






May 4, 2009



1. Will your party commit to simplifying and flattening the tax system in British Columbia by decreasing the number of tax brackets from the current five to two?

	<p>The BC Liberal government is committed to continually lowering costs on the economy while preserving equitability in the tax system. But we also need to ensure our tax system is fair to all taxpayers and that the brackets are fairly distributed across income levels. We currently have no plans to reduce the number of tax brackets but are always interested in ways to improve our tax system.</p>
	<p>The NDP supports a progressive income tax system and has no current plans to amend the number of tax brackets in B.C. We also believe that in the current economic climate it makes no sense to introduce new taxes like the BC Liberal Carbon Tax that is set to double and then triple over the next three years. The NDP will ensure B.C. continues to have a competitive tax environment that stimulates and supports innovation, job creation and diversification.</p>
	<p>The Green Party believes that the tax system should calculate and collect taxes in the fairest, most efficient way possible for the operation of government. We understand the importance of simple taxation systems. Therefore, we would raise the basic personal exemption and are amenable to the creation of a public tax review committee that would examine corporate and personal income taxes.</p> <p>However, although we recognize the need for a tax system that is not so open to manipulation by tax professionals or bureaucrats, decreasing the number of tax brackets is not currently a priority for the Green Party. We are committed to removing disincentives to work, save, and invest as well as decreasing tax avoidance and administrative costs, but are at the same time committed to a fair and progressive income tax system. Therefore, we are interested in tax reform measures that will accomplish both of these policy goals.</p>
	<p>Yes</p>




	<p>It is the policy of BC Refed to repatriate taxes to BC. We seek to retain BC taxes and only forward monies to Ottawa to pay for our share of any services provided us. We hold that the power of DIRECT TAXATION lays solely with the provinces from before confederation as the provinces were creating the entity we call Canada. Flattening of the tax system in BC for simplification is a goal.</p>
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2. Will your party commit to legislating a debt reduction plan?

	<p>We have done just that, reducing the provincial operating debt 47% from \$15.7 billion in 2002/03 to \$8.3 billion in 2007/08. Last summer, we finally reduced that operating debt to the level it at stood when the NDP took office in 1991. BC's taxpayer-supported debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio (a key measure of debt affordability) also fell from over 20% to 13.8% since 2001 – the lowest level since 1990/91.</p> <p>In order to protect the social services British Columbians depend on, the BC Liberal government will run temporary deficits for the next two fiscal years. According to the legislation introduced this spring, we will balance the budget by the 2011/2012 fiscal year. That legislation prohibits discretionary year-end spending through supplementary estimates, and requires that any increase in cash accrued during the fiscal year must be used to pay down the operating debt until that debt is eliminated.</p>
	<p>Reducing debt is a key priority that right now must be balanced with the immediate need to stimulate economic growth and job creation by investing in B.C.s infrastructure. The NDP economic stimulus plan makes a modest and affordable increase in the debt to GDP ratio and ensures that B.C. will continue to have the second lowest debt to GDP ratio in Canada.</p> <p>The NDP will implement a government-wide cost containment plan to prioritize fundamentals and cut wasteful spending. This will include the roll-back of executive wage increases, cuts to professional services, travel and other discretionary budgets, downsizing of the public affairs bureau and communications spending in government agencies and the elimination of agencies like Partnerships BC.</p>
	<p>The Green Party is familiar with the CTF's "Back to the Basics" report and its recommendations to the 2008 Budget Consultation panel. As a party dedicated to fiscal responsibility, we very much appreciate the emphasis placed upon politicians learning to live within the means of taxpayers. And, as a party committed to sustainable ways of life, we tend to refer to this as fiscal sustainability.</p>



	<p>As the CTF has noted, B.C. taxpayers funded public debt charges of \$2.2 billion last year (or 7% of provincial tax revenues). This is unacceptable. We believe it is time for a government that is committed to debt reduction. Green Party MLA's will seek a legislated debt reduction plan that is both effective and realistic. Instead of \$6 million a day going to bondholders, we would ensure that money was funding hospitals, schools, infrastructure, and lessening the burden on taxpayers.</p>
	Yes
	We are committed to that definitely.




