

Following a member survey highlighting concerns about business costs, taxation and red tape, the Chamber has received responses from provincial parties on the issues shaping the region's economic future.

The Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce has received responses from provincial parties to questions developed from its membership survey, bringing the priorities of local businesses directly into the provincial election conversation. The initiative follows a clear message from the Tri-Cities business community: businesses need a more competitive, predictable and supportive environment to survive, invest and grow.

BUSINESS TAXATION AND AFFORDABILITY

What specific tax measures would your party introduce, reduce or reconsider to make B.C. more competitive for businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises?

BC NDP

The BC NDP will launch interest-free loans up to \$1M to help small businesses recover from wildfires and tariffs, and we will create a \$5,000 tax credit for small businesses who hire a young worker for their first full-time job.

This builds on other actions we've taken in government, including:

- lowering the B.C. small business tax rate from 2.5% to 2%, in 2017
- increasing the small venture capital tax credit budget and annual limit to encourage investment in eligible small businesses
- introducing the B.C. scientific research and experimental development tax credit
- introducing the new B.C. manufacturing and processing investment tax credit
- lowering the marginal effective tax rate for new business investment through B.C.'s
- participation with the federal government's new Productivity Mega Deduction
- increasing the employer health tax exemption threshold from \$500,000 to \$1 million
- eliminating the consumer carbon tax, saving small business owners money.

CentreBC

CentreBC wants to make B.C. a better place to run and grow a business by lowering unnecessary costs and making it easier to invest.

For sectors affected by U.S. tariffs, including forestry, steel, aluminum and manufacturing, we would cut the Employer Health Tax in half for two years to provide temporary relief. A manufacturing business with about \$5 million in annual payroll could save roughly \$49,000 a year. After that period, we would review the economic conditions and the impact of the measure before deciding whether further changes are needed.

We would also expand the PST exemption for production machinery, equipment and repair parts, and increase B.C.'s research and development tax credit from 10% to 15% to encourage investment, productivity and growth.

Small and medium-sized businesses often have less room to absorb rising costs, so reducing payroll, equipment and tax pressures can directly affect whether they hire, invest or expand.

Lowering the first personal income-tax rate from 5.6% to 5.06% would also leave families with more money to spend in their communities, which supports local businesses.

I believe we should grow government revenue by growing the economy, not by adding more pressure to businesses that create jobs and pay taxes. B.C. should be a place where businesses want to stay, expand and invest.

BC Green Party

Our party specifically did not address business taxation however, as a corporation holder, the GST charged on services rendered can also be claimed with the federal government as a rebate on expenses incurred. I would seek to revise the PST to offer the same incentive as that's generally not recoverable.

The BC Greens approach to small business has more to do with storefront measures such as: Introduce province-wide commercial rent and vacancy control, limiting rent increases during tenancies, at renewal and between tenants. Rent protections will remain with the commercial space when a business leaves, preventing landlords from imposing large increases simply because a new tenant moves in.

Give municipalities the power to tax vacant commercial storefronts and other commercial properties, discouraging landlords from leaving usable spaces empty. However, as someone who operates an online business, those incentives don't apply to me and I can imagine may not apply to many business owners.

Small businesses are the heart of our community and deserve more support. Given the short timeline, our main promise to small businesses is to tackle rent hikes; I know two of my favorite local business were forced to close due to unsustainable rental increases. Now those lots sit vacant, and our community has lost services and income.

A number of municipalities have asked to be able to combat this with a vacancy tax. We promise to limit rental increases and allow municipal vacancy taxes on commercial buildings, which would reduce the strain on small business owners and remove the uncertainty and stress of unexpected rent hikes.

Also, in our previous campaign in 2024, we included platform promises of adjusting tax rates so that there was more relief for smaller and middle-sized businesses and a new tax bracket for very large corporations, to better level the playing field and reduce the tax burden on truly local businesses. I'd be interested in looking into bringing back that plan.

The BC Greens' platform doesn't specifically address business taxation. However, we will improve storefront cost measures by introducing province-wide commercial rent and vacancy control, and limiting rent increases during tenancies, at renewal and between tenants. Rent protections will remain with the commercial space when a business leaves, preventing landlords from imposing large increases simply because a new tenant moves in.

As a business owner, operating a residential renovation company in Coquitlam, I notice how large corporations and wealthy individuals are getting tax breaks not accessible to people like you and me.

We have a huge deficit to address, and we have to find that money somewhere. Rather than putting this burden on small businesses, like mine, I appreciate that a BC Green government would seek that money from the wealthiest in our society.

Where the BC NDP would run a deficit to avoid taxes, and where the BC Conservatives have no plan, BC Greens are bringing a responsible fiscal approach to our platform.

Commercial rents make up a significant portion of many businesses' operating expenses. To ensure competitive land-use and efficient utilization of commercial spaces, the BC Greens will empower municipal governments by introducing tax measures on vacant commercial storefronts and commercial properties. This will discourage commercial real estate speculation and prioritize the needs of commercial tenants and businesses.

