

BC greens

BC Greens Policy

A NEW POLITICS FOR BC (DRAFT)

BC Greens Policy

A New Politics for BC

This document is a rewrite of the BC Greens policy document. The policies themselves are the same as in the previous version (BC Green Policy: A 21st Century Vision for the Future), however, this version provides an in depth explanation of the BC Greens' philosophy and how that is so different from the ideologies of the other parties. It sets out our agenda for a wellbeing economy.

The document identifies 45 policy areas that are critical to the achievement of a wellbeing economy, although there are gaps where we do not have member approved policies.

Membership approved policies are in italics. The narrative surrounding the BC Greens philosophy has been developed based upon the "New Politics for BC" series held in 2023.

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Introduction

A Hopeful Story for a Better Future.

**“the state of the planet is broken. Humanity is waging war on nature.
This is suicidal.”**

*Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General,
at Columbia University’s World Leaders Forum, December 2nd 2020*

Today, we find ourselves at a unique crisis point – a “polycrisis” – characterized by the confluence of multiple crises.

“We have started 2023 staring down the barrel of a confluence of challenges unlike any other in our lifetimes.”¹

A global polycrisis occurs when crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity’s prospects. These interacting crises produce harms greater than the sum of those the crises would produce in isolation, were their host systems not so deeply interconnected.²

While British Columbia is currently insulated from many of the worst manifestations of the polycrisis, the effects are still more than evident. Extreme weather events, growing inequality, the opioid epidemic, the extirpation of species, even food insecurity and economic uncertainty plague the province. As regions of

¹ **Antonio Guterres - *Priorities for 2023* - UN General Assembly, 6 Feb 2023**

He described the “confluence of challenges” by saying:

Wars grind on.

The climate crisis burns on.

Extreme wealth and extreme poverty rage on.

The gulf between the haves and have nots is cleaving societies, countries and our wider world.

Epic geopolitical divisions are undermining global solidarity and trust.

² Michael Lawrence, Scott Janzwood, and Thomas Homer-Dixon. 2022. ‘What Is a Global Polycrisis?’ Version 2.0. Discussion Paper 2022-4. Cascade Institute. <https://cascadeinstitute.org/technical-paper/what-is-a-global-polycrisis/>

the world deal with greater symptoms of the polycrisis, the disruption to interconnected supply chains and mass migrations will have innumerable impacts on British Columbians.

Leadership at all levels is essential if we are to meaningfully address the polycrisis. British Columbia alone cannot solve the climate crisis or impact global economic trends. However, we can recognize our duty as global citizens, use the tools available to us to improve the wellbeing of British Columbians, and perhaps set an example for other jurisdictions to follow.

Addressing the polycrisis is not all about what we need to give up; it is also an opportunity to create healthier, more sustainable, equitable and stronger communities. To achieve that we need an honest understanding of how we got here and what problems we need to solve; a clear vision of where we want to be; and, a viable plan for getting us there.

It sounds simple, but this requires not only overcoming misperceptions about the world deeply ingrained in our psyche and our innate tendencies to resist change, but to do so in a world where conflict and division are rapidly becoming the norm.

We need leadership from those who are not captivated by the failing status quo, but can see the opportunities inherent in crises and can find hope in the work already underway to create a better future. They can see and understand the big picture, and are able to translate it into locally relevant positive actions

Leaders should be from all walks of life, should endeavour to listen and collaborate, and should sacrifice self-interest to act in the public interest. Leadership must be engaging, empowering, and inspire hope through action. We need strong leaders who give people agency through multiple venues of involvement and who support a thriving democracy. Such leadership will produce meaningful change.

Changemakers come in many shapes and sizes. Activists, academics and scientists, writers and influencers, innovative business leaders, think tanks, faith groups, interest groups, and so on; all are catalysts for changing public perceptions. Their combined influence may precipitate change at the political level such that politicians facilitate, represent, promote and implement their cause. Alternately, politicians can choose to ignore them and serve the interests of specific groups such as corporations or

unions with a vested interest in the status quo; in the belief that the best way to maintain power is to maintain the status quo with minor tweaks.

Most BC politicians have been convinced by a political philosophy, first practiced in the world by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan over 40 years ago, that involves an extreme form of laissez faire capitalism³ that operates mostly at the expense of marginalized segments of the population and the health of the planet. Socred, NDP and BC Liberal governments all embraced the free market mantra, systematically privatizing public services, weakening social supports and selling our natural assets to multinational corporations at fire sale prices. By starving the public sector of resources, government incompetence has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Where we are today is the culmination of 40 years of governing for corporations and monied interests rather than for the people of BC, as well as the commodification of our flora, fauna, and other natural resources for the benefit of current consumption and profits at the expense of future generations.

The BC Greens do not see governing as a dollars and cents calculation, where average income and wealth, skewed by the uber rich, suggests success while masking misery and deprivation for many.

Our vision is focused on the health and wellbeing of ALL people and our natural environment. Happiness and life satisfaction should be the measures of success, not status and material accumulation, and certainly not the increasingly discredited and misleading GDP. Our wealth will be measured in terms of the strength of our relationships and communities, our personal health, the quality of our land, air and water, the condition of our forests, fish and wildlife, our feelings of financial security and sense of purpose, the level of equity and fairness in society, the quality of our schools, hospitals, and transportation infrastructure, our parks and recreation opportunities,

Reconciliation is central and essential to the achievement of our vision. To advance reconciliation we must learn about indigenous culture and history; we must understand the connection with the current

³ Variations of this political philosophy have been referred to as “Monetarism”, “Thatcherism”, “Reaganism” etc. The term “neoliberalism” covers the underlying economic paradigm, which posits that the ultimate goal of economic (GDP) growth is best achieved by ultra-free markets and an absence of government intervention, other than to ensure that markets are functioning freely. Signature policies such as low taxes, deregulation and privatisation have been employed by governments across the globe and have led to accelerated fossil fuel energy use, resource depletion and ecological destruction, as well as serious social consequences which are major contributors to the polycrisis.

socio-economic realities, and stop denying the rights of indigenous peoples; we must act by reforming institutions, developing a comprehensive framework to implement indigenous rights, and ensuring the laws of the land embed indigenous rights such as those regarding mineral rights. We have much to learn from traditional indigenous ways of being. As the Truth and Reconciliation Committee said: **“reconciliation will never occur unless we are also reconciled with the Earth”.**

The foundations of our approach contrast sharply with today’s prevailing thinking:

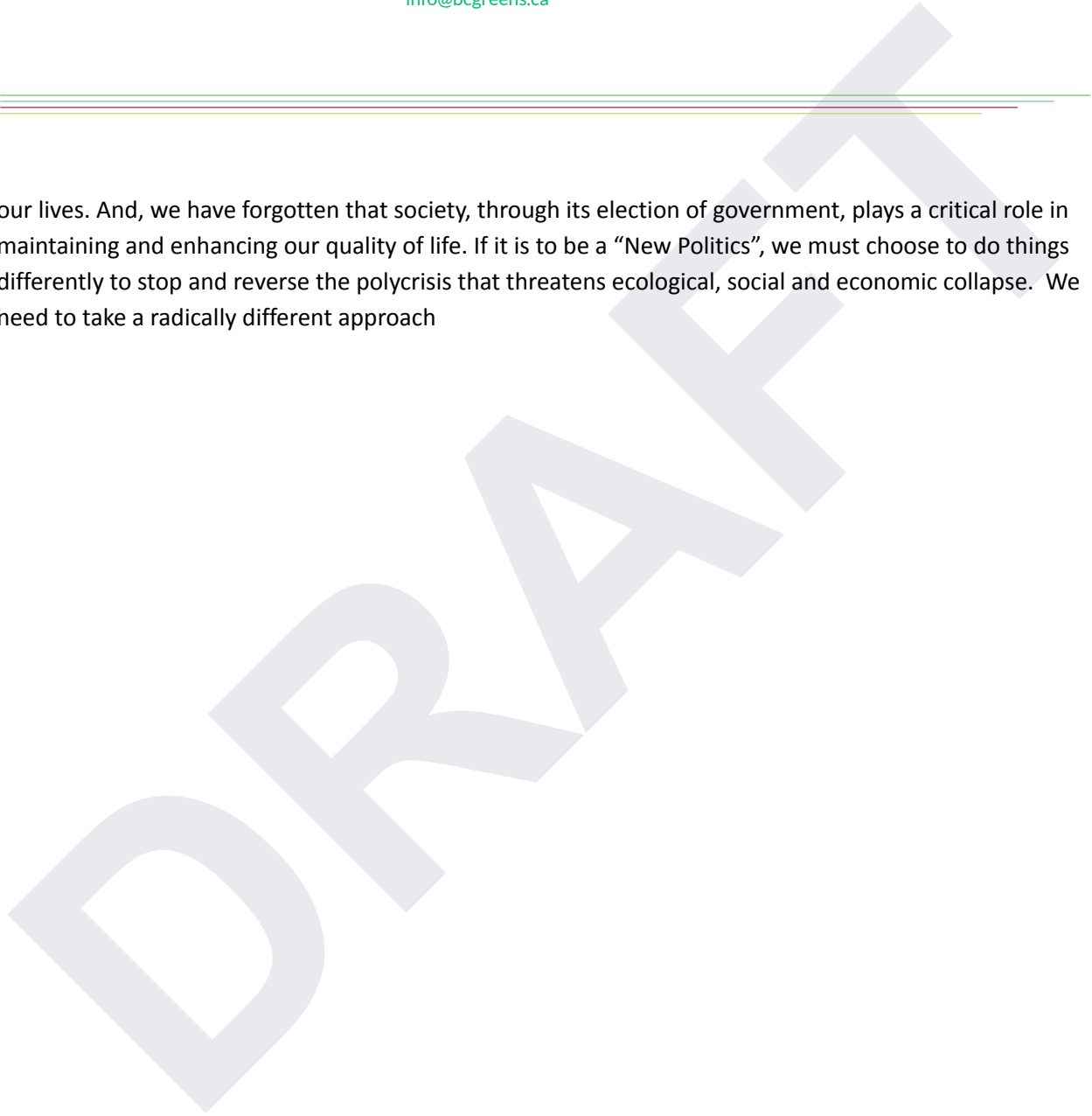
Health and wellbeing	vs	GDP and exponential economic growth
Community and belonging	vs	Self-interest, individualism and isolation
Ecological integrity	vs	The environment as a resource to exploit
Living within our means	vs	Overshooting the planet’s ecological boundaries
Having enough	vs	Endless accumulation
Equity, fairness	vs	The growing wealth of the 1%
Concern for future generations	vs	Immediate gratification
Compassion and acceptance	vs	Intolerance and hate
Government for the people by the people	vs	Government for vested interests

