

BC ELECTION 2024 RESPONSES: Rural Island & Remote Coastal Community Issues

1. Community Economic Development	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Funding programs such as the Rural Economic & Infrastructure Program which stimulate rural development have had a strong uptake by our communities in recent years, indicating the need for support in this area.</p> <p><u>How will your party support our communities in the areas of economic resilience, diversification, clean growth and infrastructure development?</u></p>	<p>We recognize the importance of fostering economic resilience in rural areas. Our party supports rural diversification and development. We believe that infrastructure investment is key to economic growth. The CPBC will continue to advocate for policies that prioritize infrastructure development in rural regions, creating jobs and enhancing quality of life.</p>	<p>We can afford a safe and sustainable future for our children. We can afford a future where our iconic forests and wildlife are healthy and abundant; where our communities have energy-efficient buildings equipped with heat pumps and solar panels; where our watersheds are protected and secure.</p>	<p>British Columbians work hard to build a future for themselves and their families. When you look across the country, BC's economy is strong - and yet many people here are still struggling. Global inflation and high interest rates have made everything from housing to groceries more expensive. Through the economic action plan StrongerBC and the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program (REDIP), we're working with rural communities to help promote economic diversification, clean-economy opportunities and infrastructure. We heard from communities what a difference programs like REDIP made to help them achieve their goals - in the first two years our BC NDP government invested \$99 million to 300 local projects and the third intake of applications is open to communities until October 31. We look forward to partnering with rural communities more in the future so they can grow their communities, in ways that make sense for them.</p>

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David Eby and the BC NDP also know that fighting climate change and powering our economy is one of the job-creation opportunities of our generation. Diversification makes us more secure and our communities more resilient and that's why we are taking action to enhance and support development in many different areas, including technology, cleantech, hydrogen, biotechnology, education and the creative sectors, including film and animation. And it's crucial we keep investing in infrastructure – from housing, roads and internet connectivity to hospitals and schools - especially to respond to our record-setting population growth. We know that rural, remote, and First Nations communities across BC work tirelessly to build economies that provide steady employment, stable services and economic opportunities for their residents.

John Rustad puts all this progress at risk. When he was in government, John Rustad left rural communities to fend for themselves. He exported BC's raw logs and natural wealth while refusing to support rural workers or fund the infrastructure and services people need. Last year Rustad opposed our critical supports for rural communities, voting against cell and internet connectivity for rural communities and against \$1 billion in local community infrastructure grants.

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			<p>John Rustad denies the science of climate change and has promised to completely abandon BC’s climate action plan that we developed with the BC Green Party. He has called climate science a “lie” and said “we should not be trying to fight climate change.” Rustad’s Conservatives will leave us with increasing emissions, dirtier air, and more at risk of extreme flooding and forest fires. And, at a time when companies are creating jobs in jurisdictions that fight climate change, Rustad will abandon climate action and the opportunities in the clean economy. We cannot afford to let BC get left behind.</p> <p>Under David Eby, BC’s economy is one of the strongest in the country. We are going to keep taking action to build an economy that works better for people and communities across the province, with good job opportunities today and for our kids and grandkids so they can build a good life here.</p>
<p>b. The Island Coastal Economic Trust is the only economic trust serving our communities of BC. <u>Will your party recapitalize the Island Coastal Economic Trust - the sole economic trust serving the island-coastal region - with at least \$150 million and transform into a permanent regenerative fund?</u></p>	<p>Regarding the Island Coastal Economic Trust, we support exploring its recapitalization to ensure that island-coastal communities have access to sustainable funding sources. However, we will focus on ensuring these funds are utilized effectively to generate long-term, measurable economic benefits.</p>	<p>The BC Greens are very supportive of the work of Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET). We will work to develop a permanent fund to support their critical work, now and into the future.</p>	<p>David Eby and the BC NDP understand how regional economic trusts, like the Island Coast Economic Trust, help people and rural island communities build more vibrant, resilient places to live, work and play. We are happy to be collaborating on a path to sustainability with the Island Coastal Economic Trust and to be providing funding that allows this important work to go forward.</p> <p>Rustad would deny rural BC the infrastructure and supports they need – just like he did before. Communities can’t afford that risk.</p>

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<p>c. Our communities are dependent on tourism dollars for their local economies, however there is a need for more regenerative tourism to preserve island culture, island carrying capacities and natural beauty.</p> <p><u>How will your party support our communities in their efforts to create tourism as a "force for good" that supports communities?</u></p>	<p>Tourism plays a crucial role in the rural economy, and we support efforts to promote tourism—encouraging responsible and sustainable travel that protects local standards of living and the wellbeing of island communities.</p>	<p>In a time of increasing uncertainty, British Columbians are seeking stability and security—especially when it comes to employment. Tourism offers the opportunity for BC-based businesses to create long-term, stable employment in all regions of the province.</p> <p>As tourism continues to expand, it is essential that our communities benefit equitably and that our ecosystems remain protected. Socio-cultural and ecotourism offer visitors the chance to experience BC’s landscapes and cultures firsthand, while promoting sustainable growth.</p> <p>The BC Greens will enhance cycling tourism in British Columbia by improving infrastructure and collaborating with local partners to promote cycling and trails as a sustainable travel option. There is a big interest in cycle tourism – especially across the gorgeous islands of the Salish Sea. We are keen to work with local communities – improving cycling infrastructure and trail networks across the province would not only enhance access to recreation but also promote sustainable tourism, creating lasting benefits for local communities and contributing to a more resilient future.</p>	<p>British Columbia is a beautiful place and a world-class tourism destination, including the rural islands throughout the Strait of Georgia. David Eby and the BC NDP will continue to support the heart of rural island economies by supporting locally driven tourism, small businesses and protecting our natural environment. We’re committed to working with you to rebuild tourism revenues to 2019 levels and continue growing from there, while also creating a more resilient sector. We know we’re going to face more challenges in the future, from climate emergencies to global economic uncertainty, but by working together, we can overcome those obstacles and ensure BC remains a world-class destination, and that local communities benefit most from tourism.</p> <p>Rustad’s Conservatives don’t believe in the importance that tourism plays in building a force for good in our communities and he doesn’t believe in protecting the natural beauty that inspires island culture and draws people from far and wide.</p>