To support small and medium enterprises and address turnover concerns, the BC Greens will introduce province-wide commercial rent and vacancy protections. This will extend rent protections to businesses by limiting increases during tenancies, at renewal, and between tenants.

Conservative Party

Small businesses aren't asking for special treatment. They're asking for a fair chance to succeed. Our party's plan includes permanently cancelling the planned PST expansion to professional services, a three-year PST exemption on qualifying business equipment and software, and raising the Employer Health Tax exemption. It also proposes lowering the small-business tax rate as provincial finances allow. To me, that's common sense:

help the people creating jobs keep more of what they earn, while being responsible about what the province can afford.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

I believe we need to review government operations to cut wasteful spending, streamline processes, and ensuring we use tax dollars better so we can lower the overall tax burden. We must review and cut unnecessary taxes currently weighing down our small and medium sized enterprises, including permanently repealing the planned PST expansion to professional services. I'd also advocate for targeted tax incentives in areas where economic growth is needed.

RED TAPE AND REGULATORY CERTAINTY

What specific steps would your party take to streamline provincial regulations and approvals, reduce unnecessary administrative costs and provide businesses with greater certainty when making investment decisions?

BC NDP

We're streamlining approvals and modernizing services to make it easier to get things built, create good jobs and improve services people rely on. The BC NDP government has taken action to:

- streamline environmental reviews and speed up project approvals
- reduce administrative requirements, such as liquor-licensing changes
- expand digital services, such as faster digital Foodsafe certification
- remove duplication and barriers that slow business activity

Our Ease of Doing Business program encourages business owners to submit their recommendations for even more improvements we can make.

One example of streamlining has been in building permits for new housing, and we're continuing that with new 30-day permit deadlines for completed applications for small residential builds (up to six units) that fit within official community plans in large municipalities.

We have nearly \$130 billion in major projects on the way, more than any other province, and recently secured the largest private sector investment in Canadian history with LNG Canada Phase 2. This reflects certainty in B.C., and we'll keep working to bring more projects and good jobs here.

CentreBC

Businesses need to spend more time growing, hiring, and serving customers, without having unnecessary paperwork and delays.

We would cut provincial regulatory requirements by 25% by 2030, and after that introduce a one-in, one-out rule so new regulations do not simply keep piling on. By the end of 2028, businesses would have one online portal for provincial permits and licences, making the process easier to understand and navigate. Routine provincial permits would be decided within 90 days or be deemed approved, while respecting required environmental reviews and consultations.

For major projects, CentreBC would move toward one coordinated review with a 12-month deadline for provincial decisions, giving investors clearer timelines and more certainty.

I think one of the biggest frustrations for businesses is not always knowing how long an approval will take or whether the rules will suddenly change. Government needs to set clear expectations, make decisions within reasonable timelines, and communicate changes properly. Businesses should be able to plan ahead with confidence instead of losing time and money waiting on government.

BC Green Party

More consistent staff training so that those reviewing the permit applications apply the same decisions unilaterally. As well, ensuring forms cannot be submitted unless they are completed correctly. Many businesses learn that delays in decisions come from incomplete paperwork after the fact, rather than prior to submission.

We need to make sure that approval processes are consistent, efficient and clear.

Feedback on incomplete applications needs to be swift so that extra delays are not incurred; improved staffing and training is one of the ways we can accomplish this, as well as looking for ways to combine steps and reduce the complexity of applications.

The BC Greens will use public procurement to support BC businesses, workers and supply chains, including making contracts easier for smaller firms to compete for. We will also publish longer-term procurement plans so BC businesses can see what the government will need and invest to supply it. We will strengthen regional economic trusts and other local institutions with stable funding, and give First Nations, communities and local governments a stronger role in shaping regional economic priorities. We will invest in the public infrastructure that supports regional economies, including tourism, recreation and better transportation connections.

We will make the government easier for small businesses to navigate through using a single front door for approvals, simpler forms and clearer timelines. Enhancing the regulatory departments will increase trained staff with reasonable workloads, causing processing times to be diminished. Much of the uncertainty in decisions comes from government leadership changes. When we implement proportional representation, policies are unlikely to swing back and forth every few years as has been the case with our current system.

We've all witnessed bureaucratic bloat. I deal with it when it comes to business licenses for mobile businesses. I deal with it when it comes to construction permit applications.

BC Greens are committed to cutting red tape by streamlining government processes.

We will strengthen our supply chains to ensure limited vulnerabilities with regard to the flow of essential materials. Where so often multi-national corporations get prioritized, a BC Green government will prioritize local businesses, and local economies.

As an entrepreneur myself, I've had to navigate many government agencies with disproportionate complexity. The BC Greens will make government easier to access and reduce administrative delays to businesses by creating a single front door for approvals.

We will have policies that require ministries to coordinate behind the scenes so

entrepreneurs can access permitting, licenses, and administrative requirements from a one-stop shop.

A successful model is New York City's OPEN for small Business initiative that combines coordinated permitting reform that reduces regulatory burdens.