In short, the BC Greens are proposing a fundamental paradigm shift that invites us to live in “the safe and just space for humanity that lies between the social foundation of wellbeing and the planet’s ecological boundaries”, as described by Kate Raworth in Doughnut Economics. This shift is justified by a growing consensus that urgent action is required in the face of the polycrisis we face. But unfortunately, the ‘business as usual with a green tint’ economic and political tool kit that is currently being applied is not only inadequate, it is exacerbating the crisis.

Many people have lost faith in our political system to bring about the changes needed because political polarisation and the struggle for power prevent collaboration and consensus building to solve our problems. We must shift away from a system that seems to cater more to the interests of large corporations than to the needs of people, to a truly participatory democracy that restores faith in our democracy and facilitates innovative problem solving.

Over the last 40 years we have become so obsessed with money and stuff, we have forgotten what is important in life: our happiness and wellbeing; our communities; and, our beautiful planet that sustains

our lives. And, we have forgotten that society, through its election of government, plays a critical role in maintaining and enhancing our quality of life. If it is to be a “New Politics”, we must choose to do things differently to stop and reverse the polycrisis that threatens ecological, social and economic collapse. We need to take a radically different approach



Principles of Wellbeing

Our Wellbeing Agenda is about creating an economy that will deliver an equitable distribution of health, wealth and wellbeing while protecting the province's resources for future generations and other species.

The Wellbeing Economic Alliance⁴ (WEAll) describes five “non-negotiables” of a wellbeing economy:

1. **Dignity:** Everyone has enough to live in comfort, safety and happiness
2. **Nature:** A restored and safe natural world for all life
3. **Connection:** A sense of belonging and institutions that serve the common good
4. **Fairness:** Justice in all its dimensions at the heart of economic systems, and the gap between the richest and poorest greatly reduced
5. **Participation:** Citizens are actively engaged in their communities and locally rooted economies

To get there requires a fundamental shift in the thinking underlying public policy

The Paradigm Shift:

1. **Create policies that are designed to promote wellbeing and planetary health**
Policies must be developed in order to promote ecologically sustainable human and social development,
2. **Measure success based on genuine progress indicators, wellbeing and happiness**
We must measure our success in terms of outcomes for people and planet, not an obscure monetary metric called GDP.
3. **Follow a different economic paradigm**
We must adopt an economic paradigm with an interdisciplinary perspective and that includes the environment as an integral part of the theory. Adopting ecological economics as the guiding paradigm for our policy will drive different outcomes.
4. **Take a systems approach**
We must manage the interconnected systems within our province and with other jurisdictions

⁴ <https://weall.org/what-is-wellbeing-economy>

with the understanding that our wellbeing and future existence is inextricably linked to healthy ecosystems and human endeavour.

5. **Recognise ecological boundaries**

We must recognise the ecological boundaries of the province and planet and stop behaving as if they are infinite.

6. **Put people and planet first**

We must ensure that the government's decisions are based on the interests of the people of BC and planetary limits, not the interests of big business and wealthy people.

7. **Enshrine the principles of justice, equity and fairness in our policy**

We must apply the "3 Is" of justice:

Intra-generational (today's people and communities);

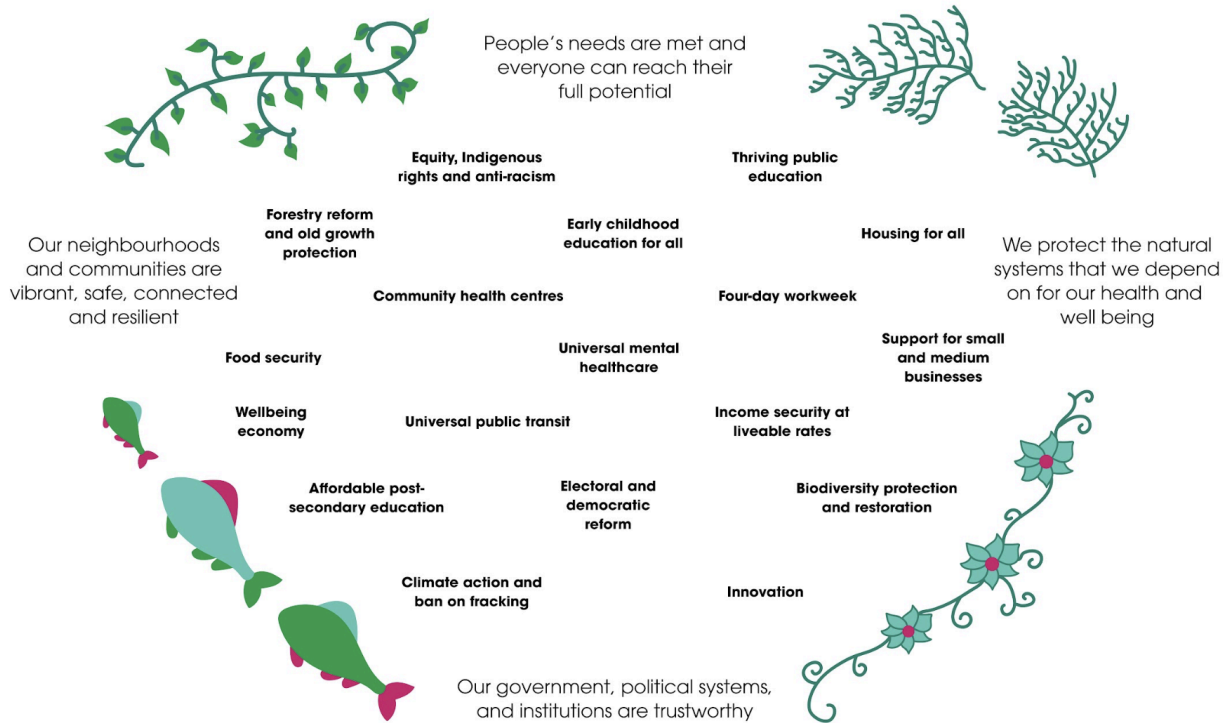
Inter-generational (future generations) and

Inter-species justice.

8. **Implement true reconciliation**

We must ensure that the rights of Indigenous people and true reconciliation are embedded in our democracy, and we must embrace Indigenous ways of being, recognising, as the TRC wrote, that "**reconciliation will never occur unless we are also reconciled with the Earth**".

BC's Wellbeing Agenda



Our wellbeing agenda pursues four interconnected outcomes:

- Our Health and Happiness: people's needs are met and everyone can meet their full potential
- Our Communities: our neighbourhoods and communities are vibrant, safe and resilient
- Our beautiful planet: we protect the natural systems we depend upon for our health and wellbeing
- Our Society: our government, political systems, and institutions are trustworthy.



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Our Health and Happiness

Health and happiness are like the chicken and the egg - healthy people tend to be happy; and happy people tend to be healthy. There are plenty of studies about the connection between health and happiness. When we compare the indicators used to assess the Social Determinants of Health⁵ with those used for the World Happiness Report⁶ and Bhutan's Gross National Happiness index⁷, there is a significant amount of overlap between them. We can also see the interconnections between our four desired outcomes:

Social Determinants of Health	World Happiness Report	Gross National Happiness
Income and social status Employment and working conditions Education and literacy Childhood experiences Physical environments Social supports and coping skills Healthy behaviours Access to health services Biology and genetic endowment Gender Culture Race / Racism	Social support, Income, Health, Freedom, Generosity Absence of corruption.	Psychological wellbeing, Health, Education, Work-life balance, Cultural diversity and resilience, Good governance, Community vitality, Ecological diversity and resilience, Living standards.