3. Will your party commit to eliminating the Health Care Premium?

	<p>The Province collects \$1.6 billion from Medical Service Premiums each year which contribute directly to the \$15 billion health care system in BC. With our growing, aging population and advances in technology, health care costs continue to grow at a rapid rate. The premium plays a small but important role in maintaining the important services British Columbians depend on in our health system. It is important to note that the province is spending over \$15.7 billion on health care this year – ten times what is collected through MSP.</p>
	<p>The NDP strongly opposed the BC Liberal government's decision to increase Medical Service Plan premiums by 50% in 2002. We also opposed other actions that made health care less affordable, including the de-listing of medical services like eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic care; and making prescription drugs less affordable for seniors. The NDP will not raise health care premiums and will freeze other fees including tuition fees and ferry fares to make life more affordable for B.C.'s families.</p>
	<p>The Green Party understands the need to reform the governance of health services to create more effective and efficient service-provision. Increased spending on health care coupled with continued long waiting lists indicate that it is time for reform.</p> <p>Therefore, we will bring BC in line with most other Canadian jurisdictions and eliminate Medical Service Plan premiums. We seek</p>



	<p>to reduce government wastefulness and recognize the tendency for large bureaucracies to produce significant inefficiencies.</p> <p>We would also establish public accountability in provincially-funded health organizations by restoring an arms-length, non-partisan body that will seek candidates and make appointments based on qualifications and expertise through a competitive, open and accountable process.</p>
	We will investigate doing so.
	BC Refed has a plan to use the expertise of ICBC to gain control of health care spending, through reductions in expensive administration and redundant underwriting, which should allow for this.




4. Will your party commit to eliminating the carbon tax?

	<p>The carbon tax is an innovative tax on pollution designed to cut other taxes - the only levy in Canada that actually lowers the tax burden on British Columbians. Under law, every cent collected over the next three years will be returned to taxpayers through personal, small business and business tax cuts.</p> <p>Personal income taxes have been reduced by 5%. Small business corporate income taxes have been reduced by 44% from 4.5% to 2.5%, and will be reduced the lowest in Canada by April 1, 2012. Corporate income taxes have been cut to 11% and will fall to 10% by 2011, the lowest in the country. Ultimately, we realize cutting corporate and small business tax rates to some of the lowest in Canada attracts investment to create jobs and stability in our communities.</p>
	<p>The NDP will immediately cancel the Carbon Tax because we believe it is ineffective and unfair. Canceling the tax will put \$1.8 billion back into B.C.'s economy. Research shows that purely punitive measures don't significantly affect people's behaviour, and the governments own models say that the tax will have only a very small impact on emissions. At the same time, the tax is universally applied even though viable fuel and transportation alternatives are unavailable to many. Finally, we believe the tax is unfair because it makes our trade-dependent manufacturing sector less internationally competitive and will have the perverse effect of increasing emissions by requiring imports of foreign goods that used to be produced here. No other jurisdictions are moving towards a carbon tax, so BC will be at a permanent disadvantage.</p>



	<p>The Green Party is committed to a Green Tax Shift in which significant reductions in income and payroll taxes are matched by a carbon tax. This tax policy will ensure that citizens of BC are left with more ways to save and invest their hard-earned dollars.</p> <p>Our Green Tax Shift is not based upon alarmist propaganda or hype, but is rooted in our understanding that not only does tax relief for individuals and businesses mean increased economic activity through more spending and saving, but a carbon tax means wastefulness will become more costly.</p> <p>We believe in practical measures that will lead to less government wastefulness as well as less industrial and personal wastefulness. A revenue-neutral Green Tax Shift will send the appropriate signals into the marketplace to ensure BC prospers for years to come.</p>
	<p>Yes, absolutely, and we will NOT replace it with an NDP style Environmental levy or any other tax on carbon dioxide.</p>
	<p>BC Refed takes the position that the Campbell/James' plans to tax carbon based fuels must be eliminated altogether. This tax is punishing to those who do not have any alternatives. Instead, we would take existing 'enviro-levies' and redirect them to post secondary schools to find viable and affordable solutions to what we are doing now. Only then can we consider incentives to get people to convert away from our current fuels.</p>