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2. Affordable Housing	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Availability of affordable, place-appropriate housing, either owned or rented, is one of the biggest challenges facing our communities in BC.</p> <p><u>What will your party do to address the housing crisis in our communities in the short and long term?</u></p>	<p>The housing crisis affects all British Columbians, and we are committed to addressing it. We will work to reduce regulatory barriers that currently hinder innovative housing solutions in rural areas.</p> <p>Our party will work with local governments, not against them. They are a critical partner in getting homes built so British Columbians can live in the communities they grew up in. By streamlining the approval process and promoting innovative solutions, we will ensure more accessible housing options for families and workers in these communities.</p>	<p>Every British Columbian deserves a safe, secure and affordable home—yet in recent years, rising housing costs have placed immense strain on individuals and families, whether they rent or own. Despite being a fundamental human right, access to affordable and secure housing remains out of reach for many across the province.</p> <p>We cannot continue to rely on the market to solve this crisis. The private sector alone cannot deliver the affordable housing we need. A bold shift in approach is required—one that prioritizes the creation of truly affordable homes and provides stronger protections for renters.</p> <p>Our plan prioritizes those most vulnerable in the housing market—renters, seniors, students and families—because this is not just a housing crisis. It is a crisis of equality.</p> <p>Our plans to address the housing crisis include:</p> <p>Strengthen tenant protections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent landlords from dramatically increasing rents after a tenancy ends by implementing vacancy control measures. This will ensure rent increases are reasonable and minimize displacement. 	<p>BC is a great place to live, but housing is too expensive. People across B.C. are facing housing pressures, whether they live in a large urban area or a smaller community. We're up against high interest rates and real estate speculators who want to cash in on our housing market.</p> <p>When the BC NDP formed government in 2017, we started by addressing some of the most challenging issues head on, like preventing organized crime from using our housing market as a personal bank for dirty money – something John Rustad's government let slide for more than a decade. We tackled housing costs by taking on real estate speculators, cutting red tape, and breaking down barriers to construction. The speculation tax has turned well over 20,000 empty condos into long-term homes and the flipping tax helped level the playing field for families who were previously competing with house flippers to purchase homes.</p> <p>Since 2017, over 80,000 homes are complete or underway through BC Housing. Those are homes that would never have been built under John Rustad, who believes BC's for-profit housing market will fix itself.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create province-wide minimum standards for tenant protection to safeguard renters from renovictions and other forms of displacement. • Enhance the Residential Tenancy Branch to address tenant and landlord disputes more effectively, ensuring fair and timely resolutions. • Increase funding to \$164 million annually for the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SHELTER) and Rental Assistance Program (RAP). Raise the rent ceilings, index them to inflation, and expand eligibility to better support low-income renters. <p>Scale Up Non-Market Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide \$1.5 billion annually to construct 26,000 new units of non-market housing each year, with 3,000 units dedicated specifically for Indigenous Peoples. • Implement province-wide upzoning initiatives to end exclusionary zoning for non-market housing. • Support non-profits and housing cooperatives with upfront investment, grant capital and low-interest financing through government-backed construction loans and mortgage guarantees. • Make existing public land available for non-profit housing development and acquire new public land to expand affordable housing opportunities. Recognize community land trusts as crucial for securing land for non-market development. • Improve efficiency and transparency at BC Housing to ensure the build out of 26,000 units of non-market housing per year. 	<p>David Eby and the BC NDP are taking action to significantly boost housing supply across the province, so people can find homes no matter where they live.. And we're making real progress, with an estimated 300,000 more homes over the next ten years on the way. Our platform also includes measures to expand social housing options for people with lower or fixed incomes. Please take some time to go through it when released.</p> <p>John Rustad has a 20-year record of defending the status quo on housing. That's good for real estate speculators, but not for the rest of us. He plans to cancel David Eby's Housing Action Plan and the hundreds of thousands of homes on the way.</p>
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		<p>Protect Existing Affordable Housing Stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funding to the Rental Protection Fund with a \$500 million re-capitalization to safeguard existing affordable rental units. Mandate transparency in fund allocation to guarantee equitable distribution. • Allocate \$100 million annually to a Rental Maintenance Fund to preserve and maintain existing non-profit and co-op housing to prevent these units from falling into disrepair. • Grant non-profit organizations the right of first refusal on the sale of rental apartment buildings, preventing the loss of affordable housing to private developers. <p>Build whole communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with municipalities to meet housing development targets and reward successful communities by sharing a portion of property transfer taxes. • Provide \$650 million annually in infrastructure funding to municipalities. • Develop housing specifically for families, students, essential workers, seniors, and people with disabilities to meet the diverse needs of communities. • Safeguard existing green spaces and expand the urban tree canopy. • Investigate the potential of land value capture as a funding source for infrastructure projects and community development. 	
