

Paul Falvo Response

NWT Association of Communities Survey

- 1. In the last budget, the government doubled the gas tax funding for one time, and it was well received. Do you support the permanent doubling of the gas tax fund for 211 communities in Canada?**

Around the world, cities are taking leadership on critical issues such as climate change, immigration and refugee protection. Canadian cities are hobbled in this respect because the 1867 constitutional designation of the municipal order of government as creations of the provinces severely limits their autonomy and authority. With only 10 cents out of every tax dollar flowing to municipalities, and no direct powers of taxation, vast inequities in our governance structures and financial stability have been created.

Successive governments have skirted the issue; there is no appetite for re-opening the Constitution. Prime Minister Harper, quite rightly, made the gas tax a permanent form of municipal taxation. The Trudeau administration has also made some progress on funding housing and transit infrastructure. These have helped to stabilize municipal budgets, but it is still insufficient.

The Green Party will:

- Give municipal governments a seat at the policy-making table through the Council of Canadian Governments.
 - Encourage the use of City Charters which give greater autonomy to cities.
 - Makes changes to the Canada Infrastructure Bank to reduce interest rates to municipalities on loans for infrastructure projects.
 - Institutionalize federal transfers to municipalities through the creation of a Municipal Fund, renaming the Gas Tax funds, which were delinked from gas tax revenue years ago. Ensure a doubling of current funding to ensure predictable and reliable funding to municipalities.
 - Allocate one per cent of GST to housing and other municipal infrastructure on an ongoing basis to provide a consistent baseline of funding.
- 2. Climate change and weather-related emergencies are on the rise in recent years. How will you work with our local governments to increase resiliency to extreme weather events and the effects of climate change?**

Even the one-degree warming already reached is producing unusually severe flooding, fires, drought and extreme weather events. It is essential that public infrastructure and natural landscapes can withstand and protect Canadians from natural and climate change induced disasters.

Agriculture

In August 2019, climate scientists released a report warning that agriculture must be transformed in order to meet climate change goals Canada has a huge opportunity to become a world leader in reversing climate change through regenerative agriculture practices. The soil will be the unsung hero, a game-changer in fighting climate change.

The Green Party will:

- Implement national standards for reducing the use of nitrogen fertilizers in crop agriculture, reducing erosion and rebuilding soils to retain carbon, and transitioning away from industrial livestock production (see Food and Food Security).
- Support the transition of industrial agriculture systems to regenerative agriculture. (See Food and Food Security).

Infrastructure

The Green Party will:

Direct the Canada Infrastructure Bank, revamped to exclude private profit in infrastructure, to invest in climate-proofing essential infrastructure, prioritizing upgrades to drinking water and waste water systems to protect against flooding, droughts and contamination.

Using the existing Green Infrastructure Fund, launch a national program to restore natural buffer zones along waterways, and carbon sinks through ecologically sound tree-planting and soil re-building.

Invoke federal powers for peace, order and good government to develop non-commercial aspects of forest management, such as massive tree planting, creating fire breaks and fire suppression, for climate change adaptation.¹⁰

Renew the abandoned process of a National Forest Strategy, with the focus on restoring ecologically sound and climate resilient forests, and restoring forests as carbon sinks, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Orient federal forest science towards this goal.

Increase forest fire preparedness, including buying water bombers and ensuring they can be deployed rapidly in high-risk zones.

3. The design of a program to support climate change in the north must be done in consultation with Northerners to ensure it has uptake and be effective. Will you ensure that any program that is developed on climate change will be in consultation with Northerners?

Yes, absolutely. The Green Party platform is based on working with governments at all levels. The Green Party supports the full implementation of treaties and other self-government agreements between Canada and Indigenous governments.

4. Homelessness, mental health and addictions are serious issues in the North. How will your party work to ensure these issues get addressed and solutions developed?

As we move into the “era of consequences” of climate change, new health imperatives are emerging. The World Health Organization has stated that “Climate change is the greatest challenge of the 21st century, threatening all aspects of the society in which we live.” Public health associations have raised the alarm that climate-related illnesses are growing and need urgent attention. According to a report by the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Ontario Public Health Association, climate change is exacerbating a number of child health issues including “heat sickness, poor air quality, water contamination and the mental health impacts of natural hazards, extreme weather, and displacement.”

So far, this issue is flying way under the radar of many health professionals and government health departments. A Green government will change that.

The Green Party will:

- End drinking water and boil water advisories by investing and upgrading critical infrastructure to ensure safe water access in every community.
- Improve food security in northern communities by consulting with residents on Arctic farming, working with non-profit groups to build greenhouses or hydroponic towers and funding education programs in nutrition and horticulture.
- Support health-care services that incorporate traditional practices and recognize the role of extended families and elders.
- Together with First Ministers and Indigenous leaders, revisit the Blueprint on Aboriginal Health: A 10-Year Transformative Plan abandoned in 2006.
- Devote sufficient resources for maternal and infant care, mental health services and treatment for diabetes and tuberculosis.