5. Will your party commit to eliminating corporate welfare?

	<p>The BC Liberal government knows that picking winners and losers with business subsidies doesn't work. That's why we've followed a policy of not subsidizing individual firms since we first took office in 2001. Instead, we work with the private sector to lower costs and put money back in taxpayers' pockets for individuals and businesses. This has resulted in an outstanding record of job creation with over 300,000 jobs created since 2001, and economic growth that has consistently outpaced the national average.</p>
	<p>The NDP does not support corporate giveaways like the BC Liberal government's one-sided resource use policies whereby big corporations benefit from the use of public resources without and local communities are left out. The giveaway of tree farm licenses to Western Forest Products for development lands that were given to them with a covenant to use to create forestry jobs is a case in point. At the same time, the NDP believes that government has a responsibility to work with key economic sectors to ensure they are competitive in international markets, are able to grow and exploit new markets, and most importantly, are able to create new jobs and</p>

	contribute to stable communities.
	<p>The Green Party understands that back-door corporate welfare schemes must be eliminated. The taxpayers of BC deserve an open and transparent picture of government hand-outs and this includes both targeted tax cuts as well as more direct subsidies.</p> <p>Governments are ill-equipped to pick economic winners and failing industries should not be propped up. At the same time, however, we do not believe that all targeted tax reductions are by their nature unprofitable. The key is transparency, moderation, and wise investment. Green MLA's will work hard to ensure any tax cuts and industry subsidies are modest and rooted in adequate economic assessments, oversight, and measurable results. Above all, though, the first step toward a more responsible government is full transparency for the taxpayers of BC.</p>
	Yes, but this does not preclude offering tax incentives for investment in creating jobs in BC.
	A vibrant economy is the lifeblood of BC. Without businesses, large and small, there is no future. We will develop policies recognizing the global pressures and competition that all businesses, employees and citizens face in the foreseeable future.

6. If your party is elected, and could make but one achievement, what would it be?

	<p>If re-elected, the BC Liberals' top priority will be creating jobs for British Columbians and preserving a strong economy. Although we're not immune from the global recession, we are in much better shape than most other places. We've built a strong foundation and we will get a major boost when we host the Olympics and by our new stature as one of Canada's leading economies. That confidence is built on stability and a record of performance. The Conference Board of Canada recently predicted that BC would lead provinces in growth in 2010. A strong economy allows us to increase funding for crucial public services like health care, education, social housing and public safety. We maintain our economic strength by living within our means and maintaining low taxes, and prudently managing taxpayers' money.</p>
	<p>Economic recovery to protect and support B.C. jobs and families is the NDP's number one economic priority. The NDP economic stimulus package makes affordable and targeted investments in people and infrastructure to create 30,000 jobs over three years and to strengthen British Columbia for the long term. The stimulus package includes a one-year tax credit against the small business income tax</p>

	<p>and the elimination of the unfair carbon tax. We will freeze tuition fees and ferry fares and stabilize BC Hydro rates to help make life more affordable for B.C.'s families.</p>
	<p>The Green Party's number one priority at this time is electoral reform. We believe it is essential that BC adopt the BC-STV system and are pleased to see growing support for this reform initiative.</p> <p>The Green Party understands that, just as healthy competition is necessary for an effective marketplace, so too is healthy political competition necessary for an effective government. Under the BC-STV system, not only will citizens be given greater choice at the ballot box, but they will have more responsive local representation because politicians will be more accountable to taxpayers rather than their party.</p>
	<p>To reform the health care system in British Columbia, so that good quality health care is available to all British Columbians on a timely basis, without increasing taxes.</p>
	<p>We seek to bring real democracy to BC. We believe that politicians do not have the corner on wisdom and that as such, we seek the direction of the citizens as THEY wish. We hold that politicians should be mere administrators of the public good and that final say on the actions of politicians must lay with the voters through an OPTIONAL voter veto of any legislation passed in the house. This would immediately moderate BC politics because the voters will be in complete control of politicians.</p>