Our Health and Happiness outcome is that people's needs are met and everyone can meet their full potential. To support this outcome, our policies are structured around 11 indicators

1. Income security
2. Housing stability
3. Employment and work/life balance

⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

⁶ <https://worldhappiness.report/about/>

⁷ <https://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org/gnh-happiness-index/>

4. Social support
5. Community care services
6. Education/lifelong learning
7. Healthy lives
8. Access to health care
9. Equity and diversity
10. Access to food and clean drinking water
11. Freedom/human rights

1. Income security

Income security means that the level of income is adequate to cover needs, that there is certainty that the income will be received, and that there is a reasonable expectation the income received will be adequate now and in the future, both during a person's working life and in old age or disability retirement. Income security is key to the elimination of poverty and to the wellness that comes with a sound financial base.

Policies

BC Greens support a livable income and appropriate support for all British Columbians, including persons with disabilities.

BC Greens support a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy that includes a livable income, low-cost housing, and increased employment opportunities to equalize the opportunities for wellness for all British Columbians.

BC Greens support an independent, non-political resolution to the discrepancy between the minimum wage and a livable wage.

2. Housing stability

Housing is one of the most basic requirements for health. When people spend excessive amounts of income on housing, fewer resources are available for other health essentials.

Studies suggest affordable housing improves health outcomes by freeing up resources for nutritious food and other essentials, reducing stress and providing the stability for patients with chronic diseases to access and maintain the level of care they need.^[1]

From a public health perspective, the most acute manifestation of the housing issue relates to homelessness as in the “unsheltered” or absolutely homeless. These people have a range of chronic health problems due to their extreme poverty, and often suffer from mental health and addiction issues. They are less likely to receive adequate medical care and more likely to draw upon emergency medical services.

Increasingly viewed as a commodity, housing is most importantly a human right. Under international law, to be *adequately* housed means having secure tenure—not having to worry about being evicted or having your home or lands taken away. It means living somewhere that is in keeping with your culture, and having access to appropriate services, schools, and employment.

Most of the conversation is about housing insecurity and there are many faces of homelessness: Homeless Hub uses a typology that describes four levels of homelessness:

- 1) **Unsheltered**, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
- 2) **Emergency Sheltered**, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;
- 3) **Provisionally Accommodated**, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally,
- 4) **At Risk of Homelessness**, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/ or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

Policies

3. Employment and work/life balance

Conditions in the workplace can have a great effect on personal happiness. People who face unpleasant working conditions and/or excessive hours are dissatisfied and less productive than those who love their job. Key factors include remuneration commensurate with worth; the working environment, vacation time, length of working week, sense of being valued, alignment of personal values with those of the employer as well as opportunities for training and advancement.

Policies

BC Greens support fairness, including re-training and transitional support for workers in non-renewable resource industries, their families and communities, to facilitate a transition to a modern green economy.

BC Greens support good-faith negotiation through fair collective bargaining.

BC Greens recognize the need to break down the unjustifiable systemic workplace barriers facing individuals based on their race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, family status, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political belief, or age.

BC Greens support regulation of sex workers to provide the same work protections as any other worker.

BC Greens support affordable childcare.

4. Social support

Social support refers to the physical and emotional comfort given to you by your family, friends, co-workers and others. It's the knowledge that you are part of a community of people who love and care for you, value you and think well of you. There are four main types of social support:

- Emotional support that you get from friends and family who care about you;
- Practical support where people help you with tasks or provide food or money during times of stress;

- Information sharing where others provide advice and suggestions or a point of view that helps you deal with a situation; and,
- Perspective building where someone encourages you, or reminds you of your strengths, or provides a realistic perspective of the situation.

Social supports are vital to wellbeing, and while the government cannot create community, it can ensure that the conditions exist for social supports to thrive.

Policies

5. Community Care Services

Community care services provide systems and structures to ensure that those who need extra help with life are able to access the services they need. These services may be for children and youth, seniors and people with mental or physical disabilities, immigrants and refugees.

Policies

BC Greens believe that all children are entitled to a warm and loving environment and the opportunity to become successful adults.

BC Greens believe in providing adequate economic support and accessibility measures for people with disabilities to live with dignity and independence.

Senior Care: *BC Greens support measures to promote healthy aging to allow seniors to live with dignity and independence.*

Senior Care: *BC Greens support a shift in senior care to a mix of public, not-for-profit, community-based services, and cooperatives.*

6. Education and Lifelong Learning

Education is generally considered to be the formal process of giving systematic instruction in schools or post-secondary institutions. Education may also be “non-formal”, i.e. is structured but takes place outside the formal schooling system; or “informal” with unstructured learning through daily experiences. Lifelong learning, on the other hand, is self-motivated education focused on personal development.

BC Greens support publicly funded quality early learning programs and accommodations to ensure that all students have equal access to education.

BC Greens support an education curriculum that prepares students to thrive in a changing world.

BC Greens support a public education system with local decision-making power that is inclusive and accessible to British Columbians in all income groups.

BC Greens support programs to ensure that food insecurity does not impact students ability to learn.

BC Greens support the development and implementation of a Province-wide plan to address racism in schools.

BC Greens recognize the critical need for expanded mental health funding in schools.

BC Greens support opportunities for lifelong learning.

BC Greens support multidisciplinary and multimodal integration of Indigenous history, languages, and culture into our school system in order to strengthen BC's social fabric.

BC Greens support the implementation of interdisciplinary, intersectional, and action-oriented climate and ecological education to promote understanding of the complex challenges facing our planet.

BC Greens support relevant, accessible, and affordable post-secondary education, including comprehensive trades education, as an investment in developing the adaptive skills necessary for a rapidly evolving world.

BC Greens support a school system that is integrated with community centres, recreation facilities, and libraries.

7. Healthy lives

A healthy lifestyle includes activities and habits that encourage the development of total physical, mental, and spiritual fitness, and which reduces the risk of major illness. Healthy activities and habits include regular exercise; a balanced, nutritious diet; adequate sleep and relaxation; abstaining from smoking and taking nonessential drugs; and moderating the intake of alcohol⁸.

Policies

BC Greens support outreach, education, and programs that proactively address the root causes of health problems including poverty, unhealthy lifestyles, and environmental degradation.

BC Greens support a healthcare system focused on wellness, the prevention of illness, and reduction of the need for chronic and acute care.

8. Access to health care

⁸ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095926845>

The health care system consists of all the organisations, employees, and programs designed to promote, restore or maintain health. Individuals may require different forms of care depending on their situation:

- Preventive care to prevent conditions developing or getting worse;
- Chronic care for those who have long term serious conditions
- Acute care for those who are seriously ill or experience trauma
- Palliative care for those at end of life

There are different levels of care: Primary care is when you consult with your primary care provider. Secondary care is when you see a specialist such as an oncologist or endocrinologist. Tertiary care refers to specialized care in a hospital setting such as dialysis or heart surgery. Quaternary care is an advanced level of specialized care.

Much of the discussion about health care is about access to primary care and lack of a family doctor, although all levels are suffering from staff shortages.

Policies

BC Greens support a community-based, comprehensive, accessible, and publicly funded healthcare system for all BC residents in all regions.

BC Greens recognize that all individuals are entitled to safe and culturally appropriate healthcare delivered by staff trained in cultural competencies.

BC Greens support an integrated, multidisciplinary healthcare system in which the workload of doctors is reduced by enabling other regulated healthcare professionals to provide appropriate services.

BC Greens support a patient-centric healthcare system that is committed to fairness, local control, and accountability.

BC Greens support affordable prescription medication.

End of Life: *BC Greens believe everybody should be empowered to pass their last days in comfort and dignity.*

Mental Health: BC Greens support treating mental health issues with respect and compassion, with adequate treatment facilities and support, without stigma.

BC Greens support fuller regulation of counsellors, therapists, and social workers as part of a push for stronger mental healthcare in British Columbia by increasing public protection, accountability, and oversight.

Substance Use and Addictions: BC Greens support a balanced, evidence-based substance use strategy of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement.

BC Greens support treating problematic substance use as a health issue, providing adequate and voluntary treatment on demand, without stigma.

BC Greens support low barrier access to safe supply to reduce the risks to people of the poisoned illegal drug supply.

BC Greens support decriminalization for simple possession of illegal drugs.

9. Equity and diversity

Equality generally means treating people the same way, to give everyone equal access to opportunities and benefits in society. Equity includes treating some people differently, to take into consideration some people's particular needs and situations. For example, requiring public buildings to have wheelchair accessible entrances to accommodate persons with disabilities (rather than deciding that everyone can climb stairs or open doors themselves).

Diversity is the presence, in an organization or a community, of a wide range of people with different backgrounds, abilities and attributes including ethnicity, race, colour, religion, age, gender and sexual orientation.