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		<p>Address the Commodification of Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce legislation to formally recognize housing as a fundamental human right, prioritizing it over market-driven interests. • Implement regulations to curb the impact of short-term rentals on the availability of long-term affordable housing. • Investigate the implementation of a property transfer tax on the transfer of properties to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) or limited partnerships with REIT involvement. • Advocate for federal legislation to ban the sale of residential units to REITs. • Extend the Speculation and Vacancy Tax to all interested communities, with revenues directed towards non-market housing development. • Create a single income-tested housing grant for renters and homeowners alike, merging the Home Owner Grant and Renter’s Tax Credit for more equitable support. • Apply a 2% tax on residential property values over \$3 million and double existing provincial property tax rates for homes valued above \$3 million, \$4 million, and \$7 million, ensuring high-value properties contribute more. <p>Support the Construction Industry and Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Construction Association to promote trades as a career option for young people, women, Indigenous, and racialized communities. Ensure these training programs have affordable tuition. 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position BC as a global leader in prefabricated home technologies by investing in innovation and developing comprehensive design guidelines to improve housing quality and affordability. 	
<p>b. Health Authority regulation has become a significant barrier to progress on the housing file as it blocks innovative solutions to sewage treatment, water collection and purification in our communities.</p> <p><u>How will your party help advance these innovations appropriate to our communities that enable greater housing availability?</u></p>			<p>BC is a great place to live, and we know we need to build more housing so everyone can enjoy a safe and affordable home. Innovation, cutting red tape and removing barriers to construction of new homes has been fundamental to our plan of tackling housing costs and the supply of housing. David Eby is taking action to build more housing, and is working with communities to support the infrastructure communities need. We are going to keep working with communities to build the housing we need and to make sure this can be successful. We are in a housing crisis and David Eby won't stop until the job is done and people can find a place to live they can afford. John Rustad has a 20-year record of defending the status quo on housing. He's promising to reinstate the red tape and government regulations blocking the construction of duplexes and triplexes as well as the needed infrastructure to develop them.</p> <p>We can't afford to let John Rustad cancel David Eby's Housing Action Plan. Let's keep taking action on housing and build a future where everyone can afford to live here.</p>

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3. Emergency Preparedness	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Our communities are extremely vulnerable to the disruptions caused by natural disasters, regardless of their location.</p> <p><u>Please give specific examples on how your party will assist our communities in being fully prepared for these disruptions, including evacuations, business closures, lost productivity, and specific impacts, particularly to the vulnerable and marginalized?</u></p>	<p>Our communities are no stranger to natural disasters, and we understand the need for strong, localized emergency preparedness plans. The CPBC will work with regional authorities to develop comprehensive disaster preparedness strategies that address vulnerabilities, including evacuations, business closures, and ensuring food and medical supplies are secure in the face of disruptions.</p>	<p>The BC Greens are committed to investing in nature-based solutions and climate resilience to better prepare communities for extreme climate events and support their recovery from disasters. Our strategy is grounded in the principles of the United Nations’ Sendai Framework, addressing all phases of disaster management—prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The time for meaningful climate action is now. Together, we can build a safer, more resilient British Columbia for everyone.</p> <p>When elected, the BC Greens will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there are enough paid, trained professionals available to manage disasters from mitigation to recovery. • Establish and maintain strong relationships between First Nations, local governments and emergency management agencies, including BC Wildfire Service. <p>We must shift from reactive disaster response to proactive resilience building and climate action, including habitat restoration and biodiversity protection. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster community engagement and participation before disasters occur to strengthen preparedness and utilize local expertise to enhance disaster preparedness and response efforts. 	<p>British Columbians are seeing firsthand the impacts of climate change and disruptions from natural disasters. In recent years, people have endured the worst forest fire season on record, major floods, drought and extreme weather events.</p> <p>Our top priority is keeping people safe. We have been taking significant action to support communities and make sure they have the resources they need to support people during natural disasters and prepare for the future. This includes boosting the BC Wildfire Service, increasing firefighter recruitment and securing more equipment, planes and helicopters, deploying new, innovative technologies and increasing partnerships with local crews who know their communities best.</p> <p>The BC NDP is taking action to strengthen support for evacuees and make them more flexible, and speed up volunteer training so that we can get support to more people, faster - without them having to wait in line. We are also directly supporting communities to better prepare for emergencies through the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund, which has supported 2,100 local projects to date such as \$20,000 for expansion of the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department, \$30,000 for the South Galiano Volunteer Fire Department and \$32,000 to review and update Quadra Island’s evacuation plan.