

Climate change and the 2013 British Columbia election





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Overview

This platform assessment looks at party positions on liquefied natural gas (LNG), oil pipelines, the carbon tax and green jobs. For each issue, party commitments are assessed based on whether they represent a step forward, or a step backward, for a healthy climate. In some cases, 'no progress' or 'unclear' ratings were issued.¹

The following table shows an assessment of each of the main parties on these four issues. The range of performance covers three steps back (the B.C. Conservatives) to four steps forward (the Green Party of B.C.). Of the two parties consistently leading in the polls, the B.C. NDP offer progress on three of four factors, while the B.C. Liberals show progress in one of four.

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	Liquefied natural gas	Oil pipelines	Carbon tax	Green jobs
	< step back	< step back	< step back	→ unclear ←
	< step back	→ unclear ←	— no — progress	step forward >
	< step back	step forward >	step forward >	step forward >
	step forward >	step forward >	step forward >	step forward >

¹ There was insufficient information to compare each of these categories on a per tonne basis, so our assessment does not quantify the size of step forward or backward.

The above ratings are based upon the following commitments from each party:

	Liquefied Natural Gas	Oil Pipelines	Carbon Tax	Green Jobs
B.C. Conservatives	Supports development while being skeptical of revenue estimates from B.C. Liberals.	Supports Enbridge Gateway and Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain proposals.	Plans to repeal the carbon tax.	Unclear if this will be a priority.
B.C. Liberals	Supports development. Commitment to ensure opportunities for renewable power at LNG facilities could lessen the impact.	Five conditions for increases in heavy oil shipments through B.C. — currently unclear as to what is required to meet those conditions.	Plans to freeze the carbon tax rate for five years.	Small increase to incentives for clean technology development.
B.C. NDP	Supports development. Commitments to broaden carbon tax and encourage renewable power at LNG facilities would lessen the impact.	Opposes Enbridge Gateway and Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain proposals.	Plans to broaden the carbon tax to natural gas venting and invest \$120 million of new carbon tax revenue in climate change solutions.	Additional revenue directed towards retrofits. Unspecified increase in incentives for clean technology development.
Green Party of B.C.	Opposes LNG and expanded shale gas extraction.	Opposes Enbridge Gateway and Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain proposals	Plans to broaden the carbon tax to all industrial emissions and continue increasing the rate.	Several proposed additions to incentives for clean technology development, retrofits and renewable energy.

Liquefied Natural Gas

Three of the categories in this assessment (LNG, the carbon tax and green jobs) have direct bearing on the province’s ability to meet its legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2016, 2020 and 2050. Of particular note is LNG, because the emissions released by extracting, processing, transporting and liquefying natural gas will all count against B.C.’s emissions inventory and make it impossible for the province to meet its reduction targets. One large LNG facility and the gas extraction needed to supply it would increase B.C.’s emissions by 21 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.² B.C. is required to reduce its emissions to 40 million tonnes by 2020 and 12 million tonnes by 2050.

The Conservatives, Liberals and NDP all support LNG development, while the Green Party opposes it. An area of difference among the three parties supporting LNG is that

² Based on 24 million tonnes of LNG per year, which is equivalent to the output of Shell’s proposed Canada LNG facility at full build out.

the NDP have proposed to broaden the carbon tax³ to natural gas venting, which will lessen the increase in greenhouse gas emissions. While there would be a difference in terms of how greenhouse gas intensive LNG development would be, we have characterized all three parties as taking a step backwards because, even with those improvements, any significant development will make it impossible for B.C. to meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Carbon tax

The NDP and the Green Party have both been assigned a 'step forward' for the carbon tax. The Green Party has proposed even bigger steps forward by committing to broaden the tax's coverage, as well as increase the rate (with an initial increase to \$50 per tonne). The NDP have committed to investing \$120 million over three years into climate change solutions.

Green Jobs

Our assessment of green jobs includes commitments to help increase jobs that will both reduce B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions and sell technologies and services that will help other jurisdictions reduce their emissions. Expansion of this sector is an important component of a transition to a clean energy economy. The Liberals, NDP and Green Party have all indicated an intention to enhance venture capital funding programs to help spur the clean technology sector. In addition, the Green Party offered a number of other ideas to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy deployment, and the NDP indicated that additional funding would be directed towards energy efficiency. The Conservatives did not indicate any support for green jobs or development of the clean technology sector in their platform.

Oil Pipelines

The vast majority of the emissions associated with oil pipelines would happen in Alberta's oilsands, or at the eventual export destination where they are burned. For example, the proposed Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion would increase oilsands production by 590,000 barrels per day, which would result in 13.4 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year in Alberta, and 93 million tonnes per year when burned.

³ The Liberals plan to keep the carbon tax's coverage the same. The Conservatives would repeal it.

Although these emissions would not show up on B.C.'s emissions inventory, they are just as important from a global climate change perspective. Given the province's ability to influence the various pipeline proposals, pipeline-associated emissions are relevant to climate leadership in B.C. The Green Party and NDP have clearly said they would act to prevent such projects from moving ahead, while the Conservatives have clearly said they are supportive of these projects proceeding. The Liberals have placed five conditions on approval of heavy oil pipelines. What proponents and governments would need to do to satisfy those conditions – and enable the resulting increase in emissions – is currently unclear.

Coal exports

An important climate issue not included in the assessment is greenhouse gas emissions associated with a proposed increase in coal exports — mined within the U.S. but exported through the Port of Vancouver. To date, the parties have not offered enough detail on their plans, but with rising concern from local governments and communities and opposition to similar proposals in Washington and Oregon, increased coal exports through B.C. will likely be an issue of increasing importance in the province.