

Alternatives North Federal Election Questionnaire

Kelvin Kotchilea (New Democratic Party) Replies

QUESTION 1

Background: Emergency mobilizations require social cohesion, but inequality undermines such collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic has further lifted the veil on the inequities in our society.

Question: How do you propose to tackle the climate crisis and these inequities at the same time? One required element of doing so is referred to as Just Transition – what is the role of the federal government in ensuring no one is left behind in the grand decarbonization transition before us?

New Democrats like me believe there is a climate emergency. We must transition to a sustainable, zero-carbon emissions economy to address it. We also believe there is an equity crisis in our society. We can't move forward on the climate emergency without at the same time addressing the inequities facing so many people in Canada and, especially, in northern Canada – underpaid essential workers, women, Indigenous people, people of colour, migrants, LGBTQ2S+ people, people living with disabilities.

The federal government has a major role to play in making a Just Transition happen. The key is to view every federal policy and program through both lenses.

New Democrats want Canada to be a leader in climate science, alternative energy, sustainable agriculture, and clean technology. We will support the development of these industries. One way to do that and hit both the climate and equity goals is to focus on supporting education and training for workers in these industries. We would also support retraining and relocation of people now employed in carbon-intensive industries into renewable and sustainable industries.

Some of the best climate equity strategies focus on making housing, power and transportation both environmentally sustainable and more affordable for middle and low-income families and individuals. For example, we will work with provinces and territories to retrofit and upgrade buildings and infrastructure to be more energy efficient and adaptable to the changing climate.

The NDP will also expand and modernize our social safety net and public services to help end the inequities in our society. We will support those initiatives by ending tax loopholes and tax giveaways to the polluters and ultra-wealthy who are ultimately responsible for the climate emergency.

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QUESTION 2

Background: The path forward has to be one of true cooperation and partnership, and one that honours and respects Indigenous title and rights. We need a path forward that seeks to make right the injustices of the past and fundamentally breaks with the colonial practices that have marked so much of our politics and economic development for centuries.

Question: What are you hearing from Indigenous communities about the climate crisis? How can you and the federal government walk a path forward on climate that respects and honours Indigenous title and rights?

I am a Tlicho person from the Indigenous community of Behchoko. As the NDP candidate in NWT, I am hearing that there is a serious disconnect between the territorial and federal governments and Indigenous governments, that there is not enough cooperation.

Indigenous governments want more autonomy and they want to deal directly with the federal government, nation to nation. In order to make right the injustices of the past, the federal government must prioritize settling land claims equitably and honourably. We must encourage the GNWT to treat Indigenous governments as genuine partners.

On the climate crisis, we are hearing that Indigenous communities are seeing some of the direct impacts of climate change already, with erosion, flooding and wildfires. Indigenous people are leveraging Indigenous knowledge, businesses and leadership to address these issues as they affect their own communities. We need Indigenous-led and Indigenous-informed climate and environmental policy with the flexibility to find local solutions, rather than top-down strategies dictated from Ottawa.

We are also hearing that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be respected and realized in Canadian law. This would help us all move forward on a path that respects and honours Indigenous title and rights, and thereby ensures First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples are full and equal partners in Canada's efforts to confront the climate crisis.

QUESTION 3

Background: During the COVID-19 pandemic, our governments committed to spending what it takes to ensure the safety of our citizens. According to climate and economy experts, we need to spend 2% of our GDP on climate action and green infrastructure and another 2% on just transition and social infrastructure to ensure no one is left behind. That would be about \$80 billion annually.

Question: Given the urgency of the climate emergency, are you prepared to spend what it takes to contribute to the global effort to avoid the worst of the climate crisis?

Yes. My party is prepared to spend what it takes to contribute to the global effort to avoid the worst of the climate crisis, including what it takes to pay for a Just Transition and social infrastructure to ensure no-one is left behind.

QUESTION 4

Background: During World War Two, in order to meet the military production and social needs of its population, Canada created 28 new crown corporations. Within two years, Canada increased manufacturing of aircraft 25 fold. Before the war, shipbuilders numbered only 2000, at the end of the war, there were 30,000 shipbuilders.

Question: Given the scaling up that is necessary to combat the climate crisis, how can the federal government create new institutions to get the job done, or leverage existing institutions?

New Democrats agree that it will take an all-out effort to fight this climate emergency at the same time as addressing Canada's social inequities. This effort will require new institutions as well as leveraging existing ones.

Market forces can be leveraged to help change individual behaviour, for example through fair and appropriate carbon taxation. But the market alone cannot be relied on to stop climate change or address social inequities.

The NDP is committed to creating new public institutions and assets to lead the transition to a net zero carbon economy. We will appoint a Climate Emergency Committee of Cabinet and establish a strong Climate Emergency Secretariat in the PMO. We will create an Office of Environmental Justice to address the disproportionate impacts of pollution and loss of biodiversity on low-income, racialized and other marginalized communities. And we will create and fund a Climate Accountability Office, to provide independent oversight of federal climate progress, to engage the public, and to make recommendations on how to achieve our goals.

QUESTION 5

Background: The pandemic has seen our governments issue health orders and take strong actions to shut down non-essential parts of the economy when needed. When it comes to the climate emergency, however, actions taken to date have been almost entirely voluntary. We encourage change. We incentivize change. We offer rebates. We send price signals. But what we have decidedly not done is require change. We need to set clear, near-term dates by which certain things will be required. For example, we should mandate that all new buildings will not be permitted to use natural gas or other fossil fuels for heating as of 2023.

Question: Are you prepared to switch from incentive-based and voluntary policies to mandatory measures to combat the climate crisis? What would those mandatory measures be?

New Democrats believe both mandatory measures and incentive-based policies are needed to address the climate emergency. The mandatory measures we support are focused mainly on governments and corporations. The evidence shows that incentive-based policies such as carbon taxation have generally proven to be effective in changing individual behaviour.

A New Democrat government will get us to net-zero emissions with impactful emissions targets, eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, taking on big polluters, and more. We will strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and the federal environmental impact assessment process, and we will ban single-use plastics and ensure the Species at Risk Act is enforced.

QUESTION 6

Background: The leaders we remember best from the Second World War were outstanding

communicators and orators who walked a careful line. They were forthright about the gravity of the crisis, yet still managed to impart hope. Similarly, that's how our present governments have modelled emergency communication throughout the pandemic. We receive daily press briefings. We hear regularly from public health officials. The media has taken seriously its duty to provide the necessary information on a daily basis. Government leaders and the media have listened to science and health experts, and have acted accordingly.

Question: Are you prepared to implement emergency-level communications about the climate emergency? What does that look like for you?

Yes, we are prepared to implement emergency-level communications about the climate emergency and the equity crisis in our society.

I have mentioned some of the institutions New Democrats plan to build in order to lead a Just Transition to a net-zero carbon economy in Canada: a Climate Emergency Committee of Cabinet, a Climate Emergency Secretariat in the PMO, an Office of Environmental Justice and a Climate Accountability Office. These institutions will enable a New Democratic Government and MPs to communicate to the public and media on a daily basis with trustworthy, expert information and explanations, much as Canadian governments have done during the current pandemic.