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in initiatives like a Youth Climate Corps and Watershed Security Fund to bolster community resilience and environmental protection. • Ensure local authorities and First Nations have the capacity, resources, and authority to prepare and respond effectively to emergencies – this includes providing ongoing funding and resources to conduct comprehensive hazard risk and vulnerability assessments. <p>We will ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely and accurate information is communicated to the public during emergencies; reception centers are accessible and supports are available for all evacuees; economic, cultural, and practical needs are met for evacuees. • Gaps in the emergency support system are identified and addressed – develop a plan to assist individuals facing long-term displacement due to disasters, and prioritize responses to extreme weather events that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and Indigenous Peoples. <p>After a disaster has occurred, the BC Greens will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the “build back better” approach to recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts. • Rebuild buildings and infrastructure to withstand potential disasters and climate change impacts; prohibit construction in disaster prone areas • Integrate mental health support and address long-term displacement issues. 	<p>John Rustad denies the science of climate change and has promised to completely abandon BC’s climate action plan. He would be a disaster for our environment, for people’s safety, and he would leave people to fend for themselves. That is just too big of a risk to take.</p>
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4. Healthcare	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Our communities struggle to provide adequate healthcare for its populations with so many deficits in infrastructure, staff and other challenges.</p> <p><u>How will your party address the deficits in health care provision in our communities?</u></p>	<p>The Conservative Party of BC is committed to improving healthcare in rural areas. We recognize the difficulties in staffing and infrastructure that impede access to care. To address this, we will invest in telemedicine and mobile healthcare units that can serve remote areas. Additionally, we will advocate for targeted recruitment incentives to bring healthcare professionals to these communities.</p>	<p>Preventing illness isn't just the compassionate thing to do—it's also the fiscally responsible choice. As climate change intensifies and the world becomes an increasingly complex and hazardous environment—whether through pandemics like COVID-19, air pollution or toxic chemicals in our water and clothing—our healthcare system must focus on keeping people well.</p> <p>The Dogwood Model</p> <p>The BC Greens commit to establishing an integrated community health centre in every riding in the province. The 'Dogwood Model' is based on former Minister of Health Hon. Jane Philpott's Periwinkle Model. It focuses on ensuring everyone has a primary care home - a place where they belong, where they feel at home, where they will go for most of their healthcare needs, and where they have a regular provider - a family physician or nurse practitioner.</p> <p>The BC Greens will roll out one Dogwood Health Centre in every riding in the province, ensuring the provision of 93 health centres in the first year. These will provide a baseline for growth, with good distribution across the province, upon which we can build.</p>	<p>We're facing big challenges. We want BC to be a place where healthcare is always there when you need it. Communities are growing, our family members are getting older, and many doctors and nurses are retiring - which means people are finding it harder to access important healthcare services. A shortage of doctors and nurses is straining healthcare in cities and towns across Canada, and we are all competing for the same pool of doctors and nurses. We're taking action to train and hire more doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers than ever before. We've hired over 800 new family doctors in the last year alone.</p> <p>We are on track to connect everyone on the Health Connect Registry to a doctor or nurse practitioner by the end of 2025 - on top of the 570,000 people we've already connected. We've announced new actions to speed up licensing for doctors and nurses trained elsewhere - immediate provisional licenses for those trained in Canada and within six weeks for those trained in comparable regions globally.</p> <p>We're performing more surgeries and MRIs than ever before and we've made it easier for people to get the care they need for minor ailments by allowing pharmacists to prescribe certain medications. Healthcare should always be there when you need it. And David Eby and the BC NDP won't stop working for rural, remote and First Nation communities.</p>

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		<p>The Dogwood Model provides several advantages for both practitioners and patients; it has easy referral models, so patients can receive care from the expert that best meets their need, be it a physiotherapist or a dietician. It places the administrative burden on the administrative professionals, rather than the health staff, ensuring they can focus their energies on healthcare, and providing the benefits of being a staff member - including health benefits and paid vacation and parental leave.</p> <p>The BC Greens action plan for addressing the needs of rural seniors includes:</p> <p>Implement strategies to support the unique needs of seniors living in rural areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a Rural Seniors Housing Strategy to address the housing needs of seniors in rural communities. • Develop and implement a Rural Health Human Resource Strategy to ensure adequate staffing and services for rural seniors. • Develop and implement a Rural Seniors Home and Community Care Strategy to ensure accessible, high-quality home care for rural seniors. • Develop and implement a Provincial Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Plan focused on achieving equity in care services across the province. • Develop and implement a Provincial Rural Transportation Strategy to improve transportation access for rural seniors. • Improve and promote the Provincial Travel Assistance Program and Hope Air to support rural seniors in traveling to medical appointments and other critical services. 	<p>John Rustad is planning tax breaks for those at the top and will make the rest of us pay for it in cuts to healthcare. In fact, Rustad's healthcare plan includes a \$4.1 billion cut. You can't cut \$4 billion from health without firing doctors and nurses, and driving up wait times.</p> <p>We know there's more work to do, which is why we can't risk losing the progress we've made. Let's keep hiring doctors and nurses, not cut them. So you and your family get the care you need.</p>
