



The
WATERWEALTH
Project

All Candidates Questionnaire

April 18, 2013

The Importance of our Water Wealth

Context: As we talk with more and more people in our communities, the WaterWealth Project is hearing that clean, safe and flowing water in the Valley is one of people's biggest concerns. We've attached the results of our community survey. This survey is echoed by a 2010 McAllister Opinion Research poll that showed 94% of British Columbians believe water is our most important natural resource.

Question 1: If you become our local representative, where will freshwater protection place on your priority list?

1st 2nd 3rd Other

Comments:

I know – and the BC NDP knows – that we live in one of the most diverse, spectacular and sensitive natural environments on earth. We believe that BC can lead the way in promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability, and freshwater protection is a priority. That's why an NDP government will:

- Complete the Water Act Modernization process and introduce groundwater regulation.

Our environmental platform also includes commitments to:

- Protecting wild salmon stocks by working with the federal government to implement the Cohen Commission recommendations
- Undertaking an independent, expert-led public review of fracking and the impact of oil and gas development.
- Beginning to restore BC Parks funding for conservation officers, park rangers, and nature interpretation programs that support tourism and help connect young people with BC's outdoors.
- Protecting significant ecological areas like wetlands, estuaries and valuable old-growth forests.
- Ensuring government decisions are supported by robust science-based evidence to better manage BC's wildlife and fisheries resources, and strengthen monitoring and enforcement capacity.

Community Control Over Our Local Home Waters

Context: We are also hearing that people are frustrated with having little to no voice in the decisions that affect our local home waters such as the lack of meaningful consultation on the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the chlorination of drinking water in Chilliwack, and the development of the Aggregate Pilot Project.

Question 2: Do you support greater community involvement in decisions that affect our local home waters and the right for our communities to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to major proposals that affect us?

Answer:

An NDP government will fulfill our responsibility to ensure major projects in BC meet rigorous environmental standards. To proceed, new developments must not pose unacceptable risks to our economic, social or environmental interests.

An NDP government will:

- Renew and strengthen the environmental assessment process to ensure BC will have rigorous, science-based environmental standards and real and meaningful consultation with First Nations.
- Withdraw from the Northern Gateway Pipeline equivalency agreement on environmental assessment with the federal government within one week of forming government. We will exercise BC’s constitutional and legal powers to fully protect BC’s interests.
- Establish a made-in-BC environmental assessment of the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline, the proposed Kinder Morgan expansion, and any other heavy oil pipeline proposal.
- Maintain the moratorium on offshore oil exploration, drilling and tankers on the North Coast.

We will also work to improve local autonomy and consultation-based decision making. Personally I am committed to creating an advisory that includes WaterWealth to pursue the options of creating a local watershed board.

Question 3: Would you support the formation of a citizens roundtable or watershed board co-chaired by First Nations and non-First Nations community members to provide leadership on a long-term protection plan for our local home waters?

Answer:

The formation of a citizens roundtable or watershed board is not part of our environment platform, but as I mentioned above I am interested in having an advisory come together to pursue the idea for the lower fraser valley.

We have released our priorities for environmental protection and stewardship, including renewing and strengthening the environmental assessment process to ensure BC will have rigorous, science-based

environmental standards and real and meaningful consultation with First Nations, and completing the Water Act Modernization process and introducing groundwater regulation. We will also renew BC's Climate Action Plan to meet BC's legislated greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, and lead the call for a national energy and climate strategy, and invest a portion of carbon tax revenues to enhance and expand transit service and options, build and rehabilitate green infrastructure, and support climate solutions in communities across BC. We will introduce new legislation to protect endangered species and habitats.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss issues and work together on ways to protect BC's waters.

Indigenous Rights and Title

Context: The waters of the Valley and the life sustained within it have supported Indigenous communities for thousands of years. Long before the first visit of Simon Fraser in 1808, this water wealth allowed them to develop sustainable economies and governance systems. As long-term stewards of lakes, rivers and streams, indigenous communities nurtured the healthy waters we enjoy today.

Question 4: Given that recognition of indigenous rights and title is essential for the long-term protection of our shared home waters, what would you bring to the table to support First Nations-Crown reconciliation of rights and responsibilities?

Answer:

An NDP government will:

- Renew and strengthen the environmental assessment process to ensure BC will have rigorous, science-based environmental standards, and real and meaningful consultation with First Nations.
- Work with First Nations peoples, Metis and Aboriginal groups towards a better future for our province, utilizing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a guide for legislation and policy development.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss the issues you have raised, and work together on ways to protect BC's waters.