Conservative Party

A small business owner shouldn't need to hire someone just to navigate government paperwork. Our party proposes firm approval timelines, a 'one-in, two-out' approach to regulations, and modernizing BC Registry Services so routine registrations can happen much faster. I'd also like businesses to have plain-language rules and a clear contact when an approval is delayed. We can maintain important safety and environmental standards without leaving responsible businesses in limbo. I would listen to local owners about which delays hurt them most and focus on fixing those first.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

BC needs regulatory reform that ensures government is a service, not a gatekeeper. My platform focuses on cutting unneeded regulation, bureaucracy, and streamlining processes so businesses can freely operate, expand, and obtain permits efficiently. We need to secure property rights for all and forge a better more predictable path forward with Indigenous communities. I am also committed to dismantling trade and licensing barriers across the western provinces (at a minimum) and work on building a western alliance to open up regional markets, drive economic growth and give us a greater voice federally. Government should serve its people, not the other way around.

SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

What concrete measures would your party implement to help small businesses remain viable, attract private investment, expand operations and create jobs in British Columbia? Would you consider targeted tax incentives, investment credits or other initiatives to encourage business growth?

BC NDP

The BC NDP's Look West strategy is designed to deliver major projects, strengthen B.C. and Canada's economic security, and create good jobs and opportunities. It sets targets for key sectors including life sciences, aerospace, agriculture, AI and quantum computing, maritime, construction, and tourism, where we'll provide funding to support innovation and growth.

We've been working to expand markets for BC products beyond the US, and it's working - exports from BC to non-US destinations are already up 16% this year. We will deliver \$6 million annually in enhanced market research grants, one-on-one advice, and expanded Export Navigator support to help small businesses diversify supply chains to buy Canadian and sell their products to non-U.S. markets.

We have committed to bring in new "Built in B.C. and Canada" procurement rules for ministries, Crown agencies, and health authorities to prioritize domestic suppliers and products wherever viable. We will also set minimum requirements for B.C. and Canadian-made materials—including wood, steel, aluminum, and cement—on public infrastructure projects, requiring domestic sourcing so money stays here.

CentreBC

CentreBC wants to create an environment where small businesses can remain viable, grow and have the confidence to invest in B.C.

We would double Manufacturing Job Fund to \$60 million a year, with support for B.C. companies involved in areas such as prefabricated housing, mass timber, food processing and manufacturing. We would also create a \$50 million Main Streets Fund to support downtowns and local businesses.

We would support targeted incentives where they encourage real investment and job creation. CentreBC would increase B.C.'s research and development tax credit from 10% to 15% on qualifying staff costs and contract research, helping businesses entering new export markets through a \$10 million-a-year Export BC top-up.

For me, supporting small business is not just about grants. It also means reducing unnecessary barriers, making approvals faster and giving businesses certainty so they are willing to put their own money into expanding and hiring. Government should create the conditions for businesses to succeed, while making sure public support is targeted, measurable and actually creates economic growth.

BC Green Party

I would review the recommendations from the Board of Trade to determine the best ways to reduce the administrative costs associated with operations.

Prime Minister Carney also seeks to remove interprovincial trade barriers and I would echo the need to make this more financially viable to support our neighbours.

I would like to meet with local business owners and discuss what support services they think would be most beneficial. I'd like to investigate facilitating ways to overcome the import/export difficulties due to American tariffs, and am prepared to work with the federal government on workable measures to reduce these harms.

The BC Greens will use public procurement to support BC businesses, workers and supply chains, including making contracts easier for smaller firms to compete for. We will also publish longer-term procurement plans so BC businesses can see what the government will need and invest to supply it. We will strengthen regional economic trusts and other local institutions with stable funding, and give First Nations, communities and local governments a stronger role in shaping regional economic priorities. We will invest in the public infrastructure that supports regional economies, including tourism, recreation and better transportation connections.

BC Greens are committed to sustainability, and that applies to the sustainability of businesses as much as it applies to environmental sustainability.

We will secure commercial rental protections to ensure stability for small businesses.

We will also introduce a vacancy tax on empty storefronts, to support both retail businesses and improve the consumer experience. We will invest \$2 million per year in community grants to facilitate the growth of local clean-tech businesses and jobs. We'll prioritize the hiring of local businesses for government contracts.

The BC Greens will make investments in promising BC technology companies by expanding the mandate of BC's Strategic Investment Fund in promising BC-based tech and clean-tech companies that have demonstrated commercial potential with viable IP (and IP ownership), and are ready to scale. Additionally, I will push to establish a provincial sovereign wealth fund to invest in commercialized technology businesses by seeding it with wealth tax income from our Fair Share Act. This will enable subsequent financing opportunities of cross-sectoral business and economic development to be sustained with investment returns from the fund.

Conservative Party

Small businesses do more than create jobs; they help give our communities their character. Our party proposes a three-year PST exemption for qualifying productive equipment and software, along with a First Job Tax Credit on the first \$5,000 of payroll

for a young person's first job. It also plans to reduce the small-business tax rate when finances allow. I would welcome targeted incentives that are affordable, measurable and genuinely help businesses grow. And I'd want to hear from Tri-Cities owners first, because the best ideas often come from the people doing the work every day.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate

When government is limited, operates efficiently and stops wasting tax dollars, it frees up the economy for real, long term business viability and sustainable job creation.

HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE AND EAGLE RIDGE HOSPITAL

The Tri-Cities is a growing community, and local businesses depend on accessible healthcare for their employees and families. Will your party commit to advancing an MRI machine for Eagle Ridge Hospital, and what other investments would you prioritize to ensure healthcare infrastructure and services keep pace with regional growth?

BC NDP

The BC NDP has committed to adding an MRI machine to Eagle Ridge, building on the work we have already done to expand the Eagle Ridge ER, and the opening of Urgent and Primary Care Centres in Port Moody and Port Coquitlam, which help to reduce pressure on the ER for non-emergency concerns. We will also be building a new UPCC in Coquitlam, providing better access to timely care for this growing region.

Hospitals need sufficient staff alongside new equipment. The BC NDP will triple our recruitment of healthcare workers from the US, and streamline the process for internationally-trained doctors already living in B.C. to practice here. We're also training more doctors here at the new SFU Medical School.

The BC Conservatives have said that healthcare would "take the brunt" of their cuts, which will put a stop to the investment our region needs.

CentreBC

Yes. CentreBC has committed to adding five new MRI machines in public hospitals, and as the MLA for Coquitlam-Burke Mountain I would advocate for one of those machines to be placed at Eagle Ridge Hospital. I think our growing population deserves healthcare infrastructure that actually keeps pace with the number of people living here. An MRI is only one part of the issue. We also need enough doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and support staff so people can actually access care when they need it. We should do this responsibly with a fully-costed plan. Simply raising taxes is not the answer, especially when we need B.C. to remain an attractive place for doctors and other healthcare professionals to work.

Our plan is to also add 600 more nurse practitioner positions by 2030, expand access to family doctors and care teams, and work to reduce surgery, scan and emergency-room wait times.

I grew up in Coquitlam, so I have seen how much the Tri-Cities has grown. We cannot keep adding homes and population without also expanding the services people depend on. If elected, I would push to make sure Eagle Ridge and healthcare services across the Tri-Cities receive the investment needed to keep up with that growth.

BC Green Party

Yes. I responded to someone from Eagle Ridge hospital directly about this.

The population of the Tri-Cities: Port Moody has 33,000 residents, Port Coquitlam has 68,000 residents, and Coquitlam has 178,000 residents, this is 279,000 residents in the Tri-Cities.

1 MRI machine running 24 hours per day can service 24 people per day, maximum.

The Tri-Cities population dictates at least 2 machines. It would also be worthwhile if one of those machines was extra large to accommodate those who do not fit inside the standard machine.

Transportation to Ridge Meadows and Royal Columbian is not feasible for many residents. Especially when areas of concern are the torso and lower limbs, driving may be unsafe and forcing people to seek rides to those hospitals.

MRI machines are crucial diagnostic tools for third party insurance claims and ensuring people don't die waiting for surgery.

More MRI machines also dissuade private clinics from being created because the needs of the community are met locally.

Absolutely, it makes sense that a community the size of the Tri-Cities needs better access to MRI machines locally.

The Greens want to develop local community health clinics that would reduce the stress on ERs. They offer local practitioners who want this kind of collaborative work environment the support to focus their energies on delivering care by removes the burden of running a business. This model has been extremely effective in the locations that have implemented it and I'd work hard to see it brought to our community.

I definitely support a new MRI machine for Eagle Ridge hospital. Having the ability to increase the number of MRI screenings and thus decreasing wait times is very important. I suffer from migraines, and when I first began experiencing them, getting an MRI was an important part of the diagnostic process to rule out other serious issues. Getting screened quickly prevents worry by patients about their condition, and faster results if action is needed. The BC Greens also have a plan to create a community care center in every riding, with enough resources that every person can see a family doctor or nurse practitioner.

Eagle Ridge Hospital Foundation reached out to ask candidates this same question, and I am very pleased to provide my full and unequivocal support for advancing an MRI machine for Eagle Ridge Hospital.

BC Greens have also committed to increasing funding for nurses and to opening community health centres focused on filling gaps in our healthcare systems, and connecting the different branches of healthcare. We'll end the push for privatization by ensuring our public system works as intended. We will also prioritize universal access to mental health care.

Absolutely, we will commit to advancing an MRI machine for Eagle Ridge Hospital. We will also reject any proposed cuts to healthcare spending (I'm aware of cuts proposed by the NDP to autism support and long-COVID).

To reduce the cost, delays, and burdens of hospital ERs and address the shortages of walk-in clinics, the BC Greens will expand Community Health Centres and Urgent and Primary Care Centres. Community Health Centres are less expensive to operate, and the cost savings can be up to 2-3x for patients accessing hospital ERs with the same conditions.

