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## Climate justice and BC's political moment

By Marc Lee

*In April, I was asked to set the stage for a conversation on climate justice at an all candidates forum organized by Gen Why Media and the CCPA. This piece is based on my talk from that evening—now, post election, this is the context in which our government needs to show leadership in meeting the challenge of climate change.*

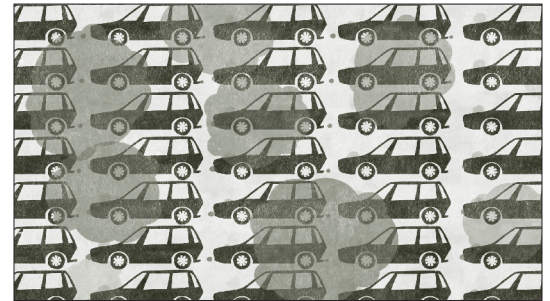
The BC government returns to work at an important moment in history. Worldwide, extreme weather events from drought to floods to powerful storms and record-breaking temperatures are making a powerful statement that climate change can no longer be denied.

Costs are piling up, with one recent estimate of \$1.2 trillion per year in global damages from climate change and from a carbon-intensive economy. These huge costs are often imposed on people who have contributed least to the problem—a fundamental matter of justice.

BC, too, has experienced climate change first hand in the form of wind and hail storms, landslides, floods, and perhaps most notably the devastation caused by the mountain pine beetle.

Humans are causing climate change by taking carbon in the form of fossil fuels from underground and releasing it into the atmosphere.

We subsidize fossil fuel extraction through our tax system, cheap electricity and public infrastructure. And we're not just addicts, we're dealers: BC exports twice as much carbon as we combust.



STILL FROM OUR DON'T FRACK THE LAW! VIDEO AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE.COM

At this point, 80-90 per cent of our known fossil fuel reserves constitute “unburnable carbon” if we want to prevent catastrophic climate change. On the basis of this math, students in the US and Canada are leading a movement calling for divestment from fossil fuel stocks.

### BC's crossroads

The good news is that, starting in 2007, BC took some important first steps on climate action. BC brought in a law requiring greenhouse gas emission reductions—one third by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050. We introduced North America's first carbon tax; aimed to reduce and offset emissions in the public sector; provided subsidies for energy efficiency; integrated emissions into official community plans; and set out a clean energy mandate for BC Hydro.

Between 2007 and 2010 BC's emissions fell by 4.5 per cent. Much of this may be due to the recession, but climate policies arguably deserve some of the credit. And there's no evidence that those policies have caused economic harm.

Unfortunately, new developments threaten to lock us into a carbon-intensive development path. Enbridge's proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline has sparked protests across the province.

Also of note, Alberta's tar sands are powered in part by BC's natural gas. The advent of “fracking” has enabled record gas production, but has raised concerns about the impact on water supplies, earthquakes and leakages of methane.

# Stopping dangerous forestry legislation in its tracks: a CCPA success story (for now)

By Ben Parfitt

*As the short spring legislative session neared its end before the writ was dropped in April and the provincial election began, the BC government withdrew a controversial section of an omnibus bill that it had hoped to quietly and swiftly ease through passage.*



PHOTO BY PETE TUEPAH

*The BC government needs to take a different path towards a sustainable forestry industry that reduces wood waste, invests in new and modernized mills, and increases conservation and reforestation.*

Had Section 24 made it into law, it would have fundamentally altered the course of forestry in British Columbia for generations to come. A handful of forest companies led by Canfor, West Fraser, Tolko and Western Forest Products would have secured a virtual lock on 25 million hectares of forestland.

In late January, the CCPA forced the issue into the open. In an op-ed in *The Province*, I unveiled key components of the plan. The op-ed flagged how a potentially massive giveaway of rights of access to publicly-owned forestlands was in the offing, and that the government hoped to pass it into law just before the election.

