province as wilderness. The Liberals also express commitment to the 12% goal. Reform does not. The PDA notes correctly that the 12% figure should apply to unique ecosystems, not just to the province as a whole. The NDP promises to do more to protect endangered species and their habitat, while the Liberal Party is lukewarm on it.

4. Property tax. The Liberals support the proposed Trust for BC Lands and tax relief for land permanently preserved by private land owners. The tax incentive is also supported by the PDA, the Reform Party and the Green Party. The NDP is more cautious, saying it will "revisit" the issue. Good potential for some action soon.

5. Environmental Protection Act. The NDP did lots of public consultation on a new BC Environmental Protection Act, but never summoned the political will to actually pass it. Now, they say it will be "the major environmental protection act of the government." The Liberals promise "new and progressive legislation on environmental issues," but the emphasis of their campaign has been on fewer environmental standards and cutbacks to environmental protection.

6. Digital maps. The Liberal Party, Green Party and Reform Party seem more amenable to allowing non-profit groups affordable access to digital maps than does the NDP. Still, the NDP says it is studying the issue and welcomes input.

7. Forest Renewal BC. The NDP would keep Forest Renewal BC as it is; the Liberals would dismantle it.

8. Forest Practices Code. Another dividing line between the NDP and the Liberals. The NDP would maintain the Code and extend it to private land. The Liberal Party would rewrite and weaken the Code.

9. Contaminated sites. The NDP promises to continue pushing forward draft regulations to clean up contaminated sites, using interminable "public consultations" to soak up extreme opposition from some municipalities and other quarters. The Liberals are vague: they would do it "as soon as it can be done effectively."

10. Pulp mills. Ending on a good note for the environment, both the Liberals and the NDP are committed to the long-standing BC requirement that pulp mills eliminate organochlorine pollution in their effluent by 2002.

The Parties

Green Party: Not surprisingly, the Green Party's environmental policies are the strongest of any of the parties'.

Liberal Party: The Liberal Party does have some good environmental proposals, such as expanding marine protected areas. And the Party has committed not to reverse some key environmental decisions, such as existing parks, the 12% quota, and the pulp mill pollution regulations. But, despite the Liberal Party's claim that it values protection of the environment, many of the Party's key planks would be unavoidably bad for the environment. The Liberals' proposed budget cuts, for example, would hit hard at environmental protection. The Liberals' proposed "reevaluation" of the *Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Forest Practices Code* is clearly 'code' for lower environmental standards. And, who in government would do all this rewriting of environmental laws if the environment ministry is cut back even farther than it has been cut already?

NDP: The NDP has both the luxury and the handicap of being the party in power. Voters can see what it has done, and they can see what it hasn't done. The NDP had a strong mandate from the electorate to pursue environmental protection vigorously. And, it has done so, becoming a world leader in creating parks and controlling pollution from

pulp mills. The NDP passed an *Environmental Assessment Act*, the *Forest Practices Code*, and contaminated sites legislation. It promoted recycling, cut smog with the AirCare program, promoted energy efficiency, and much more. That being said, the NDP has also postponed or refused many measures that are urgently necessary. Serious environmental problems remain: global warming, degradation of fish habitat, urban smog, water pollution, loss of biodiversity, and toxic contamination.

Progressive Democratic Alliance: The PDA's positions are very supportive of environmental protection. One notable exception: the PDA would not require pulp mills to abide by the 2002 deadline for eliminating organochlorine pollutants from their wastewater effluent.

Reform Party: The Reform Party has positive positions on some practical environmental issues. It supports *Water Act* reform, tax incentives for protection of private land, the adoption of an Environmental Protection Act, and no changes to existing parks, for example. However, environmental protection is not a high priority for the Reform Party. Reform has yet to acknowledge that global warming is a problem, and it doesn't have a position on key environmental issues such as Forest Renewal BC, contaminated sites, and pollution from pulp mills.

Social Credit Party: The Social Credit Party's decision not to respond to our questions appears to sum up its approach to protection of the environment!

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Issue 1: Global Climate Change

Governments around the globe are internationally committed to avoiding dangerous human interference with the global climate system. This means avoiding a doubling of the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and that requires strong action from all governments.

In December 1995, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report reflecting the new scientific consensus on global climate change. The report finds that human emissions of greenhouse gases are changing global climate, and that changes will accelerate if strong action is not taken. If we continue with business as usual, a doubling of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere will occur by the middle of the 21st Century resulting in global average temperature increases of 1 to 3.5° C by 2100. In comparison, there is only a 4° C difference between current global temperatures and the depths of the last ice age 20,000 years ago (when British Columbia was completely under ice). The predicted rate of temperature change is much faster than any change in the last 10,000 years.

The IPCC predicts that without strong action 92 million people worldwide will be displaced by increased sea levels, 50 to 80 million more people will suffer from malaria and global food supply will be disrupted as a result of more severe droughts and floods in some areas. Locally, some forest types which are unable to adapt to rising temperatures will simply disappear. Sensitive wetlands will be lost. Environment Canada predicts higher winter flows damaging spawning grounds, reduced survival and growth of fish because of increased stream temperatures and damage to the Fraser salmon run due to increased predation by warm-water species. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has already attributed part of the collapse of this year's Fraser salmon run on predation by mackerel, caused by the unprecedented frequency and duration of the warm Pacific El Nino current.

Canada and most other industrialized countries are committed to stabilizing emissions of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by 2000. An additional 50 to 70% decrease in global emissions is necessary to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Luckily, major reductions can be made which will benefit the economy for reasons unrelated to climate change. BC is particularly well poised to benefit from strong action.¹

¹ Forecast Working Group of the National Air Issues Coordinating Mechanism, Microeconomic and Environmental Assessment of Climate Change Measures, (Ottawa: Forecast Working Group, April 1995); Carl Sonnen and M.C. Justus, Impact of GHG Initiatives on the National and Provincial Economies, (Ottawa: Forecast Working Group, April 31, 1995); Energy Sector, Natural Resources Canada, "Model Simulations of the Climate Action Network Program for Energy Demand, GHG Emissions and Investment," June 1995; Carl Sonnen, Informetrica Ltd., "Macroeconomic Impacts of Climate Action Network Measures -- Interim Assessment" Ottawa, March 30, 1996.

However, many initiatives are not being undertaken because of perverse incentives in the economy. Natural Resources Canada estimates that emissions will grow by thirteen

percent from 1990 to 2000. In BC there has already been an increase of nine percent between 1990 and 1994. The federal government's hands-off, voluntary approach -- the result of lobbying by Alberta and the oil industry -- is not closing the gap.

Effectively dealing with greenhouse gases requires international, national, provincial and local action. Canada must recognize the dangerous nature of global climate change, advocate strong, binding emission reductions protocols and adopt a stronger range of national measures.

Provinces must adopt strong energy efficiency standards and promote clean energy sources. The measure with the greatest impact in British Columbia's *Greenhouse Gas Action Plan* is requiring that ten percent of gasoline and diesel fuel must be from renewable sources (e.g. ethanol from grain or woodwaste). Unfortunately, this element of the *Plan* is not under active consideration.