Conservative Party

Yes. The BC Conservatives have publicly committed to delivering a new MRI machine at Eagle Ridge Hospital, and I fully support that commitment. Faster access to testing can mean quicker answers, earlier treatment and less time away from work and family. But the machine alone isn't enough; we also need the trained staff and operating capacity to make full use of it. I would continue advocating for more front-line healthcare capacity and practical planning that keeps pace with the growth of the Tri-Cities.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

I fully support bringing an MRI machine to Eagle Ridge Hospital to ensure our local community has access closer to home and shorter wait times. Physical infrastructure is only part of the solution though - we need a systemic review of our healthcare system to ensure tax dollars are being used effectively and that frontline staff are not weighed down by ineffectual systems. The same core initiatives I advocate for regarding affordability, licensing, and regulatory reform will also help us attract and retain health professionals in BC. Lastly, to restore trust and protect the autonomy of our medical practitioners, Bill 36 needs to be repealed. Healthcare should be efficient, patient focused and support the professionals who provide it.

TRANSPORTATION AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

What provincial transportation investments would your party prioritize in the Tri-Cities, including road improvements, freight movement, transit connectivity and the potential for a direct SkyTrain connection to Port Coquitlam?

BC NDP

The BC NDP has been partnering with the federal government to get the funding we deserve for infrastructure in B.C. communities. We have ensured stable transit service and service expansions through 2028 with \$312 million in funding for TransLink. We will continue working with TransLink to develop a sustainable, long-term revenue model without raising costs for drivers who are already getting hit at the pumps.

The BC NDP will also tackle gas prices so that families and businesses can get around the Tri-Cities more easily. We'll suspend part of the provincial gas tax, and direct the BC Utilities Commission to cap excess gas profits - that will save \$20 each time a family vehicle is filled up, or \$116 every time a trucker fills up with diesel.

CentreBC

CentreBC would prioritize transportation investments that actually keep up with the growth we have in the Tri-Cities.

Our platform includes a \$15 billion three-year transportation plan, with major investments in roads, transit and freight movement. We would also fund a 15% increase in transit service by 2030 and add about six new rapid bus routes across B.C.

For the Tri-Cities specifically, I would personally advocate for better connections between Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and the rest of Metro Vancouver, including improved bus service, road capacity and freight movement where needed. I would also be open to exploring a direct SkyTrain connection to Port Coquitlam based on ridership, population growth, cost and long-term demand.

BC Green Party

As the candidate in Port Coquitlam, I will be happy to back the mayor and council to push for the SkyTrain expansion from Coquitlam Central station into Port Coquitlam. The switch is already there, the tracks simply have to be laid. I will push the Minister of Transportation and Transit to ensure this is done once the Langley Expo line expansion is complete. Additionally, I'm interested in expanding the West Coast Express to at a minimum, run a train hourly in each direction in between and after the rush hours so that it is more usable for those not working in downtown Vancouver and who work outside of typical business hours.

Increasing access to trains and reliable transit is a priority; given the increased density of our cities we need to recognize that effective public transit is one of the best ways to reduce gridlock so that business deliveries can happen effectively. Commuter trains should be being developed and the first step to that is to look into more service on the West Coast express. When we lived in that area my spouse tried to use it but his long hours as a lawyer often made it impossible; its time to look into extending service to meet the needs of people who have to work later schedules.

I agree with an expansion of the SkyTrain to Port Coquitlam, as well as expanding the West Coast Express running times for those who don't follow the typical work hours. The BC Greens will implement free, fast, frequent public transit. Our plan will prioritize doubling the number of buses on the roads within the first term. A phased approach will make transit free for all once infrastructure improvements are made, funding stabilizes, and fast, frequent transit is established.

Transit is one of the most important investments we can make, because everyone benefits from good transit. BC Greens will fund fast, frequent, and free transit.

Living in the Austin Heights area, transit can be a journey, even though Lougheed station is just down the hill. I drive more than I would like to, often because transit is not efficient enough. On the flipside, when I have to drive, I would love to have a quicker commute because transit was made more accessible for others.

Beyond this, BC Greens are committed to working on making train tracks more accessible for passenger rail, across the province.

I will push to begin development of a Coquitlam - Port Coquitlam Skytrain line once the Langley extension has been completed. The infrastructure to make the extension was built during the construction of the Evergreen Extension.

We will advocate to expand West Coast Express service and ensure that trains run frequently throughout the day, coordinating with trackage rights over CP.

We will also work with the federal government to reduce inter-provincial trade barriers and support trade with neighboring provinces and reducing the barriers to access to export terminals by consulting on the appropriate development of our freight logistics infrastructure (eg. trans Canada rail-truck intermodal transport).

Conservative Party

If you live or do business in Port Coquitlam, you don't need a study to tell you traffic is a problem. Addressing the aging Coquitlam River Bridge is a priority I've campaigned on. I'd also advocate for better freight routes, more reliable transit connections, and a serious look at a direct SkyTrain connection to PoCo. Our party supports transit expansion where population and ridership justify it. I won't promise a SkyTrain line before the costs and feasibility are understood, but I will push to make sure Port Coquitlam has a voice in those decisions.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

Transportation planning must focus on the basics: delivering essential projects with firm accountability around costs and timelines, with no unrealistic promises. We need to put more decision making power back into the hands of local municipalities who understand their community's traffic patterns and growth needs best. In the Tri-Cities, our priority should be to relieve bottlenecks and improve the movement of goods. To enhance transit, we should work together to improve bus routes and frequency. Regarding a direct SkyTrain extension to Port Coquitlam, it must be fiscally responsible and strongly supported by the municipality to ensure it matches up with their vision for the community.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE AND COMPETITIVENESS

Businesses want greater access to customers and markets across Canada. What specific actions would your party take to eliminate unnecessary interprovincial trade barriers, improve market access for B.C. businesses and strengthen the province's competitiveness nationally and internationally?