The op-ed forced the government's hand. Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, was forced to write a letter to the editor .

Thomson claimed that the government plan was simply a reflection of what an all-party legislative committee had recommended. The committee had toured several communities to solicit opinion on what to do about a looming "timber supply crisis" brought on by unsustainable logging rates and made worse by the mountain pine beetle, and in fact had made no such recommendation. They had said only that the government might wish to consider increasing the diversity of licences held by forest companies, First Nations, rural communities and others.

What the government proposed was vastly different—a plan that specifically called for the "rollover" of forest licences (which allow companies to log a set number of trees each year) to tree farm licences (which grant exclusive rights to log trees over defined areas of land). Since major forest corporations held almost all the large forest licences, they'd be first in line to get tree farm

licences, which are about as close as one gets in BC to private control of public forestlands.

Former independent MLA for Cariboo North Bob Simpson spoke out repeatedly against the transfer, and a grassroots effort to quash Section 24 began. This effort was spearheaded by, among others, Order of Canada recipient and long-time environmental campaigner Vicky Husband, and former long-time Ministry of Forests employee and professional forester Anthony Britneff.

A number of environmental organizations sounded the alarm. A map was published showing just how big the potential forest giveaway might be. A social media campaign was mounted via Twitter and Facebook. First Nations leaders spoke out forcefully condemning the bill. And soon MLAs' inboxes were flooded with hundreds of emails at a rate not seen in years, with targeted MLAs like Steve Thomson and NDP forestry critic Norm Macdonald receiving more than 3,000.

With signs that the tide of opposition was growing with the launch of an Avaaz petition on March 11, the government removed the contentious Section 24 from its omnibus bill.

I'm pleased that the government responded to public pressure, and proud that CCPA research was able to support the work of citizens across the province who spoke out against Section 24. The government now has the opportunity to take a different path towards a sustainable forestry industry that reduces wood waste, invests in new and modernized mills, and increases conservation and reforestation.

*Ben Parfitt is the CCPA-BC's Resource Policy Analyst.*

# Closing the loop: reducing greenhouse gas emissions through zero waste in BC

By Marc Lee, Sue Maxwell, Ruth Legg and William Rees

Most people are familiar with the idea that we need to “reduce, reuse and recycle” to protect our environment. Over the last few decades, waste management programs have made good progress in diverting solid waste from landfills through recycling and composting. But success has been lacking in reducing the amount of waste that is created in the first place, and in reusing materials (like bottles and packaging) before recycling. The core problem is a culture of consumption and an economic system that is wasteful and contributes to climate change.

Zero waste policies emphasize aggressive materials reduction, redesign, and reuse before recycling and composting. The aim is dramatic reductions in the volume of materials that flow through the economy, and therefore reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Well-designed policies can also support local economic development and the creation of new green jobs.

## Landfills, incineration and greenhouse gas emissions

Carbon dioxide is BC’s single largest waste by weight—more than 49 million tonnes in 2010, compared to 5 million tonnes of solid waste—even though carbon pollution goes into the atmosphere, not a landfill. Both landfills and incineration pose challenges due to greenhouse gases.

In the case of landfills, methane—a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide—is released when organic material does not decompose properly.

Incineration gives the impression of making waste disappear, but it merely transforms solid waste into ash, gases, heavy metals and toxic compounds. While billed as “waste-to-energy” (WTE), incineration, in fact, wastes the embodied energy that was used in making a product—the energy required for resource extraction and processing, product manufacture and transportation.

## Reducing emissions by reducing waste

There are major opportunities for diverting waste from landfills and incineration. Recycling and composting do mitigate the environmental impacts of solid waste. But there are physical limits to recycling, and plastics, in particular, can be challenging. Only 10 per cent of plastic in BC is recycled, and most of it is “down-cycled” into lesser-grade materials. Reduction

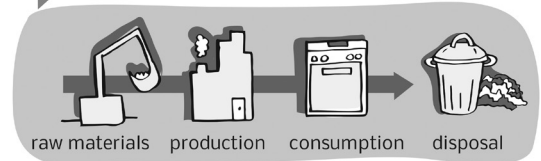
and re-use strategies go beyond recycling by displacing the need for new emissions-intensive manufacturing and transportation.

