

Addressing climate change a campaign focus in second week

From putting a price on carbon to providing tax incentives for green improvements around the home and in business, there is no shortage of suggestions on the 2021 Federal Campaign trail on how to address the impacts of climate change around the world, within Canada and right here at home.

As the four leading parties continue to outline their plans to address environmental concerns, The Auroran asked confirmed candidates this week on their party's plans to take on the challenge and the single biggest Canadian factor in the climate crisis.

AURORA-OAK RIDGES-RICHMOND HILL

Liberal candidate Leah Taylor Roy says the climate crisis leaves her worried that her grandchildren "won't grow up in the same way I did."

Her party will build on accomplishments should they form the next government after the September 20 Federal Election, including meeting and exceeding their goals on reducing emissions, banning single-use plastics and all plastic waste by 2030 and planting two billion trees over the next decade.

"Additionally we are changing behaviour by putting a price on pollution and the corresponding Climate Action Incentive Rebate that we all receive," she says. "We had to fight provincial challenges in court to implement this program nationwide and we continue to believe, along with experts and countries around the world, that this is one of the most effective way to reduce greenhouse gases: by ensuring that the price of pollution is reflected in the cost of our goods and services."

The Liberal climate plan, she adds, is a "jobs plan" focused on "building a green recovery to create jobs and grow the middle class while ensuring a cleaner future for our children and grandchildren."

"We have a program to train youth to work with homes and businesses to help them make changes to reduce GHG emissions," she says. "Companies like Windfall Ecology here in Aurora are already working on these initiatives and will grow and be able to hire more youth. Then we are providing subsidies " grants and loans " to make these changes and providing our municipalities with funding to fight the impact of climate change.

"The single biggest threat in the climate crisis is regressive climate policy. The Conservatives continue to deny climate change and want to lower our emissions targets. We cannot afford to go backward on climate action. Our Liberal team recognizes that we must act now to protect our planet."

Conservative candidate Leona Alleslev says protecting the environment has "always been a core Conservative value", recognizing that climate change is indeed real and "as Canadians we must do our part to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and "contribute to sound environmental stewardship.

"We are all committed to building a greener future for our children and grandchildren," she says. "The Conservative plan will reduce carbon emissions, both from consumers and industrial emitters. It will also reward Canadian industry for meeting the highest environmental standards in the world and encourage other countries to do the same by imposing carbon border tariffs on goods imported from major polluters like China. The plan will also increase energy efficiency, conserve clean water, build more public transit, ban the export of plastic waste and preserve Canada's wild spaces and protect our endangered ecosystems by increasing our conservation areas from 12% to 17% of terrestrial lands."

As she goes door-to-door, Ms. Alleslev says there is a misconception that the Liberals have reduced GHG emissions, noting they have increased since they came into office and Canada has had the highest GHG emissions in the G7 since 2015.

Climate change is a global issue that requires a global approach. Canadian oil and gas meets the highest environmental regulations and standards in the world. Despite being the world's sixth largest oil producing nation, Canadians get 44% of their supply from foreign producers rather than domestic supply. Canada's continued import of oil and gas from countries that have significantly lower environmental standards than ours is not good for Canada or the world. Increased use of Canada's domestic oil and gas supply would reduce both Canada's energy vulnerability and our country's total GHG emissions. If all of the oil and gas producing nations around the world adopted Canadian standards worldwide GHG emissions would be reduced by a substantial 25%.

Addressing climate change requires a comprehensive integrated approach and unwavering commitment. Canada's Conservatives have a detailed climate plan and will act to secure Canada's environment.

NEWMARKET-AURORA

The climate crisis is a reality here today and we have reached the critical action stage, says Newmarket-Aurora Green candidate Tim Flemming.

We must act now or face dire consequences in the very short years ahead ask folks from British Columbia, New Orleans, and California, let alone the widespread poverty in Africa and more, he says. True change comes from action, not rhetoric.

Where the Green Party's plan stands apart is the curtailing of funding for the oil and gas sector, with this money redirected to the electricity sector. The Greens will focus on buildings built with firm emission targets that eliminate energy waste, and expanding rail transportation in a bid to reduce emissions.