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5. BC Ferries	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. BC Ferries has undertaken several engagement sessions recently with the our communities, generating policy recommendations crucial for improving the service.</p> <p><u>What specific actions will your party undertake to improve the sustainability and resilience of ferry services on the BC coast?</u></p>	<p>Improving ferry service is critical to supporting island and coastal communities. We will push for increased service reliability and frequency, especially to improve reliability for commuting for work and medical appointments. This will be achieved through operational efficiency, and potentially expanding reservation systems. Through this approach, we aim to ensure BC Ferries is both sustainable and able to meet the growing demands of island residents.</p>	<p>Ferries are a part of our highway system, and must meet the needs of local residents of Island communities, and their visitors. Canceled sailings can have significant impacts – including threats to food security, and limiting access to timely medical care.</p> <p>The BC Greens will establish an all-party Parliamentary Committee for sustainable transport funding. The Committee will gather expert opinions to create a non-partisan mechanism for funding transport infrastructure and operations, ensuring a comprehensive network for trains, ferries, buses, bikes, trucks, and cars.</p>	<p>Ferry services are vital for our coastal communities and economy. Last year the BC NDP government took action to improve the capacity, reliability and sustainability of BC Ferries with \$500 million in funding. We know how important it is to keep fares down while also growing and modernizing our fleet, so people in coastal communities can more easily get to and from their destinations. People also want to know their sailing will run as scheduled so we made sure to work with BC Ferries to secure additional staffing. Since 2017, we’ve worked with BC Ferries to deliver on our commitment to address affordability concerns by reducing fares on the smaller routes and reinstating the Monday-Thursday senior’s passenger fare discounts that were reduced in 2014. These changes, along with adding services to some routes that were cut in 2014, have helped address long-standing concerns from coastal communities as we work towards longer-term improvements to the system.</p> <p>The last time John Rustad was in government, his government raised ferry fares and cut routes. He’s done it before and he would do it again.</p>

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6. Passenger Transportation	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. The current lack of affordable, convenient, frequent and reliable passenger transportation in our communities results in reduced economic development.</p> <p><u>How will your party support our communities' pursuit of reliable, affordable and convenient passenger transportation services, both in and between communities?</u></p>	<p>Reliable and affordable passenger transportation is essential for economic development. We will work to secure funding for interregional bus services and promote innovative solutions such as ridesharing platforms and local transit partnerships, ensuring all residents have the transportation options they need.</p>	<p>The BC Greens recognize that communities outside of urban centres face profound challenges with regard to obtaining reliable and convenient public transportation. In many parts of the province, public transit is either nonexistent or so infrequent that it's not a viable option for most people. And despite recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, intra-regional bus transportation remains inadequate.</p> <p>We plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement a free public transit system for all people in British Columbia. ● Connect all transit systems, to synchronize services and information infrastructure. ● Ensure at least hourly service for key routes and at least four services per day on all other routes. ● We will double the number of buses within three years, and triple within six. ● Require the Government to spend at least as much on public transit, walking, and cycling as on highway infrastructure and operations. 	<p>Our communities are growing, and people need to be able to go to work, run errands and get home quickly. Building the roads and public transit people need helps people with costs and means people can spend more time with their families. That's why we've made transit more affordable, including making it free for kids 12 and under, while expanding service. As our communities grow, we'll continue taking action to reduce costs and get people moving faster by increasing bus services throughout BC. John Rustad has already made clear his plan to cut transit funding and cancel new projects. Maybe he should have to ride the bus once in a while to understand why transit funding is critical for our communities so people spend more time with their families and less time in traffic.</p> <p>The BC NDP has already increased operating funding for BC Transit more than 30%, improving transit service levels across the province, while keeping fares accessible. We will always look for opportunities to expand transit and access for youth, which is the exact opposite of the BC Conservative agenda. When John Rustad was in government, he eliminated free bus passes for people with disabilities. If he got elected, he'd do it again, and free transit for 12 and under would be gone too. We've got more to do together.</p>