Another important measure is requiring electrical utilities to purchase electricity from renewable sources rather than fossil fuel generating plants. BC Hydro's Burrard Thermal Generating Plant is being relied on to meet increasing demand and is now the largest source of greenhouse gases in BC. Emissions from electrical power generation in BC have doubled from 127,000 kilotonnes in 1990 to 240,000 kilotonnes in 1994.

Most jurisdictions in North America consider the environmental costs of different energy sources in an comprehensive planning process known as integrated resource planning. In addition many jurisdictions require utilities to pay a very small premium for power from environmentally friendly renewable sources. Unfortunately, the BC Court of Appeal has recently ruled that the Public Utilities Commission does not have the power to require integrated resource planning. Some power-users are now taking the Commission to court saying it does not have the power to consider social and environmental costs in making its decisions.

Question 1(a): If elected, is your party committed to pushing the federal government to internationally recognize a doubling of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere as dangerous interference with the atmosphere?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will push the Canadian Government to internationally recognize a doubling of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere as a dangerous interference with the atmosphere."

Liberal Party: "The Province is required to stabilize all greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000, and the BC Liberals expect the federal government to live up to its air quality commitments. Containing the growth in carbon dioxide emissions from transportation is critical to achieving this target. Therefore, the BC Liberals are committed to managing local air pollution through new Regional Air Shed Boards."

NDP: Yes. In addition British Columbia is the only province to have produced a *Greenhouse Gas Action Plan* setting out over 50 actions that the Province will implement or evaluate over the next 2 or 3 years.

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes." The PDA goes on to promise a *Clean Air Act* which will promote alternative transportation networks.

Reform Party: "We have not received any conclusive evidence that human emission of greenhouse gases are causing global climate change. However, if you would like to forward copies of the December 1995 study you refer to, we would be happy to look at it. Naturally, if and when a link is proven, Reform BC will be in favour of strong action to preserve our natural climate.

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

Governments around the globe are committed to taking whatever action is necessary to avoid "dangerous interference with the atmosphere." The Greens, NDP and PDA have all promised to push the federal government on recognizing a doubling of greenhouse gases as "dangerous interference with the atmosphere." That simple recognition -- i.e. recognizing that something is dangerous if it is expected to displace 92 million people and cause 80 million cases of malaria -- is essential to driving international negotiations over actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The NDP's promise to push the federal government is backed up by Moe Sihota's record. British Columbia under the NDP has helped push the greenhouse gas agenda in forums such as the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. BC has also been the province most critical of the federal government's reliance on a poorly implemented challenge to businesses to voluntarily reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Both Liberals and the NDP are committed to stabilizing provincial emissions of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Both Liberals and NDP should be commended for doing so as several provinces have not accepted responsibility to stabilize their emissions. The Liberals have also taken the position that the federal

government must live up to its responsibility. If elected, we look forward to seeing BC Liberal support for stronger federal action.

The Reform Party joins a small circle of scientists funded by the oil and coal industries in doubting the science of global warming. We will be sending the Reform a copy of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 1995 Synthesis Report, a report accepted by delegates of hundreds of national governments with input from thousands of scientists. Given, the Reform Party's poor understanding of this issue, we do not recommend holding your breath while awaiting the promised strong action.

The Liberals, NDP and PDA discuss how they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

BC under the NDP has undertaken several initiatives, such as making government buildings more energy efficient, adopting energy efficiency standards for buildings and continuing support for BC Hydro's Power Smart program. They have done as much as any current provincial government to curb provincial emissions (indeed some provinces, such as Ontario under the Conservatives, are considering dropping regulations which benefit the economy and atmosphere by avoiding energy waste). However, even if fully implemented, the NDP government's *Greenhouse Gas Action Plan* is not expected to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels. Moreover, implementation of the Plan has been weak (see next question).

We are happy to see the Liberals recognize the importance of tackling transportation related greenhouse gas emissions. However, it is not clear how Regional Air Shed Boards will help in this regard. Will they be required to tackle greenhouse gas emissions? Will they be directed and given the powers to curb energy wasting urban sprawl and to decrease reliance on vehicles? Many greenhouse gas initiatives will still need to be implemented at the provincial level (see next questions). It is difficult to reconcile the need for a range of provincial policies with the Liberals' promise to slash government spending by 15%, but not cut education or health. Even under the NDP the development of initiatives under the *Greenhouse Gas Action Plan* have at times been stymied by lack of funds for policy development. Cut-backs will unavoidably impact on environmental programs.

The PDA's suggested Clean Air Act seems to be aimed mainly at reducing local pollutants, but PDA's recognition of the need to support alternative transportation networks is heartening.

Question 1(b): If elected, is your party committed to adopting a requirement that gasoline and diesel include a minimum renewable energy content?

Green Party: A Green Party government will require that gasoline and diesel include a minimum renewable energy component and is committed to reversing current trends towards greater reliance on private vehicles. Hydrogen and other technologies will also be used to address vehicle fuel issues.

Liberal Party: "The exact quality of regional air sheds, and therefore fuels used, will be determined by the local citizens through our Regional Transportation Boards."

NDP: "Not at this time." The New Democrats then refer to BC's requirement for California low emission vehicles starting in 2001, stating that BC's new standards will reduce auto pollution by up to 70%.

Progressive Democratic Alliance: Yes.

Reform Party: See 1(a).

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The Greens and PDA give the unambiguous answer we were looking for.

The NDP decision to not proceed with a renewable energy content requirement at this time is disappointing and contradicts their promise to implement or evaluate the actions in their *Greenhouse Gas Action Plan*. Evaluating options to require a minimum 10% renewable energy content in fossil fuels was the action item with the most impact on greenhouse gases in the *Action Plan*. The failure to even consider a renewable content requirement undermines the credibility of the *Action Plan*. Adopting such a requirement would clearly establish BC as a leader among all the Provinces in taking concrete steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We hope the NDP will reconsider their position.

The Liberal policy of making regional governments responsible for fuel standards does not rule out action at this time, but it does not give much cause for hope. Regional governments would face much greater challenges than the Province in adopting fuel standards. Diesel and gasoline are produced at a few refineries and distributed throughout the province. For a provincially distributed product, it is not efficient to have standards which vary from region to region. Also downloading of responsibility would mean duplication of government policy making processes. Finally, since global climate change is a global problem it does not make sense to hand over responsibility to regional governments.

The NDP refer to the government's regulation that introduces low emission vehicles in 2001. The NDP ignore the failure of these regulations to impact on any of the major greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide or methane. The BC regulation does not require more fuel efficient cars or cars using less carbon intensive fuels. It remains to be seen whether a committee established by the regulation and charged with encouraging sales of alternative fueled vehicles will have any effect. The NDP claim that automobile pollution will be reduced by up to 70% is only true for volatile organic compounds (VOC), which have an extremely negligible greenhouse impact. Even for VOC, this claim is only true if one ignores the effect of increased vehicle use, if gasoline standards are vastly improved and if AirCare is significantly upgraded.