BC NDP

The US trade war is making a lot of people worried, and we have a plan to stand up for BC businesses and workers. As Premier, David Eby met regularly with first ministers from across Canada to tackle interprovincial trade barriers and made good progress, including on interprovincial sales of alcohol, labour mobility, and more. We are firmly on Team Canada and if re-elected this will continue to be a priority. We are working alongside the Prime Minister to help open new markets for businesses beyond the US. The BC Conservatives would roll over to Trump's demands, making it harder to get a good deal for BC and Canadian businesses.

CentreBC

CentreBC supports reducing unnecessary trade barriers so B.C. businesses can reach more customers and compete across Canada.

By July 1, 2027, we would remove B.C.'s remaining exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and recognize equivalent standards and credentials from other provinces. Most occupational recognition decisions would be made within 10 business days, and within 30 days for doctors and nurses. This makes it easier for businesses to hire workers and operate across provincial borders.

We also need to diversify internationally. CentreBC's goal is to double B.C.'s exports outside the United States to \$62 billion by 2033. We would expand B.C.'s presence in international markets and provide a \$10 million-a-year Export BC top-up to help businesses enter new markets.

I believe Canadian provinces should be working together, not creating unnecessary barriers between each other. Giving B.C. businesses access to more customers means more opportunities to grow, invest and create jobs here at home.

BC Green Party

The BC Greens propose a "single front door" for approvals, simpler forms, and clearer timelines to help businesses navigate government rules.

As I mentioned above, we've been struggling with a difficult neighbour to the south : one obvious solution is to strengthen our ties across Canada. We are very much ready to find ways to remove those barriers and improve access to BC.

New regulations, permits, licences and administrative requirements will be reviewed for unnecessary complexity and disproportionate impacts on smaller businesses, without weakening protections for workers, consumers or the environment. The province will create a single front door for business approvals and require ministries to coordinate behind the scenes, so entrepreneurs do not have to navigate government agency by agency. To this end, provincial economic development funding will support local governments that modernize permitting and reduce unnecessary differences between jurisdictions, with a goal of making straightforward business processes intersecting with government as simple as possible. New York City's OPEN for Small Business initiative offers one recent example, combining coordinated permitting reform, one-stop navigation support and ongoing review of unnecessary regulatory burdens.

I think we've all seen how much more preferable free trade across borders is, as compared to these trade wars that benefit no one. While our provincial borders are a little less disputed, we see Alberta trying to take advantage of us. Trying to push projects on us that benefit them financially, while harming our lands and waters. BC Greens will ensure British Columbia is well-represented at the national level, so that we don't get taken advantage of anymore. We will simultaneously ensure that we have sustainable resource extraction. Resource extraction is necessary, but it doesn't benefit us financially or otherwise if it's not sustainable. This involves processing raw materials here at home, provided good jobs where we need them.

We will make public contracts accessible to smaller suppliers. If a contract is beyond the capacity of a single business, smaller firms will be able to bid as a consortia to make public-private partnerships accessible to businesses of all sizes.

The BC Greens will adopt a 'Buy BC' approach to public procurement and support our regional economies and develop regional supply chains. We will reform the public procurement process and give weight to the economic benefits of awarding procurement for local job creation, intellectual property ownership, local manufacturing, and export potential.

To improve market access, we will provide public institutions with directives to actively identify opportunities and consider purchasing from cooperatives, employee-owned businesses, First Nations enterprises, social enterprises, and locally owned small and medium-sized firms.

Conservative Party

A B.C. business shouldn't face unnecessary roadblocks just because its customer lives in another province. Our party has committed to reducing trade and labour barriers within Canada. I support working with other provinces to recognize equivalent standards and qualifications, reduce duplicate paperwork and make it easier to move goods and services across borders, while maintaining important safety protections. As a locomotive

engineer, I understand how much efficient transportation matters to the economy. Better port and rail connections can also help B.C. companies reach international customers. We should make it easier to do business both across Canada and around the world.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

I am committed to forging a western alliance with our neighboring provinces to the east and dismantling trade and licensing barriers to open up regional markets, drive economic growth and give us a greater voice federally.

WORKFORCE, LABOUR COSTS AND HOUSING

How would your party help employers manage rising labour costs while ensuring B.C. businesses can attract and retain the workforce they need? What changes, if any, would you make to employment-related requirements, workforce development and housing policy to support both employers and employees?