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7. Renewable Energy	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Communities are facing increasing risks from climate change; phasing out fossil fuels & support for renewables is urgent. <u>Will your party stop approvals of new fossil fuels projects in our province, phase out existing ones, and begin rapid support for renewables?</u></p>	<p>Our party acknowledges the importance of renewable energy sources, and we believe in a balanced approach. The Conservative Party of BC will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get the most out of our hydroelectric dams by supporting BC Hydro in capital upgrades that add capacity and extend lifespans. ● Analyze the business case for geothermal power generation. 16 potential sites have been identified in BC, which have the potential to produce clean and reliable electricity. ● Support the development of alternative renewable energy where and when the economics make sense for BC – including wind, solar, and run-of-river hydroelectricity. ● Support the expansion of hydrogen production and refueling capacity as long as taxpayers can realize a return on investment. 	<p>Climate change is already impacting B.C. Year after year, we see more intense, more destructive wildfires, heat waves, flooding and droughts. Record low snowpack levels threaten our ability to generate hydropower, underscoring the urgent need to diversify our electricity system—not only to meet climate goals, but to also remain competitive in the global clean energy economy.</p> <p>The BC Greens will prioritize power for British Columbia, not LNG and fossil fuels. We will stop public funds from being used for BC Hydro infrastructure that supports LNG projects. Existing LNG projects will be required to cover their own electricity generation and transmission costs, prioritizing BC’s energy resources for residential use and sustainable industries.</p> <p>When elected, the BC Greens will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invest \$20 million annually in small-scale distributed solar projects, with a goal of having solar account for 15% of electricity generation by 2035. Ensure these projects are economically viable and accessible to low- and moderate-income households. ● Expand the Community Net Metering program to allow British Columbians to own a share of community-scale solar energy production, receiving credits on their electricity bills for the energy produced. 	<p>The BC NDP’s CleanBC plan outlines a roadmap to align the province’s economic strategy with its energy and climate goals. If re-elected, we will continue building a clean, competitive, and inclusive economy powered by BC-made clean energy, positioning the province as a leader in the transition to a net-zero economy by 2050.</p> <p>David Eby is taking action in key areas to ensure the oil and gas industry fits within our climate commitments, and to support new opportunities in clean energy and technology. This includes bringing in an emissions cap for the oil and gas industry, eliminating the Deep Well Royalty Credit, the largest fossil fuel subsidy in BC while bringing in tough new regulations to slash methane emissions from the oil and gas industry. We are on track to exceed our target of a 45% reduction by 2025 and will strengthen our regulations to achieve a 75% reduction by 2030 and near elimination by 2035.</p> <p>To meet the growing demand for clean energy, we will expand clean energy infrastructure and double BC’s electricity generation capacity by 2050. This will involve regular open calls for First Nations, companies and partnerships to put forward clean energy projects to diversify electricity production using wind, solar, and hydroelectric power.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand funding for the Community Energy Diesel Reduction program to help Indigenous communities transition off diesel and connect to clean power and storage solutions ● Invest in research and development of geothermal energy production. Investigate a technology transfer from oil and gas drilling to geothermal energy production. ● Invest \$20 million annually for education and training programs to address the skills shortage in the renewable energy sector and to retrain oil and gas workers. Invest in a BC Clean Energy Institute in Northwest BC to drive innovation and training. ● Mandate a minimum of 50% equity ownership for First Nations in large renewable energy projects. ● Invest in expanding energy storage capacity and improving electricity distribution to support a more efficient and resilient renewable energy grid. 	<p>Powering our future with clean energy is one of the job- creation opportunities of our time. BC Hydro’s capital plan and its first call for power are projected to generate \$40 billion of public and private capital investments and create between 11,300 and 14,000 construction jobs annually. The shift to clean energy will also create jobs in new emerging professions like heat pump installation, rooftop solar installation, efficiency retrofits, electric vehicle charging and maintenance.</p> <p>John Rustad calls climate science a “lie” and a “hoax” - and would completely abandon BC’s climate action plan. He’ll leave our communities more at risk to extreme flooding and forest fires. The Greens have a lot of good ideas on climate change, but they can’t stop John Rustad.</p>
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8. Food Security	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. With increasing land costs and other challenges, agricultural and local food production and processing businesses are struggling in our communities.</p> <p><u>How will your party work to improve food security and local food production?</u></p>	<p>The CPBC recognizes the importance of supporting local agriculture to ensure food security. We will work with local governments to reduce land costs and provide infrastructure investment for food production and processing. By promoting local food systems and reducing reliance on imported food through our BC Grows plan, we aim to strengthen rural economies and ensure access to nutritious food for all residents.</p>	<p>Ensuring all British Columbians have access to nourishing food is essential to the health and well-being of our communities, and it is a key priority for the BC Greens. We are committed to working with farmers and other stakeholders to transform our food and farming systems so that we are producing healthy, nutritious food at fair prices for consumers, while also ensuring fair wages for growers.</p> <p>We urgently need to invest in food security, protect our farmland, and support our farmers. When elected, our focus will be on building a food system that strengthens local and regional economies rather than serving corporate interests. By protecting agricultural land, expanding local food production, and investing in processing infrastructure, we can fortify our regional food networks and reduce reliance on distant sources.</p> <p>We believe that this approach will create a more resilient, self-sufficient, and sustainable food system for all British Columbians.</p> <p>The BC Greens will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivize regenerative farming practices that build healthier soils, improve water management (e.g., rainwater harvesting systems), reduce energy use and sequester carbon. • Streamline the approval processes for water storage dugouts on farms to improve drought resilience and water availability. 	