

David Eby - My commitment to making British Columbia a sustainable climate leader and a prosperous province to live, work and raise a family

B.C.'s Carbon Tax – worth fixing

I support our party's positions to implement a real and effective climate agenda that reduces carbon and other pollutants from the atmosphere, puts our province on a path to be a sustainable clean energy leader and a dynamic, innovative green economy. Pricing carbon through BC's carbon tax and cap and trade are important tools to accomplish the 33% GHG reduction target by 2020, a target that is law in our province.

BC is not alone in having a carbon tax. Our neighbours in Alberta have implemented a carbon fee on large industrial emitters. Many of the most innovative OECD economies in Europe have had carbon taxes in place for a number of years. And BC's Asia-Pacific trade partners Australia, China and S Korea are currently introducing carbon taxes.

I support continuing and extending the carbon tax but also recognize that the tax needs to be fixed. Instead of funding green infrastructure, energy conservation and expanding public transit choices, the so-called "revenue-neutral" carbon tax will lose over \$300m this fiscal year. The BC Liberals carbon tax contributes to a revenue shortfall and higher deficits while the same government imposes cuts to schools, hospitals and other public services. That is counter-productive to the investments and efforts we need to make to tackle climate change.

The carbon tax can and should be a useful pricing tool to shift BC to a low-carbon future, but the way the BC Liberals have implemented it is flawed. New Democrats are concerned B.C.'s carbon tax currently exempts many large polluters, is unfair to low-income families, and is not doing enough to cut BC's GHG emissions into the atmosphere from major sources. BC is the only province in Canada that saw emissions rise in the last reporting year, according to Statistics Canada, and it is very doubtful that the BC Liberals climate plan will achieve the 2012 interim reduction target of 6%.

Christy Clark needs to clarify the direction she's giving cabinet on whether the carbon tax will rise in 2011 and 2012 or whether it will be "paused" as her Finance Minister Kevin Falcon advocates.

As the MLA for Vancouver-Point Grey, I would ensure that BC's carbon tax is effective and contributes to building greener commuting choices, clean energy infrastructure and energy efficiency retrofits in public buildings and homes across B.C.

Instead of moving BC in a sustainable direction from fossil fuel dependency and the associated risks and damage of catastrophic oil spills in our coastal waters and ecosystems, Christy Clark has used her brief time as Premier to work hand in glove with Prime Minister Harper to lift the 40-year moratorium banning oil supertankers ban from BC's north coastal waters and supporting the Enbridge tar sands pipeline proposal that is currently under federal review.

Cap and Trade – B.C. needs to lead the way

BC New Democrats are supportive of B.C.'s participation in the Western Climate Initiative (WCI), which scheduled to begin the auction and trade of carbon emissions credits to reduce GHG emissions in January 2012. Unfortunately, Christy Clark has not said if BC will comply as a signatory to the WCI agreement and timelines in the province's Cap and Trade Act. Now is not

the time to waver. California, the WCI's major powerhouse and the world's 5th largest economy has signalled intent to immediately proceed with the regional cap and trade system. Premier Christy Clark needs to be clear on whether she wants BC to be an early adopter in the WCI regional cap and trade market or delay our participation or even withdraw as Arizona and Idaho have done. I am pleased that the WCI membership now includes major provincial economies like Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba and have indicated they will participate within a year of the WCI program.

Building a strong and prosperous Green Economy

B.C.'s carbon tax should be directed towards the boosting BC's clean energy economy. Carbon tax investments towards greening our transportation network (the source of 40% of B.C.'s greenhouse gases) and retrofitting public and private buildings in the province (25% of B.C.'s greenhouse gases), should be key priorities in an effective climate action agenda that also emphasizes job creation in the green economy.

Right now in B.C., tens of thousands of jobs could be created by investing in energy conservation through retrofits of homes, schools and hospitals and public transit construction (like the long-delayed Evergreen Rapid Transit project). Unfortunately, most of the energy funds and rebates provided by government in B.C. are almost entirely for the Oil and Gas sector, not for renewable energy. B.C. needs a strong strategic plan for investing in research and development in the clean economy.

Christy Clark is behind Gordon Campbell's HST. When the BC Liberals introduced this tax, they eliminated an array of provincial sales tax credits for green consumer products like bicycles, electric and hybrid vehicles, Energy Star appliances, heat pumps, high efficiency furnaces, green-rated windows and insulation material. I'm concerned the HST creates a strong disincentive for making environmentally minded purchases by making home energy retrofit investments 7% more costly - adding thousands of dollars to greening our homes and businesses. The HST has discouraged the demand for employment among skilled tradespeople in new home construction and green retrofits.

Restoring Trust and Credibility in environmental decision-making

In order to be credible today and make decisions that balance the social, environmental and economic needs of our province, B.C. needs to use the lens of sustainability to inform its policy and decision-making. British Columbia modernized its environmental assessment regime in the 1990's and was a recognized leader. Today, after a decade of the BC Liberals in power, the environmental assessment process has been weakened by reducing public and community consultation, local government and First Nations consultation, and Ministry cuts to personnel that conduct environmental reviews are causing costly delays to business.

B.C.'s environmental assessment process fails to document climate impacts or look at a project's contribution to a cumulative impact on a particular area. As a result, the province lacks science-based information to guide decisions and is scrambling to respond to emerging environmental concerns. One of those relates to public concerns about 'fracking' impacts and sour gas and greenhouse gas emissions in the 'upstream' oil and gas industry, which the New Democrats favour reviewing publicly. It is also critically important that government return critical decision making powers to BC Utilities Commission to restore public accountability for any decisions over BC Hydro and power projects.