BC NDP

We are getting more housing built, and bringing down housing costs, so that workers aren't limited by where they can afford to live. David Eby's country-leading Homes for People plan eliminated local zoning barriers that experts expect will unlock 300,000 more middle-class homes. Rental asking prices in B.C. have dropped 27 months in a row and are now 10% below the peak in 2024. We have also been working to streamline permitting and approvals for new construction. The BC NDP will also launch a \$5,000 tax credit for small businesses hiring young workers for their first full-time job.

CentreBC

Businesses need workers, but workers also need to be able to afford to live in the communities where they work. I think we need to address both sides of that problem. CentreBC would invest an additional \$60 million a year in skilled-trades training, creating about 3,500 more training and apprenticeship spots each year by 2028. We would also make it faster for qualified workers training elsewhere to have their credentials recognized in B.C., helping employers fill positions where workers are needed.

Housing is a major part of retaining workers. We would set standards of six months for rezonings and eight weeks for building permits, cut development cost charges in half for new rental and below-market housing, and rebate PST on building materials for qualifying purpose-built rentals. We would also double BC Builds to 20,000 below-market homes by 2031.

Employers should not have to choose between rising labour costs and being unable to find workers. If we increase the supply of skilled workers and make housing more attainable, we can support businesses while also improving life for employees.

BC Green Party

In the Lower Mainland, affordability is the largest housing issue. However, outside of the Lower Mainland, supply is the largest housing issue, especially in available rental stock. The BC Greens seek to fund the Community Housing Trust to allow more co-op rental housing to be constructed, offering affordable rental rates.

The federal government's implementation of the Canadian Health Plan for foreign workers was a big step in the right direction.

The cost of WorkSafeBC premiums are also high. It would be prudent to assess whether the premiums can be scaled down proportionally to the employees within an organization. While the base premium rate has remained the same for the past 9 years, the maximum assessable payroll level could be lowered, such that the premium per employee is capped sooner.

The Greens have the best policy on making both housing and daycare more affordable for families, helping local businesses retain workers and reducing their likelihood of having to move away or run late due to excessively long commutes. As a teacher I know how hard it has been to retain good staff in some of our schools, simply because a teacher's salary wasn't enough to pay for local housing.

Housing availability and costs most directly affect the cost of labour. The BC Greens plan to build 26,000 non-market housing units per year and implement vacancy control, which ties increases in rent to a unit, rather than a tenant.

Also, an expanded public healthcare system, including mental health, dental health, prescriptions, etc will remove the need for businesses to offer private healthcare insurance options.

To begin with, I think we need to do away with the idea that labour costs are at odds with business. For a business to be successful, we need profits. It is not true that an underpaid individual is going to increase profits for a business. Rather, a worker brings in the most amount of revenue for a business when they are good at what they do and happy. Good work doesn't come cheap, and underpaid employees aren't happy.

BC Greens will increase minimum wage by 1%/yr beyond inflation, until it reaches a living wage. I've been in business since 2011 and I've never hired someone for less than a living wage. I've never regretted it.

Your initial response might be "but that means I'll have to raise my prices," and the answer is "yes." Raise your prices, and keep your profits. Your business isn't going to suffer. Finally, people earning a minimum wage will be able to afford your products and services, and that's going to make their lives so much better too.

The BC Greens will make communities affordable to live in to ensure that businesses can attract and retain their workforce. The most significant expenses affecting affordability amongst workers and families are housing, food, and childcare costs. In addition to supporting the development of regional supply chains that address the cost of goods, the BC Greens will fund our Community Housing Trust to increase affordable co-op rental housing to be constructed.

I will also push to expand our policy of \$10 a day childcare towards a universal childcare system to reduce the burden of working parents and address the cost concerns of implementing a price ceiling for private childcare operators.

Conservative Party

We believe we can support workers and employers at the same time. Our party proposes raising the Employer Health Tax exemption and introducing a First Job Tax Credit to help businesses hire. We also support practical skills training, simpler recognition of relevant qualifications, less duplicate paperwork for employers and getting more housing built so people can afford to live near their jobs. Employers need predictable costs, and workers deserve fair treatment and a reasonable chance to build a life here. Those goals should work together, not compete with each other.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

When government is limited, operates efficiently and stops wasting tax dollars, it frees up businesses and the economy, encouraging growth and prosperity for everyone.

ACCOUNTABILITY, FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIP

How would your party ensure responsible provincial spending while supporting essential public services and economic growth? What formal mechanisms would you establish to consult with local businesses and chambers of commerce before introducing policies that could significantly affect business costs, investment or operations?

BC NDP

We've been through a lot lately, and British Columbians expect their government to protect and strengthen key public services while keeping costs down. The BC NDP will never make people pay the price for this trade war. We will protect the services that people count on, like healthcare and education. The BC Conservatives have left \$5 billion of uncoded promises in their platform, which they would pay for with deep cuts to the services that families count on.