<p>The BC Industrial Blueprint, launched this past spring, outlines plans to keep food production closer to home by supporting local farmers, producers, and food manufacturers. We're doing this by funding a growing agri-tech sector, improving the transportation and infrastructure that gets food from farm to table, supporting local food businesses with marketing, and by ensuring institutions in BC like schools and hospitals are buying local.</p> <p>Food production here in BC is incredibly important, David Eby and the BC NDP will work with BC farmers and ranchers to better prepare for and respond to threats such as drought. That's why we provided \$100 million dollars for water infrastructure for farmers and food producers to help make irrigation more efficient, and to build local infrastructure to improve local water availability and local storage. This funding is supporting hundreds of farmers with water storage projects, such as agricultural dams and dugouts, and projects to improve water-supply systems for irrigation and livestock. We're also taking action to support healthy watersheds that are resilient to drought, with a \$100 million Watershed Security Fund. We know there is more work to do, and we will keep working with farmers on water storage so they have the supply they need to sustain their farms.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commit the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to work with farmers to ensure the protection of food crops during drought periods. ● Improve access to credit and capital for new farmers to make it easier to start and sustain farming operations. ● Identify options to make farming a more attractive and sustainable endeavor, including exploring a Basic Income Guarantee for farmers to secure income and encourage the next generation of farmers. ● Invest \$9 million to bolster local food systems. ● Rebuild our local food processing, storage and distribution systems. ● Support small-scale, cooperatively-owned infrastructure and businesses, including grocery retailers. ● Develop policies to facilitate public institutional procurement of local food, ensuring schools, hospitals and other institutions prioritize locally produced food. ● Invest in farmers markets, community-supported agriculture, and non-profit food hubs. Increase support for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program. ● Support the development of systems to address food insecurity in First Nations communities that honour Indigenous knowledge, values, harvesting areas and practices. ● Support Indigenous communities' access to and use of traditional foods. 	<p>The impacts of climate change are arriving faster than predicted, and we're going to keep working with farmers and ranchers to support them. John Rustad denies the science of climate change and has promised to completely abandon BC's climate action and leave communities vulnerable.</p> <p>We've invested \$200 million in food security, including support for producers to grow their businesses and become more resilient to climate change impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding for critical Food Security Infrastructure – examples include larger commercial-grade coolers, new or improved warehouse facilities, and new or upgraded vehicles for collection, warehouse management and distribution of food. ● Funding to support the food processing sector to increase food production, food security, and economic growth. ● Funding for farmers to adopt new technologies, such as equipment and robotics that can operate independently and adapt to their environment ● A replant program to help producers replace damaged, diseased and low- producing vines, plants and trees with climate-resilient varieties that produce in-demand, high-value crops. <p>The BC NDP is also helping British Columbians save on costs, like the \$500 each family is saving on ICBC insurance. People can choose to use this money in the ways that are most meaningful to them, which could include things like buying shares in a food co-op, signing up for a Community Supported Agriculture program, or renting a community garden plot.</p>
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9. Governance	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Vibrant and intact communities require an element of political representation. Many island community voices are lost at the Regional District table where the vast majority of the representatives come from and are focused on urban needs.</p> <p><u>How will your party work to ensure the voices of our communities are heard at the Regional District level?</u></p>	<p>We believe in ensuring that rural communities have a voice in decision-making at the regional level. The Conservative Party of BC supports examining potential reforms to Regional District structures that will give smaller communities greater autonomy and representation. We are committed to reducing bureaucracy and ensuring that local needs are heard and addressed effectively.</p>	<p>Democracy is vital to a healthy province. We are keen to ensure all local voices are valued and included in decision-making spaces, and look forward to working with RIEP and other community partners to improve the participation of community voices.</p>	<p>Island residents are on the front lines of their communities and closely connected to the issues affecting people in their neighbourhoods. They know about the challenges and opportunities in their communities, and we believe that when we are faced with challenges, the only solution is to work together to deal with them.</p> <p>David Eby and the BC NDP are committed to listening to local communities on how we can better work together to support the needs of all people, especially people in rural, remote and First Nation communities. We will stand with communities and they face the challenges ahead of them. We're going to be sitting down and working with you. John Rustad on the other hand has a long record of refusing to listen to rural communities and would make it harder for local voices to be heard. Now is the time that we need to be working together to make our communities better for everyone.</p>