Question 1(c): If elected, is your party committed to amending the *Utilities Commission Act* to require integrated resource planning?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will amend the *Utilities Commission Act*" to require integrated resource planning."

Liberal Party: "No viable form of mass energy production is truly environmentally friendly or completely renewable. To help planning, the BC Liberals will pre-establish high, scientifically based environmental standards. Specific deadlines for decision making and public processes will be set, and the government will guarantee access to the provincial power grid, at cost, to independent power producers."

NDP: The *Utilities Commission Act* already provides for IRP. The Utilities Commission is appealing the recent (court ruling that the Commission does not have this power) to the Supreme Court of Canada. If the appeal is lost, this matter will be reviewed.

Progressive Democratic Alliance: Yes.

Reform Party: See 1(a).

Social Credit Party: No Response.

Analysis

The Greens, NDP and PDA are all clearly committed to integrated resource planning.

The Liberal response is difficult to decipher. The reference to high environmental standards is good, but there will still be a need for planning that minimizes environmental and social costs. The references to decision making seem to boil down to a promise to "streamline" environmental assessment by establishing deadlines for decision making.

Question 1(d): If elected, is your party committed to adopting a policy which will ensure any expansion of generating capacity will come from renewable, environmentally friendly sources?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will adopt a policy to ensure that any expansion of generating capacity will come from renewable, environmentally friendly sources. The Green Party also supports a cap on CO₂ outputs from power facilities and a permanent moratorium on large scale hydro-electric development.

Liberal Party: See 1(c)

NDP: This has already been done. New Democrats support co-generation projects with biomass fuels. BC Hydro has been instructed that:

new energy must be both environmentally sound as well as affordable,

existing facilities must be used to increase capacity at minimal environmental, economic and social cost.

Progressive Democratic Alliance: Yes.

Reform Party: See 1(a).

Social Credit Party: No response

Analysis

The Greens and PDA again have clear answers.

We are pleased to hear the NDP commitment to renewable energy sources. However, the NDP statement that any expansion of generating capacity will come from renewables is contrary to BC Hydro's plans for a 60% expansion of generating capacity at its fossil fuel burning Burrard Thermal plant. We look forward to seeing the NDP reverse plans to expand Burrard Thermal. The NDP should be given credit for tentative plans to develop 59 megawatts of electrical generation capacity from two renewable sources. However, this purchase should be seen in context: it compares to 12,000 megawatts total generating capacity in the Province and 960 megawatts of generating capacity at Burrard Thermal.

The Liberal policy is unclear. Are the Liberals recognizing that all energy sources have some environmental impact or are they denying the viability of relatively benign technologies such as geo-thermal, heatpumps and small scale hydro? The Liberal promise to open the power grid is good as it encourages some types of energy conservation projects. The Liberals are not unique in making this promise; both the Reform and the NDP are saying the same thing.

Issue 2: Water Act Reform

The *Water Act* controls water use and allocation of water rights in BC. Water rights are acquired through licences, and are allocated on a 'first come first serve' basis. Under the *Water Act* there is:

No legal obligation to maintain instream flows for conservation purposes. Fish have no "right" to water in BC. There are a number of streams and creeks in the province where withdrawal of water by licensees decrease stream flows to a level which jeopardizes fish and aquatic wildlife. In one case, citizens had to carry spawning salmon in buckets past a water licensee's operation because too much water had been withdrawn.

No regulation of groundwater. BC is the only province in Canada with no regulation of groundwater. It is sorely needed to address problems such as contamination of aquifers from fertilizers and pesticides; excessive withdrawals from wells in coastal areas causing saltwater intrusion; and poor well construction practices.

Restrictions on who can appeal decisions made under the *Water Act*. Only riparian owners, licensees and applicants for a licence are allowed the right to object to applications for licences. In comparison virtually all interested parties have rights to appeal under the *Waste Management Act* and the *Pesticide Control Act*. The Regional Comptroller of Water Rights recently denied an environmental group standing to appeal a decision granting a developer the right to fill in a sensitive wetland area.

Question 2(a): If elected, is your party committed to providing legal protection for instream water flows?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will legally protect instream water flows. Part of our program of legislation will include an Environmental Bill of Rights guaranteeing every British Columbian access to clean water."

Liberal Party: "The BC Liberals' ambitious Living Rivers plan has been praised by environmentalists and industry lobbyists alike. To revitalize our streams and rivers, the BC Liberals will:

- "* commit one-third of the Columbia River Treaty's downstream benefits to river systems and agriculture revitalization;

- "* operate a salmon enhancement program;

- "* rewrite legislative and jurisdictional controls to protect our fisheries and ensure that users become effective caretakers of the resource;

- "* lobby for the dissolution of the Federal Department of Fisheries and open a smaller, more efficient local office with an emphasis on field activities such as research and enforcement;

- "* develop an 'adopt a stream' program for schools across British Columbia;

- "* encourage salmon enhancement and protection strategies for all land-based activities;

- "* ensure that river, stream, and fishery laws apply to all British Columbians equally, with special status for any group;

- "* encourage volunteer hatchery programs.

"We will pass a new Water Act which will make sure salmon protection, recreation, tourism and agriculture become considerations in decisions regarding water allocation. Public input on these issues is mandatory.

"We will prohibit any major new water diversions.

"We will review and take an inventory of BC dams to look for the potential for the removal of defunct or illegal dams and river restoration.

"The BC Liberals were the first major political party to oppose the Kemano completion project, and are committed to preserving river ecosystems for generations to come."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes. We will also legally recognize the rights of fish to safe dilution, toxicity and temperature levels. Such work will be undertaken through our Water Resources Secretariat in consultation with the Fisheries Secretariat."

Reform Party: "BC Reform believes that it is vital to maintain adequate water flows in our streams and rivers. In some parts of the province, where the supply of water is becoming scarce due to the competing demands of industrial, agricultural and residential users, this fact necessitates a close look at the *Water Act*. To this end, BC Reform is committed to establishing realistic minimum levels of water flow in our rivers and to explore the possibility of rationing available water through market-based systems, to ensure that our water resources are used in the most efficient way possible."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The Liberals wrote a lot, and certainly emphasize protection of water. Unfortunately, their answer to the specific question is weak: instream flows for fish would be "considered" but not necessarily ensured. All the other parties, the NDP, the PDA, the Green Party and the Reform Party (if we interpret Reform's answer correctly) support legal protection for instream flows. Reform's proposal for market-based rationing --if that means waterpricing -- could be a positive step.

Question 2(b): If elected, is your party committed to regulating both the quantity and quality of groundwater?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will enact regulations to protect the quantity and quality of groundwater."

Liberal Party: "The Liberals are committed to protection of groundwater from toxic pollution and unsustainable use."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes. I am committed to preserving and protecting our water, starting with a comprehensive inventory of fresh water, including ground water. We will not allow bulk exports of water."

Reform. Please see response to Question 2(a), above.

Social Credit. No response.

