

BC 2017: Questions To Ask Your Candidates

Island Tides

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Owner, Publisher & Editor:

Christa Grace-Warrick

Contributors: Barb Biagi, Gary Moore, Mike Yip, Barry Cotton, David Greer, Blaise Salmon, Craig McFeely, Ron Woodall, Elizabeth May, Priscilla Ewbank, Michael Hopcroft, Andrew Loveridge, Bill Vinton, Loys Maingon, Onni Milne, Steven Earle

Island Tides Publishing Ltd

Box 55, Pender Island, BC V0N 2M0

Tel: 250.216.2267 • News: news@islandtides.com

Advertising: islandtides@islandtides.com

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Monday, January 16 to Friday, January 27

Elizabeth May, MP January Townhalls—

SATURNA: Mon, Jan 16, Community Hall, 6:30-8pm • **SAANICH:** Tues, Jan 17, Lochside Elementary, 1145 Royal Oak Drive, 7-8:30pm

• **MAYNE:** Wed, Jan 18, 6:30pm-8pm, Community Centre, 493 Felix Jack Rd •

SIDNEY/NORTH SAANICH: Thurs Jan 19, 7pm-8:30pm, Bodine Family Hall, Mary Winspear Centre • **GALIANO:** Friday, January 20, 6-7:30pm, Galiano South Community Hall, 141 Sturdies Bay Rd

• **CENTRAL SAANICH:** Saturday, January 21, 3pm-4:30pm, Brentwood Bay Community Club, 7082 Wallace Dr • **SALT SPRING:** Monday, January 23, 6:30pm-8pm, Multi-Purpose Room, Gulf Island Secondary School, 232 Rainbow Rd •

SAANICH: Wednesday, January 25, 7pm-8:30pm, Bob Wright Centre, Room B150, University of Victoria • **PENDER:** Friday, January 27, 6pm-7:30pm, Community Hall, 418 Bedwell Harbour Rd •

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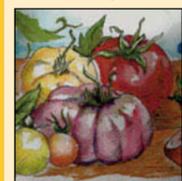
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Salt Spring Island's 22nd Annual Seedy Saturday—featuring plant family Solanaceae, presented by Island Natural Growers • Farmer's Institute, 351 Rainbow Road • **SATURDAY SEED EXCHANGE:** 10am-3pm; **SUNDAY WORKSHOPS:** Seed Growing and Cleaning, 9am-4pm, \$25 • Workshop registration: ssiseedysaturday@gmail.com • **SALT SPRING**

Next Deadline: Wednesday, January 25

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Happy 2017 to our readers, advertisers, contributors, tipsters and photographers! This is a BC provincial election year. *Island Tides* would like to get discussion of issues going right away. We have generated a dozen key questions for BC election candidates in ten coastal

ridings. In this edition, each question is followed by *Island Tides*' 'take' on the background to these issues.

In upcoming editions we will provide an opportunity for every candidate in these ridings to give their short response to one of these questions.

1. Premier Clark has announced that Kinder Morgan has met BC's five conditions for approval of the TMX pipeline. Do you now support its construction?

[The five conditions included meeting federal environmental approvals, world-leading cleanup provisions for both marine and land-based oil spills, and meeting legal requirements of aboriginal and treaty rights. To satisfy the fifth condition, the company has agreed to pay the provincial government annual payments of between \$25 and \$50 million, depending on how much bitumen is transported through the pipeline. The provincial government also announced 37 new environmental and consultation conditions, adding to the 157 conditions set by the National Energy Board.]

2. What are the most important industries in BC today? In the next five years? Ten years? Why?

[In 2015, the most important industries were associated with residential construction and professional and financial services. Extractive industries (mining, forestry, etc.) were towards the bottom of the list. LNG isn't even on the list.]

3. Should elected officials (such as the premier) be paid by their political party, in addition to their legislated salary? Why?

[The premier is paid \$50,000 per year by the BC Liberal party, in addition to her salary. It is not clear why, or whether similar sums are paid to anyone else. Potential corporate lobbyists pay thousands to have dinner with her.]

4. What is the purpose of constructing the Site C hydroelectric dam?

[Recent reasons given for the dam are to provide electricity for fracking natural gas wells to serve the proposed LNG industry, or power to assist in extracting oil from Alberta's tar sands. BC's demand for domestic electricity is not increasing, renewable electricity is becoming cheaper to produce, and the North American market price of electricity is volatile.]

5. What are the major components of the accumulated debt of BCHydro? Why has this debt been accumulated? How will the debt be paid off?

[The major components relate to the cost of electricity drawn from private sector suppliers, in pursuit of a 'self-sufficiency' target; repeated capital cost overruns (or underestimates); and subsidies on electricity supplied to heavy industry. BCHydro has also incurred a multi-billion dollar future liability to satisfy private sector 'take-or-pay' electricity supply contracts. The debt is to be paid off through increasing electricity rates to domestic consumers.

These are all cabinet decisions, not BCHydro decisions. The BC Utilities Commission has been barred by the government for many years from regulating BCHydro.]

6. Would you support the provision of a basic income to all British Columbians?

[This has been suggested and has become a political issue in some other provinces. BC has a

very high incidence of child poverty.]

7. How may BC be affected by climate change? What action is planned to reduce climate change? What action is planned to mitigate its effects?

[There are currently no plans to mitigate climate change. Sea levels may rise, weather patterns may change, and plant and animal ecology will be affected. The provincial carbon tax has not been increased in five years. BC has set GHG emission targets, but has no plans to meet them.]

8. How would you regulate the aquaculture industry? The logging and wood products industry?

[The aquaculture industry could be regulated to force a shift to land-based salmon farms. Shellfish, crab, and other smaller parts of the industry require salt water with protected purity, with no oilspills or pollution. Old growth logging could be limited; log exports could be banned in favour of an integrated wood processing industry.]

9. BC's demographic trends indicate an increasing proportion of seniors. What programs would you support to ensure their comfort and security?

[Increasing complex care facilities, and a full spectrum of home care, day care, and treatment facilities would help.]

10. What would be your solution to congestion due to increasing traffic through the George Massey Tunnel?

[The government proposes a ten-lane bridge, high enough to permit deep sea shipping up to New Westminster. A very much cheaper alternative would be an additional tunnel, but this would not provide for shipping.]

11. Why are new ferries being built in Poland?

[The government has contracted ferry construction to overseas shipyards for some time. The BC shipbuilding industry has shed capacity and can no longer bid on ferries.]

12. Do you support ownership of public infrastructure by the private sector, through PPPs?

[The provincial government has constructed the Golden Ears and Port Mann bridges, and the Sea to Sky Highway as public-private partnerships (PPPs). This means that the government guarantees the private partners a good rate of return over many future years in exchange for private sector investment and private sector design, construction, and maintenance.

The annual payments to the investors then become debts of the Transportation Investment Corporation, which describes itself as a 'Self-Supported Crown Corporation' (like BCHydro). It lost half a billion dollars last year, which is not counted in the provincial budget. Alternatively, construction could be financed through a provincial bond issue, with maintenance by the highways ministry. However, this would make it more difficult to record a 'balanced' budget.]

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