Policies

BC Greens support initiatives that enable BC residents of all backgrounds to feel valued regardless of their race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, family status, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political belief, or age, and to value each other in an inclusive society.

BC Greens support intercultural programs and initiatives led by Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, across public and private sectors, to address racism and improve cross-cultural competency for all British Columbians.

BC Greens support better collection of disaggregated race based data as required to understand inequalities in the administration of the criminal justice system.

10. Access to food and clean drinking water

The 1996 World Food Summit defined food security as being when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Similarly, the World Health Organisation states that everyone has the right to sufficient, continuous, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use.

Policies

BC Greens support the principle that access to clean water is a human necessity and that every community should have long-term, reliable, and equitable access to clean water.

11. Freedom/human rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever their nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. These are basic rights that

everyone is entitled to. We are equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Key principles include:

- Respect for fundamental rights and freedoms
- Respect for principles of non-discrimination
- Respect for civil and political rights
- Respect for social and economic rights

Policies

Our Communities

There are many different definitions of “community”, but most seem to incorporate concepts of location, social interaction and shared interests or attitudes. For the purposes of our wellbeing agenda, we are referring to specific geographic areas and the physical and social characteristics of those places.

Our Communities outcome is that our neighbourhoods and communities are vibrant, safe and resilient. To support this outcome, our policies are structured around 12 indicators:

12. Housing
13. Cultural vitality
14. Resilience
15. Agriculture and food security
16. Accessible/walkable communities
17. Low carbon transportation networks
18. Green community infrastructure
19. Safe communities
20. Parks, recreation and libraries
21. Local government
22. Volunteerism
23. Commercial and industrial activity

12. Housing

Housing in this context refers to the physical structures in “Our Communities”. This means having the quality, quantity and mix of accommodations available to serve the needs of the residents, and that affordable accommodation is obtainable, whatever the income level.

Policies

BC Greens support the development of a comprehensive housing strategy, including measures to curb speculation in BC real estate markets, to provide affordable energy efficient housing for all British Columbians.

BC Greens support investment and incentives for the provision of affordable social, supportive, co-operative, and rental housing.

BC Greens support partnerships with First Nations, non-profit organisations, co-operatives, and private developers for the planning and construction of affordable low carbon housing, including rental units.

BC Greens support protection of existing social housing and incentives for construction or conversion of existing buildings to energy efficient supportive and rental housing.

BC Greens support strong protections for rental and leasehold tenants.

The BC Greens support zoning and bylaw reforms to ensure that the supply of homes is maximised; and, that short-term rentals do not reduce the opportunity for people to find affordable, long term accommodation

13. Cultural vitality

Cultural vitality is created by the range of arts and cultural activities available to community members. These may be formal e.g. museums, theatre and festivals; or, informal such as street cafes, health and fitness groups. Cultural vitality is closely linked with social vitality, which is the community's ability to make the people who live and work there feel like they belong to or are a part of a community or neighbourhood. This sense of belonging influences many aspects of life, including crime rates and community safety. In turn, cultural and social vitality will have an impact on economic vitality which is the ability to attract and retain businesses and the jobs they bring with them.

Policies

BC Greens support arts and culture as the underpinning of a vibrant creative economy in BC.

BC Greens support the development of a strong tourism sector while protecting our world-renowned natural assets and developing more diverse tourism experiences.

14. Resilience

Community resilience is the ability of a community to recover from a disaster or persist sustainably in the face of a new, ongoing hardship. Disasters and other threats are becoming increasingly common, especially those caused by climate change, increasing globalization, and urbanization. And as communities themselves continue to grow, both in size and complexity, the risk to those communities increases.

Policies

- *BC Greens support proactive adaptation strategies to address the adverse risks associated with the climate crisis, such as sea level rise, extreme weather, and an increase in wildfires.*

15. Agriculture and food security

As communities have become more urbanized, many people have lost the connection with the land, to the point where they barely recognise the importance of agriculture and the threat of food insecurity. Whereas agriculture was once the mainstay of many communities, food is now something you buy in a supermarket and much of it has been transported hundreds or even thousands of miles to get to the shelves. This is important because too many people do not appreciate the precarious nature of our food supply.

BC produces about 35% of the food consumed in the province with 40% being imported from other countries⁹. Metro Vancouver produces about 14% of its food needs, Vancouver Island imports close to 90% of its food needs with about 60% of fruit and vegetables coming from California¹⁰. During COVID, we saw the impact of supply chain interruptions and as climate change brings more extreme weather, intensive heat and drought to areas like California, the absolute volume of produce will go down as well as the variety of crops that can be produced. We cannot rely on California or other countries with warmer climates to continue to supply the current volume of food we import.

At the same time, we have been sacrificing prime agricultural land to urban sprawl, the area of land under cultivation is decreasing. Between 2001 and 2021 the area of farmland in BC went down from 2.6 million hectares to 2.3 million, over 60% of which is pasture. Farming is hard work and few young people are becoming farmers. In 2021, the average age of farmers was nearly 58. Furthermore, intensive agriculture is depleting our soils, leaving them less productive while pollution air, land and water (see section on land contamination).

Community resilience requires food security and we need to reduce our reliance on imported food by increasing the area under crops and making greater use of land within urban areas to grow food.

Policies

Reducing GHG Emissions from Agriculture: BC Greens recognize that plant-based diets and regenerative agriculture contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

BC Greens support diverse, responsible, and sustainable agricultural stewardship.

BC Greens support small-scale, sustainable agriculture and protection of farmland to secure local food supply.

BC Green support regenerative agricultural practices.

BC Greens support rigorous programs to ensure the safety of the food supply for British Columbians.

BC Greens support enhancing access to farmland and developing new models of farm tenure such as cooperatives and land sharing agreements.

⁹ <https://www.straight.com/food/metro-vancouver-produces-14-percent-of-its-food-supply-consumes-53-percent-of-bc-stock>

¹⁰ <https://www.nanaimobulletin.com/opinion/opinion-divert-precious-dollars-to-buy-island-sourced-food-1113875>

BC Greens support improving the attractiveness of farming as a career in BC.

BC Greens support providing information and guidance to the farming industry to adapt to a changing climate.

BC Greens support increasing the production of food within BC to enhance food security.

BC Greens value animals as sentient beings, and support the humane and ethical treatment of all animals to ensure their welfare.

16. Accessible/walkable communities

Walkable communities require more than smooth, wide sidewalks and street lighting. People must feel safe, which means not being close to traffic traveling at high speeds or not having to cross busy roads. They should also be able to reach their destination in 15 minutes or less, so there needs to be amenities like shops, banks and places of work within a kilometre radius; and it needs to be convenient to walk, such that other modes are inconvenient because you have to pay to park, or because of traffic congestion, or because parking is so far away it makes more sense to walk anyway. We need to design our communities for people to walk around, with cars as a secondary consideration. Paths should be attractive so that walking is a pleasurable experience, and for those who cannot walk, they need to be fully accessible by design. This is a 15 minute walkable community.

Policies

- *BC Greens support community planning to ensure affordable living for all British Columbians, and to encourage the development of more walkable neighbourhoods, complete communities, active transportation, recreation, and healthy community design.*

17. Low carbon transportation networks

The transportation sector is responsible for 38% of the GHG emissions in BC. Here, we are primarily talking about reducing and ultimately, eliminating tailpipe emissions. It is recognised that there are significant emissions in the manufacture of vehicles, which are attributed to the jurisdiction where they are produced. Since there is little manufacturing of vehicles and vehicle parts in BC, there is little recognition of the global impact of the life cycle emissions resulting from the demand for vehicles in the province.

As the world transitions away from fossil fuels, BC must be a leader in the process, which means ensuring that the systems exist to facilitate and encourage minimum impact mobility. Essentially, this means providing viable and affordable alternatives to travel in internal combustion engine vehicles, especially single occupancy vehicles. At the same time, we need to reduce the number of vehicle miles travelled.

However, our goal should not be to just substitute one form of motorised transportation with another. Walking and cycling are practical, healthy and low cost alternatives for shorter distances.

Policies

BC Greens support funding of public transit and active transportation infrastructure in urban and rural communities to enhance quality of life and to discourage fossil fuel-based transportation.

BC Greens support the development of comprehensive, integrated, affordable, and accessible community public transit systems, and active transportation infrastructure, to enhance quality of life and discourage fossil fuel-based transportation.

BC Greens support education and other measures that protect vulnerable road users while encouraging safe active transportation, including walking and cycling.

BC Greens support measures to encourage carpooling and reduce travel in low or single occupancy vehicles.

BC Greens support the establishment of rural transportation systems for goods and passengers to increase connectivity between rural communities, and with major urban centres, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The BC Greens support the development of an inter-community rail network for goods and passengers, running on clean energy, where economically feasible.

BC Greens support the development of climate and sustainability criteria, including consideration of cumulative impacts, that will be applied to all future capital projects including transportation infrastructure investments.

BC Greens support comprehensive and equitable access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including in remote and rural BC, and in multi-family buildings.