Analysis

Good! The Green Party, the Liberals, the NDP and the PDA are *all* committed to regulating both the quantity and quality of groundwater. Such strong, non-partisan support is what it will take to develop and implement new groundwater protection laws in BC. At the beginning of its current term, the NDP government did promise to amend the *Water Act* to deal with groundwater and instream flows. However, it simply has not followed through on this commitment.

Question 2(c): If elected, is your party committed to broadening the right of appeal so that any person can appeal decisions under the *Water Act* ?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will broaden the right of appeal so that any person can appeal decisions under the *Water Act*."

Liberal Party: "Legal action against public goods such as water should be prosecuted by the Crown."

NDP: "We are considering the recent action of the Regional Comptroller of Water Rights but have made no decision as yet."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "We will move towards a more comprehensive appeal process for people who legitimate grievances, however, we will do so in a way that does not broaden the appeal process to allow spurious grievances to occur."

"Water is one of our most precious and much sought after resources. As the need for fresh water increases in BC and pressure for bulk exports from the United States builds,

through NAFTA, we must take steps to safeguard it. In our vision of a restructured government, a Water Secretariat, within the Ministry of Environment and Land Use, would be responsible for this work."

Reform. Please see response to Question 2(a), above.

Social Credit. No response.

Analysis

The Green Party and the Progressive Democratic Alliance both support broadening the right of appeal of administrative decisions under the *Water Act*. The NDP is certainly being cautious. Most other environmental statutes in BC allow citizens to appeal key administrative decisions. The *Water Act* is just outdated in this regard. The Liberals may have misunderstood the question: this has to do with appeals of administrative decisions, not prosecutions of criminal charges.

All in all, it is notable that both the NDP and the Liberal Party have made water and fish protection a major election issue. The NDP proposed a Fish Protection Act in the Throne Speech, which would protect habitat, make some changes to the *Water Act*, and allow municipalities more say in environmental protection of habitat. The Liberals' environmental policy focuses on river networks. The Party promises to pass a Rivers Act to protect rivers and salmon stocks, and a new Water Act to prohibit new water diversions and to increase the factors considered in licensing decisions. The Liberals have also promised provincial standards for the protection of urban streams.

Issue 3: Biodiversity and Endangered Species

The *Convention on Biological Diversity* defines "biological diversity" as "the variability among living organisms from all sources, including ... terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems." The Convention notes that biodiversity is being significantly reduced by human activities and that the fundamental requirement for biodiversity conservation is conservation of natural habitats and the maintenance of species in their natural surroundings.

Protection of biological diversity and endangered species requires legal protection for endangered species and protection of diverse ecosystems. In BC this means changes to the *Wildlife Act* and the *Parks Act*.

Under the current BC *Wildlife Act*, endangered species receive very limited legal protection.

The definition of wildlife under the *Act* excludes a number of animal and plant species. Many species which have been scientifically identified as threatened are not eligible for any of the possible protection measures provided by the *Act*.

Designation of species as threatened or endangered and designation of land as habitat for endangered or threatened species is discretionary. Since 1980, only four species have been designated: the Vancouver Island marmot, the sea otter, the burrowing owl, and the American white pelican. Land has been designated as threatened or endangered species habitat only once, for the Vancouver Island marmot. Hundreds of endangered and threatened species are accorded absolutely no protection.

Protection of biodiversity also requires protection of diverse ecosystems. In the past, government protected rocks, ice, and alpine areas but largely ignored old growth forests, wetlands, and other more commercially valuable land.² Currently, 21 out of a total of 105 ecosections in the province have greater than twelve percent of their area protected, nineteen ecosections have no protected areas whatsoever and another 38 have less than one percent of their area protected. This represents an improvement over the previous situation as 106 new parks were recently created under the *Park Amendment Act*. Marine ecosystems continue to be under-represented as less than two percent of BC's marine waters are protected.³

² BC Protected Areas Strategy.

³ Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Environmental Indicator Series, *Protected Areas in BC*, October 1995.

The permanence of a park designation is another way to ensure maintenance of ecological integrity. Many citizens in BC are concerned about the security of park designation. In the past huge parks such as Hamber Park in the Rockies have been drastically cut in size. More permanency for parks could be ensured by amending the *Parks Act* so that deletions of parks can only be done by legislation, rather than Order in Council. This would ensure an opportunity for public debate and legislative scrutiny.

Question 3(a): If elected, is your party committed to amending the *Wildlife Act* to:

(i) broaden the definition of wildlife in accordance with the definition in the proposed federal *Endangered Species Protection Act*?⁴

⁴ Species is defined in the proposed *Act* as "all wild life: wild mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, invertebrates, plants, fungi, algae, bacteria, and other wild organisms."

(ii) require species identified as endangered by the Wildlife Branch to be legally designated as such by the government?

(iii) require identification of and protection of the critical habitat of any designated endangered species?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will amend the *Wildlife Act* to:

i) broaden the definition of wildlife in accordance with the definition in the proposed federal Endangered Species Protection Act.

ii) require species identified as endangered by the Wildlife Branch to be legally designated as such by the government and to expand protections for species designated as 'threatened.'

iii) require identification and protection of the critical habitat of any designated endangered species."

Liberal Party: "The BC Liberals are committed to protecting endangered species whenever it is warranted and viable. The new Land-Use BC Commission will allow local citizens, scientists, environmental interests, and industrial representatives to make regionally-based decisions."

NDP:

"i) We are committed to broadening the definition of wildlife, but whether the definition will be identical with the proposed federal *Endangered Species Act* has not been decided.

ii) New Democrats are committed to designating more species and will use the Wildlife Branch listing as the basis.

iii) Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: Yes.

Reform Party: "...We believe that issues such as wildlife protection and biodiversity are too important to leave solely in the hands of legislators. We would therefore bring in legislation allowing groups like yours to propose new legislation through the initiative process, where all the people of BC could vote on this legislation in a referendum."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

Only the Green Party and the Progressive Democratic Alliance made unequivocal commitments to amend the *Wildlife Act* to protect endangered species.

The NDP does commit to some strengthening of the *Wildlife Act* regarding endangered species and to listing more species as endangered. It must be noted, though, that the NDP promised new endangered species legislation last time around but did not deliver.

The Liberals say endangered species will be protected when it is "warranted and viable." These qualifications sound ominously similar to statements made by Republicans in the US who are trying to *weaken* the American law that protects endangered species.

The Reform Party's answer apparently means they have no plans themselves to amend the *Wildlife Act* to improve the protection of endangered species.

Question 3(b): If elected, is your party committed to achieving the goal of twelve *per cent* of the province in protected area status?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will protect BC ecosystems based on setting aside enough of the land base to protect each ecosystem type and native species in BC. We suspect that the total protected area set aside by a Green Government would exceed the 12% quota."

Liberal Party: "The BC Liberals support the Province's 12% Protected Areas Strategy, and will go further by developing a system of marine parks along the BC Coast, this is something that no other party is willing to commit to."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes. However, rather than using the current arbitrary 12% of each administrative region, I believe we should be striving to protect each of the unique ecosystems in BC. When the 12% number was first used, this is what it was referring to, 12% of each unique system, to be preserved in large, continuous chunks such that each preserved area is viable."