The BC Water Act

Context: The BC Water Act, our most important piece of water legislation, is over 100 years old and completely out-dated. It has no provision to ensure there is enough water in rivers and streams to support fish ('ecosystem flows'); it doesn't put any limits on groundwater withdrawals (BC is the only jurisdiction in Canada with no rules for groundwater removal); and it allocates fresh water through an antiquated system called First in Time, First in Right.

Question 5: Do you support the implementation of a NEW BC Water Act that would ensure enough water flows through our home waters for fish and other wildlife, enacts groundwater protection, creates the framework to enable comprehensive community planning for water protection, and respects indigenous rights and title?

Answer:

An NDP government will:

- Complete the Water Act Modernization process and introduce groundwater regulation.

Drinking Water Protection

Context: The recent controversy around the decision to chlorinate Chilliwack's drinking water has highlighted the importance of keeping contaminants out of our drinking water sources (like the Vedder-Sardis aquifer) in the first place. Experts agree the best way to protect drinking water and reduce the need for expensive treatment solutions is to protect the source of drinking water.

Question 5: Do you support comprehensive provincial source water protection legislation that would empower local communities to work with government to develop enforceable plans to protect their drinking water?

Answer:

The development of comprehensive provincial source water protection legislation is not part of our environment platform.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss issues such source water protection, and work together on ways to protect BC's waters.

Your Position on Threats to Our Home Waters

Context - Kinder Morgan is increasing transportation of heavy bitumen oil through its existing **TransMountain pipeline** that crosses 100 rivers and streams on its route from Alberta through the Fraser Valley. It is proposing to **triple** the amount of oil transportation from 300,000 to 890,000 barrels per day by building a new pipeline. Since 2005, there have been four ruptures along the existing pipeline. In 2012, a similar pipeline carrying bitumen ruptured and emptied 3,000,000 litres of bitumen into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, devastating an entire community and becoming the costliest pipeline spill in US history.

Question 6: What is your position on a) the increasing transportation of bitumen through the existing Kinder Morgan pipeline and b) the creation of a new pipeline to triple the capacity of heavy oil transportation?

Answer:

An NDP government will fulfill our responsibility to ensure major projects in BC meet rigorous environmental standards. To proceed, new developments must not pose unacceptable risks to our economic, social or environmental interests.

That's the key reason why we firmly oppose the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline. It puts our environment and the economy in Northern BC at risk. It's simply not in BC's interests. Similarly, in regards to the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, we do not believe the Port of Vancouver should be converted into a major oil export facility.

An NDP government will:

- Withdraw from the Northern Gateway Pipeline equivalency agreement on environmental assessment with the federal government within one week of forming government. We will exercise BC's constitutional and legal powers to fully protect BC's interests.
- Maintain the moratorium on offshore oil exploration, drilling and tankers on the North Coast.
- Establish a made-in-BC environmental assessment of the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline, the proposed Kinder Morgan expansion, and any other heavy oil pipeline proposal.

Context: Government and the aggregate industry has developed the **Aggregate Pilot Project**, which maps out very large areas of this region that would be open to mining for corporate profit. This has been developed with limited input from local communities despite the substantial impact this mining could have on our rivers, lakes, and groundwater that are our drinking water sources, and which support fish, wildlife and local economies.

Question 7: Do you support the Aggregate Pilot Project?

Answer:

Taking a position on the Aggregate Pilot Project is not part of our environment platform.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss key issues relating to the Aggregate Pilot Project.

Context: Scientific experts such as Marvin Rosenau and Otto Langer have shown that the practice of **in-river gravel mining** can be extremely damaging to salmon and other fish habitat, and has questionable benefits for flood control. They have called for the development of a long-term management plan for dealing with this issue for 15 years.

Question 8: Do you support the development of a long-term management plan for sediment removal developed with full involvement of First Nations, scientific experts, and community members?

Answer:

The development of a long-term management plan for sediment removal is not part of our environment platform.

If the BC NDP forms the next government in British Columbia, we would look forward to meeting with you to discuss important issues such as protection of salmon and other fish habitat and the involvement First Nations, experts and British Columbians, and work together on ways to protect BC's waters.

Private Hydroelectric Diversions (also known as Independent Power Projects) - a freedom of information request from the Wilderness Committee discovered 700 instances of non-compliance at 16 private diversions in the past few years, indicating regulatory disarray for this industry. These projects can cause significant harm to fish habitat if improperly installed and operated and the cumulative impacts can be extremely disruptive to river systems.

Question 9: Would you support undertaking a comprehensive cumulative environmental assessment prior to approving any new private hydroelectric diversions in the Fraser Valley?

Answer:

An NDP government will renew and strengthen the environmental assessment process to ensure BC will have rigorous, science-based environmental standards and real and meaningful consultation with First Nations.