18. Green Community infrastructure

Community infrastructure encompasses the permanent physical structures that communities rely on including schools, hospitals, water, sewer, solid waste disposal, energy supply, roads, bridges, sidewalks, bike lanes, public buildings, museums and so on (Parks and recreation facilities are addressed separately).

Community infrastructure is an essential part of our wellbeing, however, GHG emissions are produced in both the construction and operations phases, and there can be other very significant environmental impacts from waste, disturbance to water courses and ecosystems and water and air pollution. Therefore, careful planning is essential to minimise these impacts.

Policies

- *BC Greens support effective, accountable, and regionally controlled planning for resilient and energy efficient infrastructure including water supply, sewage, local highways, recreation facilities, and public transit.*

- *BC Greens support initiatives to help communities reduce the use of fossil fuels*
- *BC Greens support initiatives to enhance energy efficiency and maximize the use of renewable energy resources.*
- *BC Greens support low carbon standards for new buildings, and measures, such as incentives and Property Assessed Clean Energy programs, to reduce the costs of making existing homes and commercial buildings energy efficient.*
- *BC Greens support investment in public infrastructure in the public interest to benefit current and future generations.*
- *BC Greens support low carbon seismically safe public buildings including schools, hospitals, and other healthcare facilities.*
- *BC Greens support stable ongoing funding to communities and effective collaboration to plan and support major infrastructure development and maintenance which considers climate impacts.*

19. Community safety

A safe community is one where people can go about their daily lives without fear, risk of harm or injury, or loss or damage to property. Perceptions of community safety, real or perceived, impact on the way people feel and interact in their community. It affects the desirability of a community as a place to bring up children, indeed, a sense of security is a major factor contributing to the liveability of a community.

Policies

20. Parks, recreation and libraries

Parks and recreation facilities are a key part of community life providing opportunities for healthy engagement and learning for all ages. The desirability and livability of a community is often judged by the availability of such amenities - they make a major contribution to the quality of life.

Policies

21. Local government

Local governments are created by provincial legislation. For many people, the majority of their interactions with government are at the local level, be it garbage collection, development approvals, police and fire services, street lighting or dog licences. Thus, local governments have a strong, direct effect on people's lives and are usually very closely in tune with the wishes of the people they represent as citizens are often able to give direct input to elected officials. Local governments are a key part of the democratic web

Policies

- *BC Greens support delegation of decision-making power to the lowest practical level.*
- *BC Greens support delegation of appropriate funding mechanisms to generate revenues at the regional level to finance regional infrastructure.*

22. Volunteerism

Volunteerism is the act of contributing labour to a community cause or to support a not for profit organization without the expectation of being paid. In effect, it is a contribution to the greater good, an act of social responsibility, with the reward of changing lives or protecting the planet rather than financial gain. Volunteering can help people meet others; gain new skills, advance their careers and promotes health and happiness through purpose and a sense of making a contribution.

The extent to which people donate their time and energy to various causes is an indication of community spirit and the ability of a community to pull together in times of crisis.

Policies

23. Commercial and industrial activity

Stable and thriving communities depend on diverse and versatile economies that can weather business cycles and easily adapt to evolving opportunities, technological changes, and the climate emergency. Communities depend on the municipal tax base generated by those businesses. At the same time, businesses depend on desirable and stable communities that attract skilled workers to live, work and play.

BC communities must move beyond the traditional dependence on resource extraction to participate in the decarbonized economy. Business and industry must be adaptable to new markets, technologies, and social changes.

But a 21st Century economy must be regenerative. Our production and consumption practices must be redesigned from a linear system based on exploitation, use, disposal and destruction to a circular economy that mimics circular patterns of resource and energy use found in mature ecological systems. Therefore, business and industry must be:

- Sustainable, in that the business activities will not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs
- Low carbon both in terms of upstream and downstream emissions; and,
- Socially responsible i.e. that business and industry play a positive role in the community; operate in a fair and ethical manner; and, embrace their responsibility to the environment by reducing harmful practices, increasing their reliance on renewable energy and sustainable resources and/or reusing or recycling materials.

Policies

- *BC Greens support investment in partnerships and resources towards advancing research, development and infrastructure for carbon-neutral fuel sources.*
- *BC Greens support the responsible development of all renewable energy projects, including wind and solar power, from small to large scale.*

BC Greens support and encourage growth in clean technologies and sustainable industries, with measures such as diverting incentives from the fossil fuel sector to sustainable businesses that do not damage the planet.

BC Greens support the practice of corporate social responsibility towards a sustainable economy which includes reporting that captures the triple bottom line: environmental, social, and economic.

BC Greens support the use of economic instruments, such as strategic innovation funding and investments, that further the greening of the economy.

Our Beautiful Planet

The outcome we seek for “Our Beautiful Planet” is that we protect the natural systems we depend upon for our health and wellbeing, as is stated in our official policy:

BC Greens recognize that a healthy environment - including clean air, land, and water - is essential to the health and well-being of British Columbians.

Our policies for protecting our beautiful planet are structured around ten indicators:

24. Ecological diversity and ecosystem integrity
25. Protected areas
26. Energy and greenhouse gas emissions
27. Clean air
28. Waste management
29. Land contamination
30. Natural resource management and accounting
31. Fisheries
32. Watershed management
33. Cumulative impacts

24. Ecological diversity and ecosystem integrity

Ecological diversity relates to the different terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems within a geographic area. Ecological systems are highly complex and made up of multiple connected and integrated ecosystems, themselves composed of thousands of different species, habitats and genetic make up.

Ecological diversity is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. A wide range of animals, plants and microorganisms, to ensure that there are healthy ecosystems to provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat. Once the integrity of an ecosystem is compromised it impacts other ecosystems, ultimately threatening ecological diversity and posing existential threat to all life on earth.

BC Greens support action to address biodiversity loss and ecological collapse.

BC Greens support the creation of strong Provincial endangered species legislation.

BC Greens support funding for species conservation, and habitat acquisition, restoration, and protection.

BC Greens support legislation to protect and restore coastal ecosystems and wild salmon.

BC Greens support hunting for food, but not trophy hunting.

25. Protected areas

A protected area is a defined geographical space designated by law for the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem and cultural values. About 15% of BC is currently designated as protected by either the provincial or federal government, and a little over 3% of marine areas are covered. Types of protected areas include nature reserves, wilderness areas, habitat or species management areas and marine parks.

Areas protected under BC legislation¹¹ contain representative elements of British Columbia's natural and cultural heritage. They include ecological reserves; provincial parks; conservancies; recreation areas; and protected areas. (See section on Parks, recreations and libraries for discussion of recreation aspects of protected areas)

Policies

BC Greens recognize the value of maintaining intact ecosystems and expanding protected areas, including Indigenous Protected and Conservation Areas, wildlife corridors, and conservation areas.

BC Greens support increased funding and expansion of provincial parks and protected areas that preserve ecological diversity and natural habitats, in addition to providing recreational benefits.

26. Energy and Greenhouse gas emissions

¹¹ <https://bcparks.ca/about/types-parks-protected-areas/#designations>

Global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions poses an existential threat to the planet, and the primary driver of emissions is fossil fuel use. There is a close correlation between the growth in the use of energy from fossil fuels, and economic growth over the last 250 years. Indeed, it can be said that the improvement in our material standard of living is directly as a result of fossil fuel energy. It is also arguable that GHG emissions and climate change are a symptom of a much larger problem - over consumption, which threatens to deplete resources at a faster rate than they can be replaced, both in terms of physical resource limits and the assimilative capacity of the earth.

BC has GHG emission targets which may be attainable in the short term, but meeting longer term targets may be challenging with the currently planned LNG development and population growth. To reach net zero emissions multiple avenues must be pursued:

- Replace fossil fuels with renewable energy
- Cut back/end fossil fuel production
- Reduce emissions by industry
- Eliminate the use of internal combustion engines
- Reduce consumption of products embodying fossil fuels
- Sequester carbon
- Offset emissions

As the world “transitions away from fossil fuel use”, British Columbians must fulfill their obligations as global citizens, and the province must take advantage of the opportunities that the shift affords..

Policies

Climate Emergency: BC Greens recognize that the climate emergency requires unprecedented societal change to combat its effects. 21st Century goals should be centred in protection, restoration, and remediation, and address the intersectionality between climate justice and social justice.

Emission Reduction Targets: BC Greens support aggressive, transparent, and measurable greenhouse gas reduction targets which are science-based and consider global standards. BC governments, industry, and consumers should be held accountable for their performance against these targets.

Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Production: BC Greens support an end to incentives, including subsidies, for the fossil fuel sector and other industries that cause damage to planetary health.

Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Production: BC Greens recognize that the expansion and development of all fossil fuels, including exploratory fracking, must stop.

Carbon Tax: BC Greens support expansion of the BC Carbon Tax to include non-combustion sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

Carbon Tax: BC Greens support the implementation of regularly scheduled, substantive increases in the BC Carbon Tax.