Reform: No response to this question.

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

It is important that both the Liberals and the NDP support the 12% protection goal: the Reform Party does not. The NDP's record on park creation is excellent. As a result of this record, BC was recently awarded with an "A" by the World Wildlife Fund for wilderness preservation. The PDA is quite correct that the 12% figure should apply to unique ecosystems. The Liberals deserve credit for profiling the need to expand the protection of marine ecosystems.

Question 3(c): If elected, is your party committed to amending the *Parks Act* so that deletions of parks may only be done by legislation?

Green Party: "A Green Party government will amend the Parks Act so that deletions of parks may only be done by legislation."

Liberal Party: "The BC Liberals are opposed to any new industrial activity in parks except wilderness tourism. "

NDP: "We will be reviewing the *Parks Act* if re-elected, and will consider this change. It would be an important and desirable change in the light of the attempt to vote down the designation of Tatsheshini Alsek by the Liberal and Reform Parties."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Current parks will not be dismantled, however, we will be doing a comprehensive resource inventory to evaluate exactly what kind of protection is needed. I believe that some areas currently designated with 'park' status require greater protection. The current *Parks Act* allows parks to be used for a myriad of recreational activities which, in some cases, proves very damaging to the ecosystem.

"The protection of biodiversity is central to the PDA's Limits to Growth philosophy around which we believe all of government and the economy should be structured."

Reform Party: "Reform BC would go one step further than what you suggest and make future changes in park designations subject to referenda in the area affected by the change."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

Only the Green Party committed itself to amending the *Parks Act* so that deletions of parks may be done only by legislation, although the NDP says the change is important and desirable. The PDA's comment that certain parks and areas within parks require protection even from recreational uses warrants follow-up. The Liberals did not answer the question asked.

Question 3(d): If elected, will your party make any changes to the current status of any of the parks in the *Park Amendment Act* (including the Tatshenshini, Kitlope and T'sylos Parks)?

Green Party: "A Green Party government may change the status of certain sensitive ecosystems so that they are governed under ecological preserve legislation which changes the focus on the areas from tourism to conservation."

Liberal Party: "Parks will not be deleted under a BC Liberal government."

NDP: Did not respond.

Progressive Democratic Alliance: See the PDA's response to question 3(c).

Reform Party: "We have no plans to change the current status of any parks."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

Although the NDP did not answer this question, we note that that may have been due to a problem with the layout of the questionnaire. We understand that the NDP's policy is not to delete any provincial parks. The NDP government has increased the amount of protected land in the province from 6% to over 9%. It is the only government in Canada to have made such substantial progress towards achieving the 12% protected areas goal recommended by international authorities.

The Reform Party said it has "no plans to change the current status of any parks." Unfortunately, its Reform BC 1996 Election flyer states, "Future and existing parks will be subject to a cost impact assessment."

Although the Social Credit Party did not respond to the questionnaire, we note that Socred MLA Cliff Serwa was the only MLA to vote against the 1995 *Park Amendment Act*, which expanded the number of parks in BC. It should also be noted that about half of the Liberal MLAs supported the Reform Party's move to deny legislated park status to the Tatshenshini.

The PDA and the Green Party make good points regarding the potential impact of recreational and tourism activities on provincial park ecosystems. In comparison, the NDP government's record includes allowing logging of more than 50 acres of old growth forest in Cypress Provincial Park for expansion of the ski facility. Overall, though, the NDP deserve high marks on parks.

Issue 4: Property Tax and Conservation

Although private land is a small percentage of the British Columbia land base, many of the most ecologically productive and most threatened areas are privately owned. There is a critical need for protection of environmental aspects of private land, such as forest cover to replenish groundwater, and undisturbed habitat to foster biodiversity.

A 1994 amendment to the *Land Title Act* provided a new legal tool in BC for voluntary protection of private land. It allows an owner to grant a "conservation covenant" to a non-governmental conservation organization. A conservation covenant binds future owners of the land to protect the land for ecological purposes.

Unfortunately, the BC property tax system discourages these landowners from using conservation covenants. In many parts of BC, landowners who would prefer to keep their land in a relatively undeveloped state are feeling pressured by rapidly increasing property taxes to sell their land for development or to develop it themselves. The property tax system in British Columbia provides lower taxes for land used for activities such as farming or managed forestry, but does not provide similar incentives for using land for conservation purposes.

Other jurisdictions have established programs which encourage property owners to preserve and protect natural areas voluntarily through property tax incentives. Conservation covenants provide a way to ensure that tax benefits are provided only where conservation is guaranteed in perpetuity.

Question 4: If elected, is your party committed to a property tax incentive for owners of private land who voluntarily commit to environmental conservation of all or part of their land?

Green Party: "If elected, the Green Party is committed to offering property tax incentives to owners of private land who voluntarily commit to environmental conservation of all or part of their land."

Liberal Party: "The BC Liberals will create a BC Trust for public lands to enable and encourage private initiatives to preserve land. This will provide tax relief for land permanently preserved by private land owners. Development decisions on private land are affected by the market prices of the timber and resources that are extracted, and taxation adjustments should take place at the appropriate level to encourage and permit preservation."

NDP: "The *Land Title Amendment Act, 1994* already provides for a property tax incentive for owners of private land who covenant all or part of their land for conservation. Assessors are directed to take the terms or conditions of any covenants into account in determining property tax assessments under the Assessment Act. If you have evidence that this is not an effective mechanism, we would revisit this matter."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes."

Reform Party: "We support the concept of a conservation covenant attracting some measure of property tax relief."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The Green Party, PDA, and Reform share first prize for giving the answer we want to hear!

Interestingly, the Liberals have picked up on the suggestion of the establishment of a Trust for BC Lands, which came out of a report commissioned by then-Minister of Environment John Cashore. Bonus points for non-partisanship! The Trust proposal is a good one, and the Liberals' commitment to support tax relief for land permanently preserved by private land owners is very welcome.

The NDP's answer is correct in that the legislation (passed by the NDP, to its credit) that allowed non-governmental organizations to hold conservation covenants also specifies that the existence of such a covenant on a property should be taken into account in determining the assessed value of the property for tax purposes. However, the tax benefit under the current system is too small to make much difference in most cases. We're glad the NDP is willing to revisit the issue, because we think the tax incentive proposal is a good one. With support already expressed by the Greens, Liberals, PDA, and Reform, the NDP should be willing to back the proposal, since it would be a non-controversial, non-partisan measure.

Issue 5: British Columbia Environmental Protection Act

Updating of British Columbia's anti-pollution legislation has been on the agenda of the last two provincial governments. British Columbia's main anti-pollution legislation, the *Waste Management Act (WMA)*, was introduced in 1982 and does not reflect modern approaches to pollution prevention and environmental protection. Three shortcomings are particularly acute in the current *WMA*:

It is designed to simply regulate end of pipe discharges rather than prevent the creation of polluting substances at source. Most of North America has embraced pollution prevention as a superior strategy to waste management, yet government's mandate under the *WMA* is largely restricted to end of pipe waste management.

