

**COMPILED SURVEY RESPONSES FROM THE GREEN, LIBERAL AND NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF BC**  
MAY 5 2009

**SAFE DRINKING WATER**

Canada has no national drinking water safety law. The non-binding Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality address microbiological, chemical and radiological contaminants, and concerns with physical characteristics of water, such as taste and odour. Some provinces have adopted all these Guidelines into legally binding provincial standards.

**Question # 1) Should the non-binding "Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality" be made binding in BC as has been done in other provinces such as Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec?**

	<b>Green Party</b>	<b>Liberal (BC)</b>	<b>New Democratic Party (BC)</b>
<b>Short Answer</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No (inferred)</b>	<b>Possibly (inferred)</b>
<b>Full Answer</b>	Yes, and the BC Green Party would also designate as off-limits to logging our remaining intact watersheds, domestic drinking water watersheds, endangered ecosystems, habitats of endangered species, and First Nations lands on which approval to log has not been granted. The BC Green Party would ban the use of pesticides and synthetic chemical fertilizers in publicly-owned forests to protect the water supply.	The BC Liberal government has a comprehensive Drinking Water Program, led by the Provincial Drinking Water Officer. Drinking Water Officers, Public Health Engineers and Medical Health Officers administer the program locally in each of the regional health authorities.  Water suppliers must receive construction and operating permits before creating or altering a drinking water system. All regional health authorities require water suppliers to conduct testing to comply with all chemical substance standards set out in the <i>Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality (Guidelines)</i> before receiving a permit. As laid out in the <i>Guidelines</i> , additional testing can be imposed if a Drinking Water Officer or Medical Health Officer deems it necessary in response to specific local circumstances. The <i>Drinking Water Protection Regulation</i> requires bacterial standards for all systems in province including two substances - total coliforms and E. coli - to ensure the health of all British Columbians. This regulatory framework gives flexibility to our drinking water experts, and provides British Columbians with an excellent drinking water system.	New Democrats will...  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure safe drinking water and protect our freshwater resources through a full assessment and consultation process leading to a revitalized Water Act for BC.</li> <li>○ An examination of the government of Ontario's response to the Walkerton crisis and aftermath, with an aim to strengthening the monitoring, enforcement and transparency of drinking water guidelines, including consideration of the <i>Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water</i>. British Columbians need certainty about the safety and quality of their drinking water.</li> <li>○ The creation of water allocation guidelines to ensure the protection of clean, quality drinking water as a top priority.</li> </ul>

## GROUNDWATER REGULATION

Groundwater and surface water are linked parts of the hydrological cycle. Most uses of surface water require people to obtain a government license. BC is the sole province in Canada that does not require a government licence for groundwater extraction.

**Question #2) Does your party support the regulation (licensing) of groundwater withdrawals?**

	<b>Green Party</b>	<b>Liberal (BC)</b>	<b>New Democratic Party (BC)</b>
<b>Short Answer</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Possibly (inferred)</b>
<b>Full Answer</b>	Yes, the BC Green Party supports the protection and regulation of our groundwater and surface water. It is unacceptable for BC to be the only province that is lacking in government oversight. Licensing would ensure that water extraction is fairly administered.	Yes, the BC Liberal government supports the regulation and licensing of groundwater withdrawals. Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan, commits that by 2012, we will regulate groundwater use in priority areas and large groundwater withdrawals.	New Democrats will...ensure safe drinking water and protect our freshwater resources through a full assessment and consultation process leading to a revitalized Water Act for BC. This will include protection of critical watersheds and groundwater withdrawals.

## WATER ALLOCATION

The level of human impact on the natural world and on water systems has increased in recent years. In many places, it has become necessary to deliberately set aside a proportion of the available water so that the environment and its ecosystems can continue to function, and for example, so salmon will have enough water throughout their life cycles. Water used for this purpose is known as “environmental water”.