27. Waste management

In our throw-away economy, waste is a perennial issue, and as BC's population grows, so the problem grows. Avoiding waste is the most desirable approach. This might be achieved by improving the durability of goods, ensuring goods are constructed in a way that facilitates recycling, promoting reuse, sharing equipment, or avoiding purchasing the goods in the first place. Demolition waste fills a significant volume of our landfill, and could be reduced by reusing construction materials or renovating existing structures rather than replacing them. Hazardous waste is also a problem providing challenges for transportation and safe disposal or storage.

Industrial activity in the province has often contaminated the land on which the industry is/was based. Remediation is required when preventative controls fail to provide adequate protection, or when adverse environmental consequences are deliberately disregarded. Many contaminated sites are a legacy from a time when activities, especially mining, were unregulated. However, new damage and contamination is ongoing and regulatory enforcement has not kept pace. Sound resource management is needed to minimize future negative impacts.

Policies

BC Greens support the goal of zero waste through producer responsibility programs and employing best methods for reducing, recycling, and reusing goods, materials, and waste.

BC Greens support innovation that maximizes benefits from waste streams.

BC Greens support requirements for businesses and individuals transporting, storing, or producing hazardous materials to demonstrate their ongoing ability to cover the total costs of cleanup and restoration for damage arising from their operations.

28. Clean air, land, and water

British Columbians have a right to clean air, land and water.

With the focus on carbon dioxide pollution, the impact of other airborne pollutants is often forgotten. Yet, the human health effects of the criteria air pollutants (particulate matter PM2.5, carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides and ground level ozone) are far more immediate. Major sources of air pollution in BC include burning materials - residential wood stoves, open burning, forest fires; industrial activity; transportation and agriculture.

Intensive agriculture involving the excessive application of phosphates and nitrogenous fertilizers not only contributes to increased GHG emissions, the formation of ground level ozone, and the thinning of the ozone layer, but also runoff from agricultural land can cause the over stimulation of growth of aquatic plants and algae which use up dissolved oxygen as they decompose, resulting in dead zones

Industrial activity in the province is often responsible for contaminated air, land and water. Remediation is required when preventative controls fail to provide adequate protection, or when adverse environmental consequences are deliberately disregarded. Many contaminated sites are a legacy from a time when activities, especially mining, were unregulated. However, new damage and contamination is ongoing and regulatory enforcement has not kept pace. Sound resource management is needed to minimize future negative impacts.

Policies

29. Natural resource management and accounting

BC has an abundance of natural resources, and the economy has been shaped by the use/harvesting/extraction of those resources - often by foreign owned companies, and often they have been exported with little or no processing. As is the protocol in neoclassical economics, these resources have been treated as if they were infinite, and they have been exploited with little or no regard for environmental impacts.

Large corporations have been able to extract government concessions in return for investing in BC and creating jobs. The provincial government has sold land at bargain basement prices, built infrastructure such as powerlines, given royalty holidays and handed out tenures to try to attract companies.

But the net benefit to BC is questionable. Forestry resources are renewable in the long term, fisheries may be lost forever, and metals and minerals extracted now will never be available for future generations to use. And yet, our accounting systems do not allow for resource depletion, or environmental degradation as a result of extractive activities. They do not reflect the deficit we are passing on to our children.

Policies

BC Greens support responsible resource use that will not cause permanent harm to ecological systems and will address the needs of communities and the Province, now and for future generations.

BC Greens support improved regulation, enforcement, and compliance of resource extraction industries.

BC Greens support the management, harvesting, and processing of BC resources in a way that achieves optimal long-term benefits to British Columbians.

30. Forests and rangelands

BC's forests provide multiple benefits over and above their commercial worth. Values include carbon sequestration, recreation, soil and water quality, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity. It is also important to recognise Indigenous interests, and the role they play in community health.

Rangelands are a natural ecosystem of grasslands, shrublands, forestlands, wetlands, alpine and deserts and are grazed by domestic livestock like cattle, sheep and goats. Industry, guide outfitters, hunters and recreationalists can access Crown rangelands. About 80 percent of rangeland in B.C. is on Crown land. The rest is privately owned¹². Rangelands support vegetation that is consumed by wild animals and is also used for livestock grazing. Careful management is required to deal with pressures from a number of sources to ensure that their environmental and recreational values are protected.

Policies

BC Greens support the conservation of healthy BC forest ecosystems on public and private land.

BC Greens support establishing a 21st Century regulatory framework for forestry management.

BC Greens support best practices in silviculture and zero net deforestation to enhance and protect the complex ecosystems of our forests.

BC Greens support a forest management and allocation system that recognizes the standing value of forests as well as timber values.

BC Greens support the permanent protection of all remaining high-risk old-growth ecosystems and recognize that protection for these rare ecosystems must be backed by economic support for affected communities and workers.

BC Greens recognize that carbon sequestration is an objective of BC forest management. We support the protection and restoration of our forests and wetlands to manage their potential as carbon sinks.

31. Fisheries and aquaculture

As with forests and range, fisheries tend to be primarily viewed in terms of their commercial value, rather than their ecological value. Nevertheless, failure to recognise the impacts of over harvesting on fish ecosystems combined with climate change, has resulted in the collapse of some fisheries.

¹² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/rangelands>

Jurisdiction over fisheries is complex. Overall, the federal government has responsibility for the conservation and management of the fisheries “resource” in coastal waters, although some responsibilities have been delegated to the province. Non-tidal (freshwater) fishing is managed by the province.

Policies

32. Watershed management

Protecting watersheds is fundamental to community wellbeing. Watersheds provide safe drinking water, fish habitat, they support biodiversity and economic activity, they improve the ability to deal with the extremes of climate change, and are foundational to the exercise of Indigenous peoples’ rights and responsibilities. The recent increase in environmental emergencies such as fires, floods and drought provide challenges for water quality along with encroachment from settlements and industry.

Policies

BC Greens support enhanced local management and protection of BC’s watersheds.

33. Cumulative impacts

Acknowledging and addressing cumulative impacts is a key element of systems thinking. The recognition that even minor events can have significant negative effects when combined with the effects of past, present and future activity and natural processes, is essential for the management of the environment, socio-economic conditions and human health.

Policies

BC Greens support environmental assessment processes that consider sustainability goals and take full account of greenhouse gas emissions and cumulative impacts; and, input from meaningful and comprehensive community engagement.

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Our Society

The term “society” also has multiple definitions. Most tend to refer to a large group of people in an ordered community and revolve around formal and informal organizational structures. In this particular case, we are addressing the way British Columbia is governed; i.e. the institutions, laws and the management of its shared public assets as well as public participation in the functioning of society. A healthy and well-functioning democratic society is an essential part of a wellbeing economy.

The outcome we seek for “Our Society” is that our government, political systems, and institutions are trustworthy. We have identified 11 indicators:

34. Indigenous rights and self-government
35. Democratic engagement
36. Transparency
37. Participatory democracy
38. Parliamentary reform
39. Fair taxation
40. Budgeting and the wellbeing economy
41. Communications and advertising
42. Intergovernmental relations
43. Public asset management
44. Justice

34. Indigenous rights and self-government

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the United Nations on September 13, 2007, to enshrine rights that “constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.” According to UNDRIP, Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems

or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

The BC government passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act) into law in November 2019. It establishes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the Province's framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. In March 2022, the government issued the Declaration Act Action Plan which identifies 89 priority actions for implementation.

Policies

BC Greens support decision-making with Indigenous peoples and local governments on resource development.

BC Greens recognize First Nations as equals in land management with Provincial resource agencies beyond aboriginal title lands, where there are shared interests in the lands and resources.

BC Greens support a co-management stewardship model with First Nations for the development of shared lands and resources in BC.

BC Greens support seeking consent from First Nations for development proposals within their traditional territories.

BC Greens support full reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, based on respect, inclusion, and recognition of rights.

BC Greens support and promote full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

BC Greens recognize the right of First Nations to self-determination and self-government, and these rights apply with respect to First Nations' traditional territories, governments, and legal orders.

BC Greens support requirements for project proponents and the Province to comply fully with Canadian law, including court decisions, regarding the recognition and protection of aboriginal and treaty rights and title of First Nations.

35. Democratic engagement

Democratic engagement refers to the level of participation in the democratic process, and the satisfaction of British Columbians with the workings of democracy in the province. “A society that enjoys a high-level of democratic engagement is one where citizens freely participate in political activities, express their political views, and share political knowledge; where governments build relationships, trust, and encourage citizen participation; and, where democratic values are promoted by citizens, civic organizations, and all levels of government. A healthy democracy means more than voting in elections; it requires ongoing democratic engagement both during and between elections.”¹³

Policies

BC Greens support measures to increase the engagement of youth in the political process, including lowering the voting age to 16, and implementing an expanded K-12 citizenship curriculum to foster such engagement.

36. Transparency

Transparency is a means of holding public officials accountable for their operations. When a government’s meetings are open to the press and the public, its budgets may be reviewed by anyone, and its laws and decisions are open to discussion, it is seen as transparent. Transparency ensures accountability, openness, communication and builds trust between the public and government.

Policies

BC Greens support effective communication and responsive engagement by the government with British Columbians.

BC Greens support building and maintaining good relationships with stakeholders.