- Large parts of consumer waste could be transformed by reuse and better product design. Banning single-use containers would also help.
- Requiring extended warranties on durable products and consumer electronics would push manufacturers to provide repair and maintenance and reuse components.
- Collaborative consumption or sharing has been around for a long time, with public libraries being a good example—some communities are building on this idea with toy or tool “libraries.”
- Digital music, video, books and magazines enable a reduction in materials while allowing essentially the same consumption.

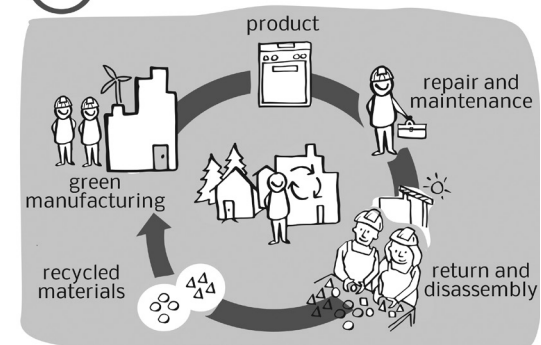
## Building a resource recovery economy

For economies like BC, shifting to zero waste is no small task. BC’s resource-based economic model has been subsidized through tax credits, low royalty rates, cheap electricity and publicly-funded infrastructure. In addition, some costs of production have been externalized: for example, costs like pollution and climate change are borne by people in general and by the environment, not by the specific producer or consumer.

### Shift from linear systems



### to closed loop systems



INFOGRAPHIC BY SAM BRADD. VIEW THE BIG PICTURE AT: BIT.LY/ZERO-WASTE-GRAPHIC

*Incineration gives the impression of making waste disappear, but it merely transforms solid waste into ash, gases, heavy metals and toxic compounds.*

# How big is BC's public sector?

By Igluka Ivanova

Spending cuts and staffing reductions have seriously weakened BC's public sector. Budget 2013 lays out further cuts of over 1,000 full-time public service jobs in 2013/14 alone. These cuts have been justified by appealing to a commonly held (but inaccurate) notion of an oversized public sector, claiming that reducing "overspending" is key to eliminating the deficit and can be done with little impact on much-valued programs and services.

*Rounds of spending cuts and staffing reductions have starved BC's public service to the point where key programs have indeed been scaled back or dismantled.*

But an examination of trends in public sector employment and provincial government spending in BC finds that the numbers tell a very different story:

- BC has the smallest public sector of all provinces, when measured by the number of employees per 1,000 population. In 2011, there were 89.8 public sector employees per 1,000 people in BC, compared to 91.7 in Alberta and 99.6 in Ontario (which have the second and third smallest public sectors).
- Federal, provincial and municipal public sector employees accounted for 18 per cent of all BC workers in 2011, considerably less than the Canadian average of 21 per cent.
- While other provinces have reinvested in public services since the early 2000s, BC made cuts from 2001 to 2004 and again after the 2008 recession, leaving services unable to meet the needs of a growing population.
- Provincial government spending as a share of the economy (or GDP) has declined significantly and by 2011/12, BC was spending 2.3 per cent of GDP (or \$5 billion) per year

less than we did in 2000/01. There is no evidence to support claims of government "overspending." The provincial deficit is caused by a revenue shortfall due to a decade of tax cuts followed by a slow economy.