It relies solely on criminal penalties, involving proof beyond a reasonable doubt and criminal rules of procedure and evidence to enforce environmental regulations. Other jurisdictions and other BC statutes use administrative penalties as a supplement to criminal penalties. Provisions which allow administrative penalties, including automatic pre-set fines on emitters who break the law, allow for more effective enforcement with limited staff.

It does not provide the public with basic procedural rights and safeguards which assist in the enforcement of environmental regulation and ensure environmental regulation is undertaken in an open, accountable manner. For instance, other provinces have

whistleblower protection, i.e. protection for private and public sector employees against employer retribution if they inform enforcement agencies of suspected environmental violations.

The draft *British Columbia Environmental Protection Act* has been under active discussion for the last three years as a solution to these and other problems with the *Waste Management Act*. Although virtually complete, it has not yet been introduced into the legislature.

Question 5: If elected, will your party enact the British Columbia Environmental Protection Act, including:

- o enabling provisions for pollution prevention;
- o provisions for administrative penalties including automatic fines for firms that exceed permitted emission levels; and
- o whistleblower protection for private and public sector employees informing regulators of suspected violations?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would enact a *British Columbia Environmental Protection Act*, including:

enabling provisions for pollution prevention

provisions for administrative penalties including automatic fines for firms that exceed permitted emission levels; and

whistleblower legislation to protect private and public sector employees informing regulators of suspected violations."

Liberal Party: "BC Liberals will introduce new and progressive legislation on environmental issues. All new legislation will consider provisions for pollution prevention, new administrative penalties, and informant protection. In order to remove partisan politics from environmental issues, Gordon Campbell's Liberals will formally recognize an independent, scientific monitoring of our progress towards sustainability."

NDP: "The *British Columbia Environmental Protection Act* is part of the NDP Environmental Action Plan. It will be the major environmental protection act of the government. It will group together the provisions that apply to all environmental legislation - such as the general principles of environmental management, enforcement,

environmental rights and obligations, appeals and emergency measures. As well the act will establish the legislative basis for programs related to pollution prevention and control, air quality, water quality, pesticides and waste management.

"We are considering enabling provisions for pollution prevention, and administrative penalties. Whistle-blower protection provisions were included in the *Forest Practices Code*, and this issue will be revisited during the drafting of BCEPA.

"We recognize some frustration has developed at the pace of proceedings. However, New Democrats aim to consult broadly and thoroughly in order to build respect for the law."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes" (to all three components of the question.)
"We will institute a review of all existing legislation with a view to making environmental standards more direct and more enforceable."

Reform Party: "Yes, we would enact an *Environmental Protection Act*."

Social Credit Party: No Response.

Analysis

The NDP expresses commitment to *BCEPA*. However, over the last four years there does not seem to have been the political will in cabinet to move *BCEPA* onto the legislative schedule. The NDP is correct in observing that "some frustration has developed at the pace of proceedings." Business' negative and often ill-informed response to *BCEPA* seems to have been the reason for delay. The NDP also gives an equivocal response to the need for whistleblower protection and administrative penalties. Nonetheless, they have launched pollution prevention programs even without the benefit of *BCEPA*, they have expanded the use of administrative penalties (but not automatic penalties) and, historically, the NDP has supported whistleblower protection.

The Liberals say they will "consider" the key elements of *BCEPA*, but their enthusiasm for strong action seems doubtful. For example, in the Legislature the Liberals have been critical of the NDP's "heavy handed approach to using fines ... and charges" under the *Forest Practices Code*. Also, the Liberal's reference to removing partisan politics from environmental issues by independent scientific monitoring is unclear. Although the environmental benefits of initiatives such as the *Forest Practices Code* and new vehicle emission standards sometimes have been exaggerated for political purposes, the NDP government's record on independent, accurate state of the environment reporting is quite good.

The Green Party and PDA responses clearly support passing the BCEPA, including the three key elements listed in the question. The Reform Party also supports "an" Environmental Protection Act, but it does not mention what the content would be.

Issue 6: Access to Digital Maps

Solving contentious land use disputes in BC is made much more feasible when the competing stakeholders are working from the same maps. This provides common ground, both literally and figuratively. These days, the maps in question are frequently in electronic form. Governments, resource companies, environmental groups, First Nations groups and many others are rapidly expanding their use of these digital maps in the process of defining and resolving land use problems. This is highly desirable, because it allows --forces-- the parties to discuss issues using a common base of information, rather than each party simply using its own information to combat the other parties' information.

There is a problem, however. The BC government is using its monopoly on the sale of the digital base maps to charge extremely high prices. Each sector requires digital base maps in order to figure out its own proposals and to present them to other sectors in a usable form. But, the government's prices are astronomical: approximately \$30,000 for digital maps of the Clayoquot Sound area requested by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC). It is clear that such high prices prevent non-profit groups from having access to digital base maps, the common denominator of land use decision-making.

The Commission of Information and Privacy, David Flaherty, recently ruled that the government's refusal to provide WCWC with affordable copies of the digital maps was lawful but unfair. He urged the government to consider a two-tiered pricing system which would recognize the potential public interest contributions of non-profit groups. The Commissioner recognized the desirability of the government recovering the costs of making the maps, but recognized that a fee waiver for environmental non-governmental organizations would not cost the government any money, since the groups cannot afford to buy the maps at the current price anyway. He also noted "no one seems to have pointed out the cost to society of not using (the digital base maps) to the fullest advantage in the making of public policy with input from all affected and interested parties."

Question 6: If elected, will your party establish a two-tier pricing system for digital maps that will

allow non-profit organizations to obtain digital maps for the purpose of participating constructively in the resolution of land use debates in BC?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would ensure that groups participating in public processes concerning land use have access to government maps at a reduced cost or free of cost and open the terms of these processes to allow any BC registered society or individual to act as a participant. Until proper accessibility to process is achieved, the Green Party supports the two-tiered map system proposed by Mr. Flaherty."

Liberal Party: "The BC Liberal Party supports the decisions of the Privacy Commissioner on public access to government information including digital maps. The Privacy Commissioner stated that government should consider a two-tier price policy and a BC Liberal government would consider such a scheme. We must however, keep a close eye on the cost of government and watch for bogus non-profit agencies being set up to obtain services at a discount."

NDP: "The TRIM Program has start up costs in excess on \$70 million. The data compilation costs for each map is about \$10,000. A set of map sheets in digital form costs close to \$30,000. Annual update costs are expected to be in the \$2 million range annually."

"New Democrats certainly appreciate the contribution made by NGOs to the land use debates in BC. The issue is how to facilitate access to the maps while protecting a very substantial public investment. The government is studying the decision of Commissioner Flaherty and we would welcome your views on how this problem might be resolved."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "No. Instead we will supply four year core funding to environmental groups so that they have adequate resources to critique, assess and work with government in environmental policy development."

Reform Party: "We would consider some sort of price differential on the sale of digital maps, provided there was a public policy justification for doing so."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The Greens are the only party whose answer expressly supports a two-tier pricing system. The Liberals' response is close, though, saying they support the Commissioner's decisions and they would *consider* the two-tier proposal. Similarly, the Reform Party appears to give qualified endorsement to the idea.