¹³ “Democratic Engagement domain components” Canadian Index of Wellbeing (online) <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/what-we-do/domains-and-indicators/democratic-engagement-domain-components> [April 2017]

BC Greens support responsible empowerment of public servants to effectively carry out their roles as dedicated, non-partisan professionals.

37. Participatory democracy

Participatory democracy is one of the six Green Principles. It is a model of democracy where citizens have the power to participate directly or indirectly in political decisions and policies that affect their lives. There are different levels of participatory democracy practices - information, consultation, dialogue and partnership; and, many different models to organise participation such as a user-friendly interactive homepage, a consultation platform, a Participatory Budgeting initiative or a Citizens Assembly. The aim is to engage citizens in decision-making processes.

Policies

BC Greens support the use of citizen assemblies to inform government decision making.

38. Electoral and Parliamentary reform

Electoral reform refers to a change in the process by which Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected. In general this involves moving from a first-past-the-post system to some form of proportional representation. Parliamentary reform pertains to the ethics, practices and procedures of the Legislative Assembly.

Policies

BC Greens support limits on the influence of money in politics.

BC Greens support proportional representation at all levels of government.

39. Fair taxation

Tax fairness is not only about treating taxpayers equitably, it is also about levying a charge on externalities, i.e. the consequences of an activity that affect other parties without this being reflected in the cost of the goods or services involved,. Too often, the rich pay little or no tax, with the major burden of taxation falling on the middle income earners. Tax loopholes, exemptions, write-offs and tax credits benefit the most wealthy in our society, while the failure to make polluters pay and properly price our natural resources results in over use of our natural environment.

At the same time hundreds of millions of dollars flow through shell companies and real estate which not only deprives the government of tax dollars, some is funding criminal activity and distorting the real estate market.

Policies

BC Greens support a simpler, transparent, and truly progressive and fair tax system by eliminating loopholes and frivolous tax credits.

40. Budgeting and the wellbeing economy

A wellbeing economy moves beyond the endless pursuit of GDP growth and is focused on delivering good lives on a healthy planet. This means designing the rules and incentives and budgeting government resources to ensure that everyone has enough to live in comfort, safety and happiness in a healthy natural environment.

Policies

BC Greens support a budgetary process based on sustainability and which considers societal needs within our planet's finite limits.

BC Greens support the adoption of government budgets based on health and well-being goals, with progress measured against genuine progress indicators focused on economic, health, social equity, and environmental targets.

41. Communications and advertising

Government has a legitimate need to communicate with the citizens of the province to inform them of services; make them aware of issues and actions being taken by the government; and provide information on taxation, regulations and legislation etc. It uses multiple media channels including paid for advertising. However, there is a fine line between providing information and propaganda that may be crossed in the run up to an election.

Policies

42. Intergovernmental relations

Managing intergovernmental relations is very important because there are few issues that do not have cross jurisdictional implications and actions by one level of government often impact other levels. Maximising the health and wellbeing of British Columbians means that the provincial government must be an effective partner with other levels of government and other provinces.

Policies

43. Accountability

Accountability in the government context means that public officials -- elected and un-elected -- have an obligation to explain their decisions and actions to the citizens. It can be achieved through the use of a variety of mechanisms -- political, legal, and administrative -- designed to prevent corruption and ensure that public officials remain answerable and accessible to the people they serve. In the absence of such mechanisms, corruption may thrive.

Policies

BC Greens support measures to strengthen conflict of interest and ethics rules for public servants and elected representatives, including shut-out periods for post-employment lobbying, to increase public trust in government and government institutions.

BC Greens support the expansion of open data and open information available to the public in a usable form and in a timely manner.

BC Greens support initiatives to ensure that government records are maintained and securely stored.

BC Greens support comprehensive investigative powers for the Auditor General of British Columbia and other government watchdogs.

44. Public asset management

The provincial government is responsible for managing a wide range of very valuable assets from roads, schools and hospitals to millions of hectares of crown land, on behalf of the people of the province. These assets provide services, employment, economic resources and vital ecosystems which must be managed for the benefit of current and future generations.

Policies

BC Greens support full life cycle costing for all public and private developments, including all direct and indirect costs, over the lifetime of a project.

BC Greens support multi-year planning for revenues and expenditures in order to ensure ongoing stability in the delivery of public services.

BC Greens support strategic investment and management of public assets including land and infrastructure.

BC Greens support the proper recognition of the depreciation of public assets, and adequate budget provision for operations and maintenance.

BC Greens support open and transparent financial accounting by the government.

45. Justice

The term “justice” has many meanings, but at the highest level it can be said that “justice” refers to concepts of fairness, equality, moral behavior, lawfulness, and order. Justice can be broken down into three main types¹⁴:

- Distributive, which refers to the fair allocation of resources within a community;
- Retributive, more commonly known as the criminal justice system, with a focus on how to punish crime; and,
- Restorative, which focuses on helping victims of crime as well as helping offenders understand the harm they have caused.

Distributive injustices are the root cause of many crimes, but this is addressed in our policies on human rights and income. This section is focused on the work of the agencies and institutions whose job it is to administer and enforce the law, this includes the police, and courts as well as those who facilitate restorative justice.

Policies

BC Greens support affordable access to the justice system for all British Columbians.

BC Greens support restorative justice and rehabilitative measures for offenders rather than punitive measures that do not address the root causes of criminal acts.

BC Greens support strategies targeting all forms of organized crime and the resulting proceeds of crime.

BC Greens support initiatives to target white collar crime.

Our approach is hopeful; by acting on these fundamentals we will build a thriving province with a flourishing natural environment and strong communities, where everyone has enough to meet their needs and an abundance of happiness.

¹⁴ <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/what-is-justice/>

Postscript

Our economic system is broken.

On that point, there is just about unanimous agreement by all political parties

And, whereas the BC Conservatives will blame the NDP, and the NDP will blame the BC Liberals; the BC Greens agree with both parties - the NDP are to blame and the BC Liberals are to blame, as are the Socreds before that.

Because many of the problems we face today have their roots back in the 70s and 80s,

This is not to say that the world economy was perfect before then, indeed, Keynesianism, the prevailing economic system at that time, was in chaos. But when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the UK and President Ronald Reagan in the US were elected on platforms that represented a paradigm shift in political and economic thinking, we set out on a course that has culminated in converging crises. Governments throughout the world began adopting variations of this political philosophy, which has been called by various names including “Monetarism”, “Thatcherism”, “Reaganism” and “neoliberalism”.

The theory goes that the ultimate goal of economic (GDP) growth is best achieved by ultra-free markets and an absence of government intervention, other than to ensure that markets are functioning freely. In other words it is an extreme form of laissez faire capitalism that operates mostly at the expense of marginalized segments of the population and the health of the planet.

In BC, Socred, NDP and BC Liberal governments all embraced the free market mantra, systematically privatizing public services, weakening social supports and selling our natural assets to multinational corporations at fire sale prices and abdicating their responsibility for protecting the environment and British Columbians from economic exploitation. By starving the public sector of resources, government incompetence has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Where we are today is the culmination of 40 years of governing for corporations and monied interests rather than for the people of BC, as well as the commodification of everything from our flora, fauna, and natural resources to health and housing for the benefit of current consumption and profits at the expense of future generations.

While the BC Conservatives want to double down on the failed prescriptions of neoliberalism, the BC NDP seeks to band-aid the system with incremental improvements in social programs and environmental protection. Both parties are still wedded to the holy grail of eternal economic growth. As Sir David Attenborough said:

“Anyone who thinks that you can have infinite growth in a finite environment is either a madman or an economist”

Peter Victor observes that in recent years, the shortcomings of economic growth have been signaled by the various adjectives that have been placed ahead of the word “growth”. Words such as inclusive, smart, clean, shared, sustainable, climate friendly and green all suggest that there has been something lacking in economic growth that can be remedied by applying the right policies. But he goes on to observe that even green growth and the green new deal are a “dangerous” distraction, since they provide a foundation for stronger and faster economic growth, and that ultimately more economic growth will result in increased emissions, accelerated resource depletion and ecosystem loss, more pollution and waste; and, very likely, greater income and wealth disparities.

Thus, our problems have been a long time in the making, indeed the ideas of neoliberalism are now so entrenched in our psyche that they are accepted as self-evident truths. Most government responses to the many crises we face are shaped by this thinking and tend to address the symptoms not the disease;

All of the other major parties in BC subscribe to some form of growth based, neoclassical economic paradigm, and we know that economic growth is now posing an existential threat to the planet.

Unpacking the Problem

If we are going to develop viable policy to address our multiple crises, we need to understand the problems and the causes of the problems.

The System is Based on Flawed Economic Theory

The converging crises can be traced back to the underlying thinking behind the neoliberal philosophy, starting with the flaws in mainstream neoclassical economics i.e. the standard economics taught in economics departments throughout Canada.