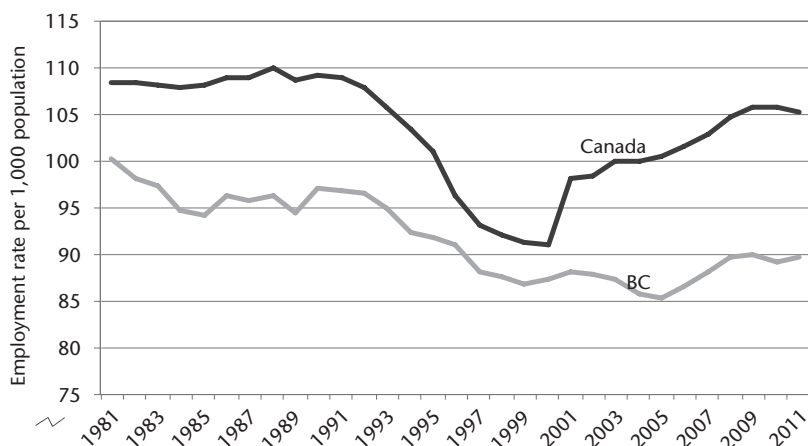
Rounds of spending cuts and staffing reductions have starved BC's public service to the point where key programs have indeed been scaled back or dismantled. The consequences of cutting public sector jobs include:

- Reduced monitoring and protection of forests and water, allowing for more illegal logging and pollution;
- Larger class sizes and overcrowding in public and post-secondary institutions, reducing the quality of education;
- Less homecare and other services for seniors, leading to hardship for seniors and overcrowding in hospitals; and
- Less protection for vulnerable children in care, increasing the likelihood of abuse and neglect, as documented by the BC Representative for Children and Youth.

Overall, cuts have hit the most vulnerable in our society hardest, and contributed to a general shift away from paying for programs and services together, through taxes, and toward paying individually, through user fees or by purchasing education, seniors' care and other social services in the private market. A reinvestment in a strong public sector would not only improve quality of life for all British Columbians, but also reduce the economic and social costs associated with the high levels of poverty and inequality in our province.

*Igluka Ivanova is Economist and Public Interest Researcher at the CCPA-BC. This is an edited excerpt from the report Reality Check on the Size of BC's Public Sector, available at [www.policyalternatives.ca/bc-public-sector-reality-check](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/bc-public-sector-reality-check)*

Public sector employment rate, BC and Canada, 1981 to 2011





# Clyde Hertzman, an incredible advocate for children: R.I.P.

By Seth Klein

*As many of our members have likely heard, in February we at the CCPA lost a great friend, and Canada lost one of its greatest advocates for children.*

The sudden and untimely passing of Clyde Hertzman came as a terrible shock. Clyde was the life partner of our former BC Board Chair and prolific research associate Marcy Cohen, and was himself a long-time research associate with the CCPA-BC (he authored the wonderful report, *Making Early Childhood Development a Priority: Lessons from Vancouver*, available on our website).

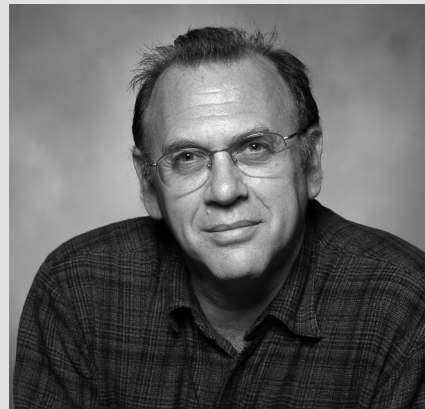
Just weeks before he died, Clyde was named an officer of the Order of Canada. This was in recognition of a lifetime of work. But in truth, Clyde was still at the height of his career, with much more to contribute.

Clyde was one of the greatest living champions of early childhood development and population health in Canada, and widely considered a “guru” in the field internationally. As the founding director of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at UBC, Clyde oversaw the production of an extraordinary body of research spanning and

linking the health and social sciences. Combined, this work hugely deepened our understanding of childhood development, and equipped us with compelling evidence-based arguments for progressive policies. Whether struggling for publicly-funded universal child care or calling for the elimination of child poverty, Clyde’s work showed why we all have a stake in realizing these goals.