**Question # 3) Does your party support the establishment of legally protected environmental water allocations that have priority over individual water extraction licences?**

	<b>Green Party</b>	<b>Liberal (BC)</b>	<b>New Democratic Party (BC)</b>
<b>Short Answer</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No (inferred, underlying problem recognized)</b>	<b>No (inferred, not addressed explicitly in response; one reference to “protection of critical watersheds”)</b>
<b>Full Answer</b>	Yes. (Full answer available on website includes party positions related to the Environmental	There are serious pressures on many of our water sources and we need more equitable water allocation in order to improve	New Democrats will take specific measures to protect freshwater in B.C.,



	<p>Protection Act, restoring and enhancing public and local government control over resource use, development, and the protection of ecosystems, repealing Bill 30 (2006), the establishment of development review boards, strengthening environmental assessment, better fisheries management and regulation of resource extraction, local management of fisheries and improving species at risk legislation and enforcement of fish and wildlife regulation. See <a href="http://www.ecojustice.ca">www.ecojustice.ca</a>)</p>	<p>certainty of access.</p> <p>When stream health is in jeopardy or in times of drought, the BC Liberal government has committed to review the amount of water that has been allocated. Moreover, we have stopped the long-standing practice of previous governments who gave out licenses for power generation that last forever.</p> <p>In some cases, we will need to regain some of the water that has been allocated in perpetuity. How we can best achieve the right balance will be an important discussion as we modernize the <i>Water Act</i>.</p>	<p>including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Ensure safe drinking water and protect our freshwater resources through a full assessment and consultation process leading to a revitalized Water Act for BC. This will include protection of critical watersheds and groundwater withdrawals.</li> </ul>
--	--	--	--

## INDEPENDENT POWER PROJECTS

In recent years, over 600 creeks and rivers across BC have been staked for the development of privately owned power generation projects known as Independent Power Projects and IPPs. The process for staking streams and rivers for private power generation is fraught with problems. Key issues include: the water licensing process does not provide the public opportunities to participate; many “smaller” IPPs escape the environmental assessment process; cumulative environmental impacts of clustered projects are not considered; and local governments remain constrained in governing local issues of importance.

**Question # 4) Does your party favour instituting a moratorium on private power development until these issues are addressed? If not, how does your party propose to deal with these issues?**

Party	Green Party	Liberal (BC)	New Democratic Party (BC)
<b>Short Answer</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Full Answer</b>	<p>Yes, the BC Green Party will halt all river-based energy generation projects pending stricter environmental assessment.</p> <p>BC Greens will restore public ownership of the Nechako/Kemano generation system.</p>	<p>In the fight against climate change and in these tough global economic times, it would be irresponsible to turn our back on a zero source emission electricity that is providing good paying jobs in rural British Columbia. This is a high regulated industry that has invested \$2.4 billion in B.C. with an additional \$6.8 billion expected in the future. Today, there are more than 1,000</p>	<p>We agree with you that the current gold rush approach to run-of-river power generation projects is unsustainable and fraught with problems. Right now, the cumulative ecological impacts of run-of-river projects are not being considered.</p>



	<p>BC Greens will phase out all power imports from fossil fuels or other greenhouse gas emitting sources.</p> <p>BC Greens will require that BC’s short- and long-term energy needs be fully met first, before foreign energy sales take place.</p> <p>BC Greens will allocate funding for the building of green and clean renewable energy facilities with an emphasis on cooperative and municipally-owned utilities. We will ensure private producers and transmission operators are able to participate in a mixed public/private energy system. We favour the creation of regional energy production systems rather than inefficient, large-scale projects. These systems allow for a built-in resiliency in case of failure and create more long-term jobs than large-scale projects.</p> <p>A new ministry – combining environment, energy, and climate change portfolios – will oversee a new BC Energy Authority responsible for all aspects of energy regulation and planning for the province. Elected Regional Resource Management Boards will establish a diversified portfolio of projects to meet regional requirements.</p>	<p>construction workers building IPPs in rural B.C., and an additional 140 workers operating completed projects. IPP projects are not new and have been supported by previous governments since they began putting clean energy onto the provincial power grid in the late 1980s.</p> <p>Prior to changes made by the BC Liberal government in 2003, water-power licenses were issued with no expiration date. Also, the previous NDP government awarded water licences that didn’t require flows to be maintained in the water course. Our government requires flows to be maintained according to biological criteria. As well, local government input is still requested in the application process and the review of power projects, regardless of size or ownership, is comprehensive in scope. The project application is made available to agencies, local governments, First Nations and special interest groups for feedback.</p> <p>Considering the size and scope of a project, there could be no fewer than 11 provincial approvals that must be attended to when considering an IPP permit. As well, as many as six federal departments would have to approve an IPP, if federal approval is needed. In addition, for projects more than 50 megawatts, a review by the Environmental Assessment is required.</p>	<p>New Democrats support the development of renewable energy options with proper government oversight and planning. We called for a moratorium on all new private sector power generation projects until a full review of anticipated supply and demand is completed. In government, we would initiate a planning process that considers the cumulative impacts of electricity generation and has as its main objective securing energy sources that are low cost for ratepayers while having the least negative environmental impacts possible. Lastly, New Democrats will review the Environmental Assessment process to make sure long-term, cumulative impacts of proposed projects are fully analyzed.</p>
--	---	---	---