During the 20th century economics became increasingly mathematical and focused on money, and less about “the study of man in the ordinary business of life”. Complicated economic models were developed to explain and predict the behaviour of money. But, in order to make their models work, economists have to make various assumptions, some of which are just unrealistic, but others have proved dangerous for the planet. Some of the most damaging flaws of standard neoclassical economic theory are:

- The environment and ecosystems are an “externality” not an integral part of the economic model, with the exception of natural resources which are an economic resource to be exploited;
- Economics assigns a dollar value to just about everything, in effect, commodifying the natural world;
- Economics discounts future use thus the long term benefits of the natural world is undervalued.
- Economic tools used to support decision making with regard to the natural world are based on monetary outcomes, not environmental and ecosystem outcomes.
- It relies on functioning markets driven by the profit motive. Unfortunately, “market failure” occurs when there is no profit to be made in an area such as low cost housing, or the pricing mechanism fails to take into account costs imposed on third parties e.g. pollution.
- The characterisation of human beings as self interested, calculating “rational economic man” with dominion over nature may have been necessary to make the models work, but is far from reality.
- Economics lacks an interdisciplinary lens that takes into account environmental and social factors; thus ignoring the interaction of earth’s complicated systems

Neoliberalism embraces these flaws as attributes and puts capitalism on steroids with the notion that “the invisible hand” of the market is the best arbiter of what’s best for the common good which is expressed as a number - gross domestic product (GDP). As an accounting tool that measures the goods and services produced within a jurisdiction in a given time period, it is fine and has its place. But as a measure of the wellbeing of people and planet, it is a highly misleading metric.

Mainstream economics does provide an analytical framework which is useful as long as the shortcomings are understood and acknowledged, and not used to drive a political agenda.

A Disdain for Society

Linked to these factors is the disdain for society that has grown increasingly divisive over the last 40 years and especially in the last 10 years. In 1987, Margaret Thatcher famously said “...there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.” She, like other neoliberal practitioners, believed that too many people had a sense of entitlement and were too reliant on government to solve their problems. Self interested individualism and personal accumulation were to be respected ahead of communitarianism and sharing.

People became “consumers” with a duty to go out and shop in order to keep the economy growing; the ads tell us that happiness can be found in the shopping mall or when the Amazon delivery person rings the doorbell; that having lots of “stuff” will make up for the emptiness in our lives. Divisiveness and isolation are key strategies for keeping individuals compliant.

Economic and Political Opportunism

Two other factors have been important in the domination of neoliberal prescriptions over the last 40 years. The first being economic (and political) opportunism. The death throes of Keynesianism were not only greeted with glee by the academics who had posited an alternative economic paradigm, but also by wealthy vested interests who saw the potential to enhance their power and wealth with neoliberal prescriptions. They generously provided funding for right wing think tanks that not only refined the theory, but also strategised about the best ways to put it into practice and sell it to working people while lining their own pockets; and, political parties and

politicians that were prepared to put the new economic order in place. Thus, they control the economic and political agenda and do not see democratic reform to be in their interests.

The second was the perceived lack of an alternative at critical moments when neoliberalism was demonstrated to have failed; for example after the financial crisis in 2008, and during the shutdown of Covid-19. Some of the most pernicious elements of neoliberal policies are still being promulgated especially by the right wing parties in BC, while the NDP sits delicately on a fence until an environmental value comes up against union jobs or GDP growth.

What is Wrong with Signature Neoliberal Policies?

And after forty years with neoliberalism as the dominant economic and political paradigm, generations of British Columbians know nothing else and they think this is the natural order of things. Until recently, it was heresy to challenge neoliberal prescriptions

Indeed, the various right wing think tanks spent years creating a vocabulary and boiling the story down to be simple and easily digestible such that a very large portion of the population think that the policy prescriptions are perfectly reasonable. It is only when you look beneath the surface and examine what are the real outcomes that you see the fatal and destructive flaws of neoliberalism.

The allure of low taxes is hard to resist, yet it is costing many people dearly, as governments fail to provide the services they need, while the wealthy benefit spectacularly. Small government has been a cornerstone of neoliberalism, and the efforts of right wing think tanks and commentators to discredit government have many people believing that the government is the enemy.

Having said all this, it must be recognised that over the last 40 years there has been a significant improvement in the economic condition of millions of people throughout the world. But this has come at a cost to the natural world, and certain groups have been left behind. In BC and Canada, as elsewhere in the developed world, 40 years without investing in society has taken its toll. In and of themselves the individual signature policies have some benign elements, but when taken to an extreme and bundled together, they have precipitated some disastrous outcomes.

Table 1 identifies some of the signature neoliberal policies and the theory behind, then it identifies the flaws in the theory, showing what plays out in reality.

The Problem in a Nutshell

Over the last 40 years we have become so obsessed with money and stuff, we have forgotten what is important in life: our happiness and wellbeing; our communities; and, our beautiful planet that sustains our lives. And, we have forgotten that society, through its election of government, plays a critical role in maintaining and enhancing our quality of life

This is no accident - our world has been deliberately designed to be focused on consumerism. Whereas Marx described religion as the opium of the masses, shopping has taken its place. Yet we are not happier, and some people have become appreciably worse off over the last few years. Most people feel insecure and troubled by our divided society

Our challenge is to bring about a seismic shift in social, political and economic thinking. Thinking that is based on people and earth friendly economics; thinking that can supersede the destructive ideology and policies of neoliberalism and bring people together in a better world.

It is a daunting task that will take time, because it has taken 40 years to get us to this place; and we will have to do it through a grassroots rebellion rather than a stealth campaign as was funded by the uber rich to promote neoliberalism.

Table 1: Neoliberalism and Public Policy

Policies	Theory	Practice
Low Taxes	Enhances consumer’s choices; provides incentive for people to work more since they keep more of their extra earnings; reduces costs for business; creates a more attractive investment climate which will drive growth; greater growth will lead to increased government revenues which can be used for education & social programs etc.	Less tax revenue, less money for programs. Regressive user fees have been imposed where services were previously free or had a nominal charge. The rich and corporations have been the major beneficiaries and much of the money has been channeled into offshore bank accounts rather than reinvested
Deregulation	Cuts costs of compliance for industry, thus attracting investment which will create jobs. Less red tape is better	While some elimination of unnecessary or outdated regulations has been beneficial, there is often reduced protection of important values e.g. labour standards, environmental protection, health and safety
Small Government	Big government is inefficient and a drag on the economy that “crowds out” private sector investment;	Insufficient resources available for key service areas including social programs, justice, oversight and inspection, and healthcare. Results in burnt out public servants and poorer and slower service delivery.

Privatisation	Private sector is more efficient than government, can deliver goods and services at less cost	Private sector does some things better than the government. but not everything. Often “cut corners”. Not all necessary services are profitable, so government subsidises the private sector to provide the goods or services; or they are not provided e.g. low cost housing.
Outcome-based Regulation	Specifying the desired outcome rather than the specifics of how to achieve the outcome, allows for innovation. Cuts cost to industry	No intervention until the required “outcome” has not happened, e.g. There has to be a discharge of pollution into a watercourse before any action is taken. It is reactive rather than preventive.
Qualified Professionals	By requiring industry to hire qualified professionals to evaluate regulatory compliance and/or self-monitoring saves the government money and facilitates small government by not having to have experts on staff	Conflict of interest for Qualified Professionals between their obligations to uphold provincial interests and the interests of those paying them. E.g. Shawnigan Lake. Eliminates expertise from within government to evaluate the work of external professionals
Economic (GDP) Growth	Growth is required in order to avoid the economy going into recession and unemployment. GDP is an established, international measure that is a good proxy for the overall health of the economy. The benefits of GDP growth with “trickle down”	Infinite economic growth is impossible GDP doesn’t measure the health and wellbeing of people and planet. It treats “economic bads” e.g. fighting forest fires as a positive addition and does not account for the diminishing stock of the planet’s natural resources. There is no trickle down
The following signature policies are ones over which BC has no direct control, but have an impact of the BC Economy.		

Free Trade	Allows for increased efficiency through specialisation. Consumers have access to a wider range of cheaper goods. Supports economic growth	Free trade is an integral part of colonial exploitation. Creates a dependency on imported goods and issues when supply chains break down. Developing countries are often disadvantaged by Free Trade Agreements, WTO arrangements.
Free Capital Flows	Facilitates investment across the globe to support economic growth. Investment can be targeted at countries with the greatest comparative and absolute advantage in the production of a good or service	Investors seek lowest cost jurisdictions which usually means those with the weakest worker and environmental protections. Allows developed countries to “export” pollution. Key component of colonial exploitation
Deregulation of Financial Sector	Enables the creation of innovative financial instruments and eases access to capital for industry	Instability in the financial sector, particularly in the US has had repercussions throughout the world as in 2008. Reckless lending, debt-based money creation and tax havens have been facilitated by deregulation.
Financial Risk Transfer	By reducing the exposure to risk, companies are able to save money. By providing tax credits, savings programs, pension and benefit funds have been locked into the stock exchange to release large amounts of capital for investment.	Ordinary people are exposed to the vagaries of the stock exchange and those on fixed incomes can be especially impacted. “Playing the stock exchange” is a lucrative business for some.