As any who had the pleasure of seeing Clyde present can attest, he was a thoroughly compelling speaker. Clyde completely captivated his audiences. His persona was so dynamic and friendly, and he exuded such tremendous enthusiasm for his work and its implications. In short, Clyde was compassionate, lovely and warm, and also fabulously intelligent, and all this was obvious to those who encountered him, in a private setting or an auditorium of hundreds.

The few truly brilliant people we have the good fortune to meet in our lives are those rare people who connect the dots in deeply original ways—who see patterns



across disparate fields. It is unusual when such individuals are also possessed with a unique ability to communicate their insights, and to inspire and motivate others. Rarer still is when that brilliance comes wrapped in humility and good humour. Clyde was such a person.

We extend our deepest sympathies to our dear friend Marcy, to Clyde’s children Eric, Emily and Amos, his brother Owen, and his mother Eileen, and to our friends at HELP.

And we mourn the passing of a great fighter in the struggle for social justice.

*Donations to the Clyde Hertzman Legacy fund can be made here: <http://memorial.supporting.ubc.ca/dr-clyde-hertzman>. The fund supports innovative investigation and community initiatives that contribute to the social and emotional development of young children.*

*Continued from page 3*  
*Zero waste*

Many of the materials collected from BC recycling programs are not processed locally, but are treated like just another commodity that BC exports to the US or Asia.

Changes in economic incentives to capture externalized costs like pollution can develop robust local markets and support a resource recovery economy:

- Shift from encouraging the extraction of raw resources toward supporting the use of recycled materials and local manufacturing.

- Drive market demand for recycling by increasing domestic capacity in areas like carpet, non-refundable glass and paper.
- Establish disposal bans or increase tipping fees for disposal in landfills or incinerators.
- Ensure demand for recycled materials through public procurement policies and requirements for recycled content.
- Encourage business models based on renting and leasing, rather than owning.

# Social housing reality check

By Seth Klein

Over the last few years, barely a week went by without a government news release trumpeting a new housing initiative. Yet many housing and homelessness activists insist the need for low-income housing far outstrips new supply, and even the most astute observers of the housing file found it difficult to determine which government announcements were new and which were recycled; which dealt with actual new housing and which merely captured conversions of one kind of housing into another.

*In all this time, there has been virtually no change in the stock of basic social housing for low-income families.*

In 2010, in an attempt to cut through the fog, I teamed up with Lorraine Copas of the Social Planning and Research Council of BC to write *Unpacking the Housing Numbers*, which tracked how much new social housing was actually brought on stream between 2006 and 2010. Instead of relying on government spin, we looked at the annual BC Housing Service Plans, i.e. the government's own numbers.

The picture that emerged was mixed, but on balance, troubling. As the number of homeless BC residents escalated and public concern mounted (and perhaps more cynically, as BC prepared to host the 2010 Winter Olympics), there was indeed a great flurry of activity on certain fronts. But most of that activity did not represent actual new social housing. Most of the support was in three areas: rental assistance supplements, new emergency shelter beds, and the purchase of a number of single room occupancy (SRO) hotels. And while these initiatives were needed and laudable, for the most part they did not represent an actual increase in the stock of low-income housing.

We now have three more years of data from BC Housing Service Plans, so I figured it was time to revisit the numbers and see if anything has changed since 2010. The accompanying table summarizes the total households assisted, comparing 2006/07 and plans for 2013/14.

## Unpacking the numbers

So, what do these numbers tell us? The government estimates that in the year to come, it will provide housing assistance of some form to more than 100,000 BC households, an increase of 16,110 households since 2006.