- Sustain the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative to continue capacity building in the health care profession for Indigenous communities.
- Restore the federal/provincial Health Accord, basing health transfers on demographics and real health care needs in each province, replacing the current formula based on GDP growth introduced by the Harper government and retained by the Liberals.
- Expand the single-payer Medicare model to include Pharmacare for everyone as well as free dental care for low-income Canadians.
- Create a bulk drug purchasing agency and reduce drug patent protection periods.
- Negotiate the Canada Health Accord to prioritize expansion of mental health and rehabilitation services, reduction in wait times, access to safe abortion services and access to gender-affirming health services such as hormones, blockers, and surgery (See Section VI Advancing the Just Society: Advancing LGBTQI2+ Rights)
- Uphold Jordan's Principle in full, ensuring Indigenous People receive the health care they need without being delayed by bureaucratic disagreements over jurisdiction.
- Implement Calls to Action 18-24 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, improving health care for Indigenous Peoples.
- Support First Nations, Métis and Inuit in (re)building traditional knowledge systems around healing and wellness, including the formal inclusion of traditional healing within mental wellness and home and community care programs. This process must be led by First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations.
- Reorient Health Canada's mandate towards mental health and addictions, health promotion and disease prevention, and the health risks of climate change.
- Encourage medical associations to train health-care professionals to understand and engage with climate change related health threats.
- Address the opioid crisis as a health-care issue, not a criminal issue, by declaring a national health emergency. Recognize that fentanyl contamination is why deaths are more accurately described as poisonings than overdoses. Drug possession should be decriminalized, ensuring people have access to a screened supply and the medical support they need to combat their addictions. Increase funding to community-based organizations to test drugs and make Naloxone kits widely available to treat overdoses.
- Establish a national mental health strategy and a suicide prevention strategy to address the growing anxieties plaguing Canadians regarding inequality and affordability, the

growing precariousness of work and housing, the climate crisis, social isolation, resurgent racial and ethno-nationalism and other harms and risks.

- Protect our public blood system by prohibiting for-profit blood collection services and removing barriers to blood donations not based on science.

5. Inadequate housing in terms of both quantity and quality is greatly affecting outcomes for our residents, whether it is in education, health, justice and many other areas. Will your party ensure that long term funding is made a priority, and will you work to find a flexible program that works for our Northern region?

Federal incentives for purpose-built rental housing were eliminated in the 1970s. During decades of encouraging home ownership, federal support for co-ops, rental housing, social housing and supportive housing has languished. We now face a national shortage of affordable housing and as a result, a growing problem of homelessness and housing insecurity.

The Liberal government's National Housing Strategy does not address immediate core housing needs across Canada. Funding for affordable housing will roll out over 15 years but it is needed now. The first-time home buyer grant has been criticized for exacerbating housing speculation and commodification.

It is past time that the government of Canada moves to ensure that everyone has access to safe, affordable housing. The Green Party will enhance the federal government's contribution to meeting the housing needs of Canadians through direct investments, changes to tax policies, and lending and granting programs, putting the government's focus where it is urgently needed.

The Green Party will:

- Legislate housing as a legally protected fundamental human right for all Canadians and permanent residents.
- Appoint a Minister of Housing to strengthen the National Housing Strategy so that it meets the needs for affordable housing that are unique to each province, and oversee its implementation in collaboration with provincial ministers. This recognizes that housing is provincial jurisdiction. The target would be 25,000 new and 15,000 rehabilitated units annually for the next 10 years.
- Increase the National Housing Co-investment Fund by \$750 million for new builds, and the Canada Housing Benefit by \$750 million for rent assistance for 125,000 households.
- Create a Canada Co-op Housing Strategy that would update the mechanisms for financing co-op housing, in partnership with CMHC, co-op societies, credit unions and other lenders.

- Eliminate the first-time home buyer grant.

Financing

The Green Party will:

- Restore tax incentives for building purpose-built rental housing and provide tax credits for gifts of lands, or of land and buildings, to community land trusts to provide affordable housing.
- Include new and existing housing as eligible infrastructure for funding purposes, allowing the Canada Infrastructure Bank to support provincial and municipal housing projects.
- Provide financing to non-profit housing organizations and cooperatives to build and restore quality, energy efficient housing for seniors, people with special needs and low-income families.
- Remove the “deemed” GST whenever a developer with empty condo units places them on the market as rentals.
- Re-focus the core mandate of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) on supporting the development of affordable, non-market and cooperative housing, as opposed to its current priority of supporting Canadian lenders to de-risk investment in housing ownership. With many housing markets demonstrably overvalued, and home ownership rates among the highest in the world, individual home ownership should not be the preoccupation of a public service housing agency and a national housing strategy.
- Change the legislation that prevents Indigenous organizations from accessing financing through CMHC to invest in self-determined housing needs.

6. It is essential that all communities have access to all telecommunications so they can participate in the digital economy as well as all aspects of digital life. How do you intend to advocate for this essential service to all NWT homes and improve service and reliability for all?

The Green Party will:

- Establish banking services and public high-speed internet access in post offices, particularly in under-serviced rural and remote communities without banks and libraries.

To a great extent, the Green economy is a digital economy. To participate fully, individuals and communities across the country need access to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet. Such infrastructure is as essential today as power and telephone lines were early last century.

Currently there is a digital divide separating those with such access and those without. The Green Party supports the government's Connectivity Strategy but has concerns about the introduction of 5G technology and which companies should be involved in delivering this next generation of connectivity. We are also concerned that the regulatory structure governing cellular and internet service results in Canadians paying much higher fees than people in other countries.

A Green government will:

- Strike a parliamentary committee to examine the implications of introducing 5G technology, including security issues and impacts on weather forecasting, and make recommendations on how and if Canada should proceed.
- Guard against threats to net neutrality.

7. More work needs to be done to ensure cellular coverage along current and future NWT highways. It is a necessity for safety in the North. How will your government support the NWT in this safety requirement?

A Green government will:

- Amend CRTC regulations to increase competition in the provision of cellular and internet services to consumers and decouple payments for cell phones from cell services.
- The plan for ensuring cellular coverage is connected to the plan in question (6) above to build greater technological infrastructure.