The NDP's emphasis on the cost of producing the digital maps seems a bit defensive. Everyone agrees it costs a lot to make these digital maps. But pricing the maps out of the reach of NGOs doesn't help the government gain revenue, it just deprives non-profits of the information they need. Still, the NDP says it is studying the issue and welcomes input, so that's better than saying "No"!

Speaking of "No," the PDA's answer is odd. The commitment to provide core funding to environmental groups is very welcome indeed! But why require the groups to use this core funding to buy maps from the government (e.g., giving the money right back to the government) when the government could just donate the maps to the groups (at virtually no cost to the government/public)? Then the groups could spend the core funding on things that the government *can't* provide at no cost to itself.

Issue 7: Forest Renewal British Columbia

In 1994, the Province set up Forest Renewal BC, a partnership of forest companies, workers, environmental groups, First Nations, communities and government. The mandate of Forest Renewal BC is to:

promote the health and productivity of BC's forests through enhanced forestry,
restore and protect the forest environment,
create more value and jobs from each tree,
provide forest sector workers with the skills they need in a renewed forest industry, and
strengthen forest communities.

Increased stumpage and royalties paid by companies to harvest timber on Crown land will provide an average of \$400 million a year for Forest Renewal BC investments. The partners of Forest Renewal BC recognize the need for a long term commitment to forest investments if BC's forests are going to be renewed successfully. Forest Renewal BC was set up as a Crown corporation to ensure the long term stability of its investments.

Question 7(a): If elected, will your party maintain Forest Renewal BC and its mandate?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would maintain Forest Renewal BC until such time as all forest companies are able to compete on an equal footing competitively for forest cutting rights. After that time, the Green Party would return all restoration responsibilities to the government funded by *substantially higher* stumpage fee revenues."

Liberal Party: "BC Liberals believe that a stable and growing forest industry cannot be replaced by government-directed bureaucracies and make-work projects such as the system envisioned under Forest Renewal BC. We will leave Forest Renewal funds in the regions in which they are generated so that they can be invested in land-use productivity, environmental enhancement and community stability."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "We will maintain Forest Renewal BC, however we will also change its administrative structure."

Reform Party: "We would review Forest Renewal BC and may or may not continue it in its present form. Most of its functions could be equally well fulfilled through the forestry ministry and local management boards in each forest district."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Question 7(b): If elected, will your party maintain the current partnership structure of Forest Renewal BC?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would review the current structure of Forest Renewal BC with a view to decreasing corporate involvement which will likely reduce giveaways such as those seen in the Clayoquot Sound recently."

Liberal Party: "We will de-politicize the Forest Renewal Board to ensure that the maximum amount of funding goes to improving forest productivity, not another NDP bureaucracy."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "We will amend it to become more responsive to local community needs and to protect against it being primarily an agency of large companies. We are also committed to reforming the forest tenure system to allow small and medium sized forest companies greater access to timber, thus increasing the likelihood of keeping the jobs and wealth in the communities. In order to increase the timber destined for local mills we would reduce Category One sales in the small business sector in favour of category 2 sales."

Reform Party: "We would review Forest Renewal BC and may or may not continue it in its present form. Most of its functions could be equally well fulfilled through the forestry ministry and local management boards in each forest district." (repeated from above)

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

On this issue, the difference between the NDP and the Liberals is very clear. The NDP would keep Forest Renewal BC as it is. The Liberals would dismantle it. The Greens and the PDA would keep Forest Renewal BC with some changes, and the Reform Party doesn't yet know what it would do on this issue.

Two comments. First, what makes Forest Renewal BC different from previous government-spending programs in the forestry area is that the directors of Forest Renewal come from the different sectors: forest companies, workers, environmental groups, First Nations, communities and government. It is in their attitude toward multi-sector involvement that the NDP and the Liberals differ so significantly. The NDP supports the multi-sector approach, and this is reconfirmed by the NDP's recent proposal for a *Fisheries* Renewal BC along the same multi-sector lines. The Liberals, on the other hand, see Forest Renewal's multi-sector management as 'politicized' and a 'government-directed bureaucracy.' This, combined with the Liberals' intention to "leave Forest Renewal funds in the regions where they are generated," appears to imply that the funds would still be collected, but would be spent by civil servants at the regional level.

Second, the Green Party makes a challenging point when it says it would put the responsibility for restoration onto government, paid for by stumpage fees from companies. Technically, this is off the topic of Forest Renewal BC, because Forest Renewal isn't supposed to replace companies' and government's ongoing reforestation obligations. But the point deserves consideration: who is more willing and able to take proper care of forests used for logging -- companies or the government? Would this be

different if the smaller scale operators got more access to timber, as proposed by the PDA?

Issue 8: Forest Practices Code and Private Forest Land

Recent reports of severe environmental damage from logging practices on private lands -- including extensive detrimental impact to fish habitat -- highlight the need for regulations in BC to protect privately owned forest lands. While the *Forest Practices Code* was brought into effect to improve forest practices in BC and to prevent environmental damage from logging, it currently applies only to Crown land.

Question 8(a): If elected, will your party apply the *Forest Practices Code* to private land?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would apply the *Forest Practices Code* to private land."

Liberal Party: "BC Liberals will implement a *Forest Practices Code* that is scientifically-based, with a better balance between incentives and penalties. We believe that the Code must be clear, unequivocal, lean and adaptable - that's the best way to ensure we have a truly secure timber supply."

NDP: "Yes. Joint government and corporate stewardship of the environment is a critical ingredient to today's forest practices - on both private and public lands. We will be consulting as to how much of the Code should apply, but certainly key environmental provisions should, e.g. riparian zones."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "We will extend the Code to apply to logging on private land."

Reform: "Very little of BC's forest base is in private hands. As a general principle, BC Reform is reluctant to have government interfere with personal property rights. However, where land attracts a lower tax rate because it is designated for active forestry use, and where activities on a property may affect other properties (including streams and ground water flowing away from the property), then government may be justified in extending certain logging rules to private land."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The NDP, the Green Party and the PDA are all committed to applying the *Forest Practices Code* to private land in order to adequately protect the environment from avoidable degradation caused by logging. The Reform Party does not commit itself, but it does recognize that there may be justification for applying logging rules to private land.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party's response ignores the question of applying the Forest Practices Code to private land, presumably reflecting an unwillingness to go in that direction. What the Liberals do say about the Code implies a desire to rewrite and *weaken* the Code, since ensuring "a truly secure timber supply" (e.g., preventing erosion) is only one of the many purposes of the Code (other purposes being to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, etc.)

Question 8(b): If elected, will your party strengthen the *Forest Practices Code* if existing provisions are not effective in maintaining biological diversity and the ecological integrity of BC's forests?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would strengthen the *Forest Practices Code*, including a ban on clear cutting, reducing discretionary powers of district managers, increased riparian protection and giving the legislation the full force of law."