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10. Volunteer Sector	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Our communities are dependent on volunteers to help provide the kind of essential services that communities with municipal governments often take for granted.</p> <p><u>How will your party recognize and support the volunteer and non-profit sector of our communities?</u></p>	<p>Volunteers are the backbone of rural communities. Our party is committed to recognizing the contributions of volunteers by providing more support to non-profit organizations, including grants and training programs. We will work to ensure these essential services are adequately funded and can continue to serve their communities.</p>	<p>The BC Greens recognize and support the work of volunteers and the non-profit sector in making a powerful difference in their communities. For example, in our mental health platform, we have pledged to reduce bureaucratic barriers for non-profit service providers, ensuring they can effectively support vulnerable populations by reducing bureaucratic requirements for trusted non-profit service providers to ensure their operational efficiency. This plan also guarantees annual funding for nonprofits, with a proven track record in order to limit the need to compete for grant funding, thus ensuring stability. We welcome a conversation with the RIEP to better understand which groups and organizations have made a difference to vulnerable populations in your communities.</p>	<p>Non-profits and volunteers are vital to people and communities in this province. The work done by our province's non-profits and volunteers reflects some of the most important ways British Columbians show up for each other. They help people overcome challenges and make a difference in the lives of many families and communities. Non-profits help our government deliver housing, health, cultural supports, and food security. They are important partners, often delivering services to the most vulnerable people in all corners of British Columbia. That is why, in recognition of their pivotal role in B.C, our BC NDP government officially proclaimed October 30, as "Non-Profit Recognition Day." Last year, our BC NDP government provided \$60 million to support non-profits and their volunteers in providing key services for people and communities. We also funded the development of a provincewide non-profit network to help non-profit organizations strengthen their potential and improve their ability to support and advocate for the people and communities they serve.</p> <p>We can't let John Rustad undo the work we are doing to strengthen communities and ensure people get the services they need. It's too big of a risk and will hurt the most vulnerable people in our communities.</p>

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11. Education K-12	BC Conservatives	BC Greens	BC NDP
<p>a. Many of our communities do not have access to the full range of public education, and must relocate entirely to other areas in order to access educational services for our children. The "rural-urban" gap where residents from rural areas show significantly lower skills proficiencies is well-documented in Canada.</p> <p><u>How will your party address the rural-urban education gap for our communities?</u></p>	<p>The rural-urban education gap is a concern for our party. We are committed to closing this gap by properly funding rural schools and exploring innovative approaches to education delivery, potentially including curriculum components delivered via online learning and community-based education programs. We will also work to reduce the financial burden on families who must relocate for their children's education by exploring improved options for affordable transportation.</p>	<p>The BC Greens believe that though education is the foundation of a healthy society, it has been consistently deprioritized by consecutive governments in British Columbia. Teacher shortages, reduced funding for special education and rising operating costs are having a heavy impact on students ... We also recognize that even as the K-12 and childcare sectors in BC are struggling to attract and retain qualified staff throughout the province, these challenges are particularly experienced by communities in rural and remote areas.</p> <p>Here are some of our policies with regard to reforming and renewing education province-wide which feature province-wide mandates or special provisions for remote and rural communities:</p> <p>The BC Greens will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernize operational funding and increase grants for school districts to ensure every school has the resources to meet instructional and student support needs. • Develop bursaries for educators who commit to serving in remote districts, and increase funding for rural and remote teacher education programs to address workforce shortages. • Increase provincial funding support for community schools, which serve as spaces for community connection and make use of public buildings outside school hours. 	<p>We believe that no matter where people live in the province, their kids should have access to standardized high-quality education across the province. We recognize the unique challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers in rural communities. We're increasing the recruitment and retention of teachers in rural and remote school districts with new hiring initiatives and incentives, which has led to 50 new teachers hired in those regions over the past few months alone. We will continue to support the training of more teachers with additional teaching seats and allow a higher number of internationally trained educators to work in BC by updating the certification process. We are taking action to ensure that kids get access to professionally trained teachers and the best possible learning outcomes, no matter where they live in BC.</p> <p>By contrast, the last time John Rustad was in government, his government closed 267 schools, fought with teachers all the way to the Supreme Court to try to increase class sizes, and froze construction of new schools for eight straight years.</p> <p>That's a risk nobody in BC, urban or rural, can afford.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure every school district has sufficient funding to provide accessible recreation programs, and invest in outdoor education to promote leadership skills and confidence in youth. • Increase the counsellor-to-student ratio in school districts to provide better mental health support for students, and allocate additional provincial funding to hire more school psychologists, counsellors, and social workers across BC schools. <p>Though the RIEP specifically addresses the question of K-12 education, we would also like to announce that we are proposing a plan to create equitable access to education for Indigenous students through culturally relevant institutions. The BC Greens will work to create a dedicated funding stream for First Nations-mandated institutes, providing Indigenous language programming and culturally relevant education for Indigenous students in rural and remote areas. Though these schools are usually post-secondary institutions, they contribute to the growth and wellbeing of rural indigenous communities as a whole, notably through the preservation and dissemination of lifeways and language.</p>	
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