On a practical basis, the biggest factor and change we can all make is reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, he says. Oil, coal and some natural gas must be designed to cease and replace with renewable electricity, solar and the like. Beyond that, [defeating] climate change comes down to leadership, and us. Each one of us has a role to play as consumers of fossil fuel and hold our elected officials accountable to do same. But we must act not talk now.

While Conservative candidate Harold Kim says their plan will meet targets and reduce emissions by 2030, they will do so without the Liberal government's Carbon Tax.

Unlike the Liberals plan simply to impose another tax on the middle class that doesn't go to fighting climate change, our plan reduces emissions and provides a boost to jobs and the economy, he says. The carbon tax drives jobs and investment out of the country. The Conservatives will bring in Low Carbon Savings Accounts (LCSA) that help Canadians make greener lifestyle choices, while allowing them to decide what works best for them and their family - putting choice back in Canadians' hands.

In addition, we recognize that public transit is important and have seen huge investments in VIVA and York Region Rapid Transit buses, but for many parts of Canada public transit just doesn't make sense. We have a plan for this too. Through our platform addressing the economy, we plan to provide incentives for made-in-Canada solutions and tax incentives for cutting edge technology and will be looking to make electric and hydrogen vehicles right here in Ontario. And, in this regard, by 2030 we will be requiring 30 per cent of light duty vehicles sold to be zero emissions.

Many voters of this Riding changed from Liberal to Conservative in the 2019 election, solely based on the Carbon Tax, he claims. During the initial stages of the pandemic, gas prices were around \$1.00/litre, and now gas prices have surged to reach \$1.40/litre, causing great concern for people who will be returning to the workplace. Most residents are also aware that rising gas prices impact prices of everyday living, making affordability a number one concern. The ability to put decisions back into the hands of residents is appealing to many and the Canada Recovery Plan has very detailed, doable plans and programs, with made-in-Canada solutions.

Liberal candidate Tony Van Bynen, on the other hand, has a very different perspective.

The most important aspect of our climate plan has been making sure it is no longer free to pollute, he says. Our plan is making

the big polluters pay, giving most of that money back to Canadians, and investing the rest in the green jobs and technology that our kids and our grandkids will need. We're also scaling up renewables and green sources of energy, retrofitting homes and buildings, and working to electrify the rest of our economy. To get more of them on the road, we're also making it easier and cheaper for Canadians to switch to electric vehicles. Because of the measures we've put in place, we're on track to reduce emissions by 36% by 2030, and we will surpass our Paris targets by reducing emissions by 40-45%, something the Conservatives have said they will not do.

?If you look at the data, the largest emitter in Canada is the oil and gas industry. We've been providing companies with funding to make their processes more environmentally friendly, and we've taken steps to reduce emissions in oil and gas through market mechanisms like a carbon price, which is already working to help the industry move in a cleaner, more sustainable direction.?

The NDP will set a target of reducing Canada's emissions by at least 50 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030, says candidate Yvonne Kelly, who says her party will create and fund a ?Climate Accountability Office? to provide independent oversight of the Federal government's ?climate progress.?

?We will continue with carbon pricing while making it fairer and rolling back loopholes the Liberal government has given to big polluters,? she says. ?We will fulfill Canada's G-20 commitment to eliminate the fossil fuel subsidies and redirect these funds to low carbon initiatives, and make sure that future governments can't reverse this by putting in place legislation to ban any future oil, gas and pipeline subsidies. We'll work with the provinces and territories to make Canada an innovation leader on methane reduction. The federal government can also model change, by becoming a trail-blazer in energy efficiency, clean technologies and renewable energy use. We will lead by example and procure from Canadian companies producing clean technology.

?One of the factors that plays a big role in the climate debate and climate crisis in Canada is the need to move from reliance on fossil fuels and what this will mean for the economy. In Alberta in particular, the economy which is driven largely by the oil industry is resistant to this change. The tension exists between moving on with the transition to clean energy and creation of good well-paying jobs in this new sector and the concern for the loss of jobs in the current industry. While the concern for those employed in the oil sector is real and we need to ensure that these workers are well taken care of as the transition takes place, the argument to keep these jobs does not hold a candle to the imminent dangers of the climate crisis. Big money, the oil industry and investors use the argument of job loss to convince Canadians that we cannot afford to transition and end our reliance on fossil fuels. In truth the loss of immense profits from oil is the main reason why this tension is perpetrated and it is also used to undermine the acceptance of climate science.?

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