## WATER GOVERNANCE

Sound water resource management is critical for both basic human and ecosystem health and is fundamental for long-term community prosperity. British Columbians are increasingly concerned that climate change, rapid urbanization, intensification of water withdrawals and rampant resource development are degrading the health and function of BC's watersheds and undermining the flow of ecological goods and services flowing from our water resources.

**Question # 5) Do you support the creation of an independent oversight office that will provide regular public reporting on the health of our watersheds and ensure water resources are managed for the public interest of all British Columbians?**

Party	Green Party	Liberal (BC)	New Democratic Party (BC)
<b>Short Answer</b>	Yes	No (inferred, "could be a topic of discussion")	No (inferred – but alternative oversight mechanisms promised)
<b>Full Answer</b>	Yes, BC Greens will appoint an independent Commissioner of the Environment with responsibility to ensure environmental legislation is obeyed and that resource development is undertaken in the public interest to oversee the environmental assessment of industrial and infrastructure projects.	The professional public servants at the Water Stewardship division of the Ministry of Environment take great pride in looking after the integrity of our watersheds. However, as part of our process to modernize the <i>Water Act</i> , this could be a topic of discussion.	New Democrats will take specific measures to protect freshwater in B.C., including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The creation of a Standing Committee of the Legislature on Environment and Sustainability to improve public accountability of environmental protection.</li> <li>○ Extending the mandate of the Auditor General to include oversight of environmental considerations, including the issue of water.</li> </ul>



## WATER USE EFFICIENCY

Reducing water demand provides the cheapest source of “new” water and can be implemented more quickly and in a less environmentally damaging than any other supply alternative. Most current demands can be met with far less water—and with water of lower quality—than is currently used.

**Question #6) Does your party support the creation of legal binding water use efficiency and reclamation standards for agriculture, industrial, commercial and residential use?**

Party	Green Party	Liberal (BC)	New Democratic Party (BC)
Short Answer	Yes	Maybe (inferred, “one tool that could be considered”)	Yes
Full Answer	<p>Yes, the BC Green Party advocates for the prudent use of our water resources and higher standards for reclamation in all industries and residential areas that have caused the pollution of our environment. BC Greens envision that our province can become a true leader regarding water issues.</p> <p>(Full answer available on website includes Party positions concerning health promotion, pollution prevention, better protection of watersheds where resource extraction, pesticide use and other agricultural activities are occurring. See <a href="http://www.ecojustice.ca">www.ecojustice.ca</a>)</p>	<p>The BC Liberal government has set a target of reducing water consumption by 33% by 2020 and 50% of new municipal water needs will be acquired through conservation by 2020. That means every sector must reduce its consumption and seek out new innovative ways to conserve our water resources.</p> <p>Legally binding standards are one tool that could be considered during the modernization of <i>Water Act</i>, and we must also consider every way to increase efficiency and reduce consumption. For example, we have already made water efficiency a condition of infrastructure grants to municipalities.</p>	<p>Key to the success of sustainability in B.C. will be conservation efforts, both of water and energy. We will use a conservation lens in decisions related to a range of activities across all sectors of our economy. We will set targets and standards for water efficiency and support the use and development of new technologies to achieve these goals. For example, we have committed to strengthening energy and water conservation in the province’s building code. A key part of this objective will be water reclamation, particularly with respect to grey water. This will include support for identifying and utilizing evidence-based best practices from elsewhere, particularly Europe.</p>