But note the following. Of the 16,110 increase:

- 10,550 (65 per cent) have been in the form of rental assistance (mostly the new Rental Assistance Program for families with children combined with a smaller amount in rental supplements for the homeless, offset

by a small decline in rental assistance for seniors). Such programs may indeed be valuable to some families, but they do nothing to create new low-income housing stock (and families on social assistance or single people are excluded from the program).

- 670 were in more emergency shelter beds (such as Vancouver's HEAT program). Again, this has been needed, but it's not housing.
- There has indeed been a notable increase in housing for the homeless, with supportive housing for homeless people dealing with addiction and mental health challenges increasing by 5,400 units. However, 1,550 of these units are in SRO hotels that the province purchased in order to protect them from demolition or conversion into more expensive housing, with the goal of placing them under non-profit management. Again, purchasing these hotels was a good policy decision, but it means that the net new units in this category came to only 3,850.
- Transitional supportive housing increased by 1,690 units, but this has been offset by a loss of 2,200 units in the independent social housing category (what we traditionally think of as social housing for low-income households). Much of this stems from regular social housing for seniors being converted into assisted living, and thus switching to a different category. Also notable is a sharp decline in special needs housing such as group homes. The housing for women and children fleeing abuse is likely not new, but rather, simply a product of shifting administrative authority for these units from the Ministry for Social Development to BC Housing.
- Also noteworthy is that, in all this time, there has been virtually no change in the stock of basic social housing for low-income families.

Overall then, after accounting for the points above, what the government's own numbers tell us is that over the last eight years, BC has seen an

**Table: BC Housing initiatives, households assisted by the continuum of housing and support services, 2006-2013**

	2006/07 Service Plan	2013/14 Service Plan	Increase/decrease, 2013 over 2006
Homeless initiatives	3,680	11,340	7,660
Emergency shelters	1,190	1,860	670
Housing for the homeless (supportive housing)	2,490	7,890	5,400
Homeless rent supplements (approx. \$120 per month)	n/a	1,590	1,590
<b>Transitional/supportive and assisted living</b>	<b>17,460</b>	<b>19,150</b>	<b>1,690</b>
Special needs (group homes etc.)	14,430	6,080	- 8,350
Frail seniors (assisted living)	3,030	12,240	9,210
Women and children fleeing abuse	n/a	830	830
<b>Independent social housing</b>	<b>43,760</b>	<b>41,560</b>	<b>- 2,200</b>
Low income seniors	23,880	21,660	- 2,220
Low income families (including Aboriginal families)	19,880	19,900	20
Rent assistance in the private market	19,020	27,980	8,960
SAFER (rental assistance for seniors)	19,020	17,060	- 1,960
RAP (Rental Assistance Program for families)	n/a	10,920	10,920
<b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED</b>	<b>83,920</b>	<b>100,030</b>	<b>16,110</b>

SOURCE: BC HOUSING SERVICE PLANS, 2006/07 THROUGH 2013/14

actual net increase of approximately 3,340 new units of social housing, or 418 new units per year.

That's a notable improvement over what we found in our 2010 report; the last three years in particular have seen a sizable jump in supportive housing, as long promised new buildings have finally reached completion.

#### Low by historic comparison

However, 418 units per year of new social housing stock is nothing to boast about. By comparison, between the mid 1970s and the early 1990s, with joint funding from the feds, BC used to add between 1,000 and 1,500 new units of social housing per year. And if one includes the widespread co-op housing construction in that era, the number was closer to 2,000. BC still benefits from this legacy; thousands of families and individuals have relied on this low-income housing stock at one time or another.

After the federal government ended funding for social housing in 1993, BC's NDP government at the time continued to build new social housing, but the pace of construction slowed. And during the BC Liberal government's first mandate (2001 to 2005) there was almost no new investment on the housing front. It's no great mystery then why homelessness had reached a new crisis level by the mid 2000s.

#### What now?

Of great concern now is that no new plans for building social housing are in the works. The BC Budget tabled in February only provided money for renovations for some of the most decrepit SRO hotels already purchased. That is a recipe for the homelessness crisis to be right back to where it was before the 2010 Olympics.