Liberal Party: "The diverse eco-systems and climatic regions in BC support a diversity and an abundance of wildlife that is not replicated in other parts of North America. The BC Liberals recognize the importance of protecting the integrity of our ecosystems, and will commit unequivocally to covering shortfalls of existing legislation drafted by the NDP and Social Credit governments of the past."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes. The Limits to Growth philosophy which will govern all of our economic and governmental strategies places a strong emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity."

Reform Party: Please see the answer to Question 8(a), above.

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The NDP, Green Party and Progressive Democratic Alliance agree to strengthening the *Forest Practices Code* if the existing provisions are not effective in maintaining biological diversity and the biological integrity of the forests of this province.

The Liberals' response is puzzling. In their answer to this question (Question 8(b)), the Liberals apparently "commit unequivocally" to strengthen the *Code* should its protections be inadequate. Yet, in their answer to Question 8(a), the Liberals say they will rewrite the Code, and imply that it will be weaker from an environmental viewpoint, stronger from a timber supply viewpoint.

Issue 9: Contaminated Sites

The *Waste Management Amendment Act, 1993*, BC's contaminated site legislation, has not yet been brought into force. Since 1993, BC has been developing draft regulations which, when finalized, will implement the legislation. BC Environment has thoroughly consulted with all interested stakeholders in developing three drafts of the regulation. The current version of the regulation and the 1993 legislation carefully balance many competing interests without compromising the "polluter pays principle." The legislation and the regulation provide substantially more certainty and fairness to industry, and have been supported by interests as diverse as the Canadian Bankers' Association, the Urban Development Institute and environmentalists. It is now time to bring the legislation and the regulations into force. BC's legacy of historically contaminated sites must be dealt with soon.

Question 9: If elected, will your party bring the *Waste Management Amendment Act, 1993*, and supporting regulations into force in 1996?

If your party does not intend to implement the *Waste Management Amendment Act, 1993*, what legislative means will it use to implement polluter-pay in the context of contaminated sites?

Green Party: "The Green Party government would bring in the *Waste Management Act, 1993*, and supporting Regulations into force in 1996. The Green Party would bring in the Act and then investigate means to better reflect the "polluter stop" principle in future waste management legislation."

Liberal Party: "In conjunction with our Living Rivers Strategy, the BC Liberals will continue with implementation of the *Waste Management Act* as soon as it can be done effectively."

NDP: "That is our intention. The precise date is not known, because the consultations are still in progress. The government consulted widely before bringing in the bill in 1993, and will continue consulting widely on the Regulations."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes."

Reform Party: "We have not seen the draft regulations and have no way of knowing whether or not we can support them."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

The Progressive Democratic Alliance and the Green Party agree that the *Waste Management Amendment Act* should be brought into force in 1996. The NDP has not committed to that timeframe, but says its "intention" is to bring the Act into force. The Liberals have indicated that they will "continue with the implementation of the *Waste Management Amendment Act* as soon as it can be done effectively." There is no assurance that the Act will not be subject to further unnecessary delay prior to implementation. The Reform response that the party has not seen the regulations, which have been available for public comment for several months, provides a clear indication of the extent to which the party concerns itself with issues affecting the environment.

The Green Party went one step further than the other parties in indicating that it would go beyond the "polluter pay" principle in order to address a "polluter stop" principle in future waste management legislation.

Issue 10: Pulp Mill Regulation

The BC pulp and paper industry has shown marked improvements in environmental performance over the past five years. Environmental effects from pulp mill effluent were the subject of considerable concern in BC for many years. Elevated levels of dioxins and furans in a variety of species led to numerous closures of commercial shellfish fisheries and consumption advisories at both coastal areas and a number of inland waters.

In 1990, BC adopted the *Pulp Mill and Pulp and Paper Mill Liquid Effluent Control Regulation* and, for the first time, set legal limits for chlorinated organic compounds (AOX) -- which includes dioxins and furans -- discharged into the environment in pulp mill effluent. In 1992 the regulation was amended to strengthen the standards, requiring mills to reduce AOX discharges to 1.5 kg AOX per air-dried tonne of pulp by the end of 1995 and to completely eliminate AOX produced in the bleaching process by the end of 2002.

This regulation and other complementary standards have resulted in a host of environmental improvements, many achieved ahead of the regulatory schedule. The regulations also have driven -- and continue to drive -- technological developments that yield significant environmental improvements in the pulp production processes used in BC. Increased research and improved technology are paving the way for mills to move to full recycling of chemicals and to eliminating altogether the discharge of pulp mill effluent -- a step that would also eliminate the remaining environmental problems linked to discharging pulp mill effluent into marine and freshwater environments.

Question 10(a): If elected, will your party maintain BC's pulp mill effluent regulations requiring the elimination of AOX produced in the bleaching process by the end of 2002?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would advance the deadline date for elimination of AOX emissions from pulp mills to a date prior to July 1st, 1999."

Liberal Party: "BC Liberals will live up to the commitments of the Province on environmental issues, including the existing goals for effluent discharge."

NDP: "Yes."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "No, this date makes reductions a very costly endeavor for the mills with very little environmental return. We would push the date back, keep the current regulated levels and instead require the mills to use that money

to put into air pollution control and reduction of effluent discharged into the atmosphere."

Reform Party: "We will not commit at this time to a policy of zero AOX. There may be room for a very small amount of AOX without compromising environmental requirements and we will not blindly compromise BC jobs and industry without exploring all the options."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

Good news for the environment! Both the Liberals and NDP are committed to the long-standing BC requirement that pulp mills eliminate AOX by 2002. Take note, pulp industry!

In a curious way, neither the Greens' desire to move up the deadline nor the PDA's desire to push back the deadline is very realistic. The 2002 deadline was a hard fought compromise and is not unreasonably generous to the industry. At the same time, pushing back the deadline is not on, either, because it would be unfair to companies that have already gone out of their way to meet the original deadline.

The Reform Party's reluctance to take a position before "exploring all the options" could be explained by the Party's recent arrival on the political scene. But, all the options were in fact explored when the regulation was adopted.

Question 10(b): If elected, will your party strengthen pulp mill regulations to reduce or eliminate other environmental impacts from pulp mills?

Green Party: "A Green Party government would strengthen pulp mill regulations to reduce or eliminate other environmental impacts, particularly emission of sulphur derivatives and natural antibiotics from wood fibre."

Liberal Party: "As part of our Living Rivers Strategy, a BC Liberal government will implement strict scientifically based limits on effluent discharge, restore and rejuvenate

our water resources. We cannot tolerate ongoing pollution and degeneration of water quality caused by effluent discharge."

NDP: "The government is considering new evidence about contaminants from pulp mills. Once that process is complete, decisions will be made about whether new regulations are needed."

Progressive Democratic Alliance: "Yes."

Reform Party: "... BC Reform will always remain vigilant on health and environmental issues and will look at options to reduce or eliminate other environmental impacts from pulp mills."

Social Credit Party: No response.

Analysis

Lots of agreement. All of the parties (that responded) are willing to tighten pollution standards for pulp mills if the evidence warrants.