CentreBC

CentreBC believes we should protect essential services while being much more responsible with public money. Our plan would reduce the deficit every year after our first budget, bring it to about \$9 billion by 2030/31, and balance the budget by 2034/35 without relying on extra revenue from economic growth. We would protect front-line services while reviewing government administration, reducing waste and requiring departments to justify spending instead of allowing budgets to automatically grow. We would also put the path to balance into law through a Balanced Budget and Spending Control Act and create an Independent Budget Officer who reports to the Legislature and publicly checks whether government is meeting its targets. Large public projects over \$100 million would receive independent cost reviews, and CentreBC would publish a quarterly scorecard showing progress.

I also believe businesses need a real voice before government makes decisions that affect their costs or ability to invest. As MLA, I would maintain regular communication with the Tri-Cities Chamber and local businesses and bring their concerns directly to government. Major new policies, fees or taxes should be clearly explained before they are introduced, with their costs made public so businesses have time to understand and respond. Government should listen before acting, spend responsibly, and make sure businesses can plan with confidence.

BC Green Party

The BC Greens want to introduce an tax on the ultrawealthy on those with more than \$50 million in assets, compared to the BC NDP who want to increase tax on those earning more than \$190,000 annually.

The wealth tax would generate \$22 billion dollars in its first year of inception, with over \$5 billion each year after that, by using the following scheme:

A one-time fair share contribution on extreme wealth: 5% on net wealth above \$50 million, 10% above \$100 million, and 20% above \$1 billion. That raises about \$22.2 billion.

An ongoing annual contribution: 2% on net wealth above \$50 million, 3% above \$100 million, and 5% above \$1 billion. That raises about \$5.4 billion every year.

What it funds: Getting the ultra-rich few to pay their fair share means we have the resources to ensure every family gets day care, to make transit free for all, and to build the affordable homes people need

Responsible spending means increased oversight in both public education and healthcare to make sure there is more efficiency in where and how public funds are spent. Both I and my family and friends in nursing have often commiserated over how much management bloat has occurred, with less of our dollars going to actual patients and students; that has to change.

We also have a plan to make sure we stop allowing our resources to be squandered. Raw logs being exported is a missed opportunity for value added local jobs and business opportunities, and increased gas production has come with ever lower royalties so that, despite producing more than double the gas we did 15-20 years ago, our total royalty revenue went DOWN. This is not a good deal for BC ; we need to get a competitive rate for what we are selling and make sure that, when rising prices give those companies more profits, we get a share in them, too.

The BC Greens support a wealth tax to expand essential public services.

BC has economic trusts, regional partnerships and other locally rooted organizations with valuable experience and relationships. We will strengthen and expand these institutions rather than impose a single new structure across the province. Every part of BC will be covered by a regional economic development strategy, with regular planning cycles, public reporting and clear responsibility for implementation. The goal is for regions to have ownership over their economic strategies, within a provincial framework that connects decisions across regions and levels of government. Regional strategies will have a formal role in provincial planning. Ministries and Crown corporations will be required to consider regional priorities when making major decisions about infrastructure, workforce programs, public procurement and economic investment. The province will report on how it has responded to regional strategies and explain where priorities have not been advanced. Regional institutions will also provide regular advice

on changing economic conditions, emerging opportunities and barriers that require provincial action.

Responsible public spending means having a costed plan that addresses the needs of British Columbians. BC Conservatives are promising huge expenditures on shiny promises with no realistic way to pay for them. The BC NDP intend to keep running deficits, and have already wasted \$100M on this unnecessary snap election.

Only the BC Greens have a costed plan for making BC better while getting rid of our deficit.

I encourage you to check out the BC Green Party's website for our detailed plan, because there is so much more to it than I've had a chance to address here.

Major public bodies will report procurement spending by region, sector, supplier size and relevant ownership categories, including First Nations businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises. This information will be used to identify where spending is leaving the province, where local supply chains are already strong and where targeted business development could fill gaps. Progress will be measured by how much public spending builds lasting capacity within BC.

To coordinate the resources and opportunities, the BC Greens will establish permanent partnerships and supplier-development programs for priority industries to coordinate procurement, infrastructure, skills, and public investment around an industrial policy that values domestic resilience, regional supply chains, export potential, and circular economic systems.

Conservative Party

Like any household, government needs to understand what it can afford and make its priorities count. Our party proposes an independent fiscal review, clearer spending benchmarks and bringing back the Small Business Roundtable. Locally, I would propose quarterly meetings with the Tri-Cities Chamber and business owners, and seek their input before supporting changes that affect their costs. Healthcare and other essential services must remain priorities. Fiscal responsibility isn't about saying no to everything; it's about asking good questions, listening carefully and being accountable for how public money is spent.

Lee-Ann Bates Independent Candidate (Port Coquitlam)

A responsible, accountable and transparent government would provide a stable foundation for public services and long term economic growth. I would support the systemic review of government operations to cut wasteful spending, streamline inefficient processes, and maximize every tax dollar. We should put more decision making power back into the hands of local municipalities, instead of imposing top down mandates that create more bureaucracy and unnecessary costs. Policy should be guided by the cities and local Chambers of Commerce who understand their business

communities. By empowering local governance and keeping provincial operations lean, we can eliminate costly red tape, lower the tax burden, and foster real economic growth.