Building social, co-op and affordable housing is not a job that society can do once and be done with. It must be an ongoing commitment. Population growth means new demand will always materialize.

It doesn't have to be this way. Building 2,000 units of social housing, for example, costs about \$400 million. Building 10,000 units a year (as the BC Social Housing Coalition has called for) would cost about \$2 billion—a lot of money to be sure, but equivalent to less than one per cent of BC's GDP.

Surely in a society as wealthy as ours, there is no need for homelessness.

*Seth Klein is the BC Director of the CCPA.*

*Building social, co-op and affordable housing is not a job that society can do once and be done with. It must be an ongoing commitment.*

Plans to build the Site C dam on the Peace River would provide new power for fracking and mining operations.

BC's Natural Gas Strategy envisions a doubling or tripling of fracking in the northeast, to feed a new liquified natural gas export industry. This development would be like putting 20-40 million cars on the roads of the world. And even though most of those emissions would occur outside of BC, it would mean that BC would not be able to meet our legislated targets.

In Vancouver, plans to dramatically expand exports of coal from the Port have met local resistance, as have plans from Metro Vancouver to build a new garbage incinerator.

These projects are all connected to climate change, but also to the rights of BC's First Nations, and protection of our natural heritage. They create very few jobs, at a heavy environmental price.

Still, we find it hard to say no because resource extraction has been so successful in making BC a wealthy part of the world, and because fossil fuel companies have disproportionate influence in the corridors of power.

BC's climate actions have stalled: funding has run out for retrofits of homes and public institutions; the carbon tax is still not high enough to result in a significant decrease in emissions; BC has built the widest bridge in the world to ease car traffic while public transit funding is in crisis; and claims of carbon neutral government have been exposed as accounting fiction.

Continued from page 5  
Zero waste

- Support cooperative economies and collaborative consumption approaches.

### Developing a green jobs agenda

Managing waste for resource recovery has the potential to create green jobs in BC in repair, servicing and maintenance, and reusing bottles and containers. Sophisticated collection and sorting systems, and redirecting recovered material from export markets toward domestic reuse, remanufacturing and recycling activities will also support new employment. Promoting and supporting unionized workforces would

### Searching for Climate Leadership

There is still time to return to strong leadership on climate and energy. But we can't have it all: we can't be a climate leader and at the same time make huge investments in new fossil fuel infrastructure.

In the lead-up to this election, the CCPA's Climate Justice Project issued an open letter calling on BC political parties to recommit to our GHG law. Leading environmental groups called for a Better Future Fund that increases BC's carbon tax to build public transit and clean energy solutions. A coalition of labour and environmental groups called on parties to table a bold green jobs plan.

The path to a zero carbon economy is rooted in ensuring renewables power our daily needs, but also in dramatic improvements in the efficiency with which we use energy. It requires the development of zero waste policies that dramatically reduce waste generation and GHG emissions. And over the longer term, solutions depend on the development of complete communities, where people live closer to where they work, shop, access public services and play.

A zero carbon BC is doable, and would create tens of thousands of jobs, and a province where all jobs are green jobs. It is a project with a purpose, one that will occupy a whole generation. What has been lacking so far is the political will to embrace a new vision of what BC can be.

ensure green jobs to offer decent wages and working conditions.

*Marc Lee is Senior Economist at the CCPA-BC and co-director of the Climate Justice Project; Ruth Legg is Corporate Social Responsibility Specialist at the BC Lottery Corporation and a member of the board of the Fraser Basin Council; Sue Maxwell is the principal of Ecoinspire; and William Rees is an ecological economist, Professor Emeritus and former director of UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning. This is an edited excerpt from the full report, available at [www.policyalternatives.ca/zero-waste](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/zero-waste).*

### BC COMMENTARY

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