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# THE UBYSSEY

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# THE UBYSSEY

## EDITORIAL

Coordinating Editor
**Pawan Minhas**
coordinating@ubyssey.ca

Visuals Editor
**Lua Presidio**
visuals@ubyssey.ca

News Editors
**Charlotte Alden and Andrew Ha**
news@ubyssey.ca

Culture Editor
**Danni Olusanya**
culture@ubyssey.ca

Sports + Rec Editor
**Diana Hong**
sports@ubyssey.ca

Video Producer
**Josh McKenna**
video@ubyssey.ca

Opinion + Blog Editor
**Sam Smart**
opinion@ubyssey.ca

Science Editor
**Myla White**
science@ubyssey.ca

Photo Editor
**Sophie Galloway**
photos@ubyssey.ca

Features Editor
**Bailey Martens**
features@ubyssey.ca

## BUSINESS

Business Manager
**Douglas Baird**
business@ubyssey.ca

Account Manager
**Forest Scarrwener**
advertising@ubyssey.ca

Web Developer
**Keegan Landrigan**
k.landrigan@ubyssey.ca

Web Developer
**David Kao**
d.kao@ubyssey.ca

President
**Rees Pillizzi**
president1@ubyssey.ca

Social Media Coordinator
**Luiza Schroeder**
social@ubyssey.ca

## CONTACT

**Editorial Office:**
NEST 2208
604.283.2023

**Business Office:**
NEST 2209
604.283.202
The Nest 6133 University Boulevard
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

**Online:** ubyssey.ca
**Twitter:** @ubyssey
**Instagram:** @ubyssey

## STAFF

Sarah Zhao, Charul Maheshka, Paloma Green, Safa Ghaffar, Mahin-E-Alam, Tianne Jensen-DesJardins, Maya Rodrigo-Abdi, Danisa Rambing

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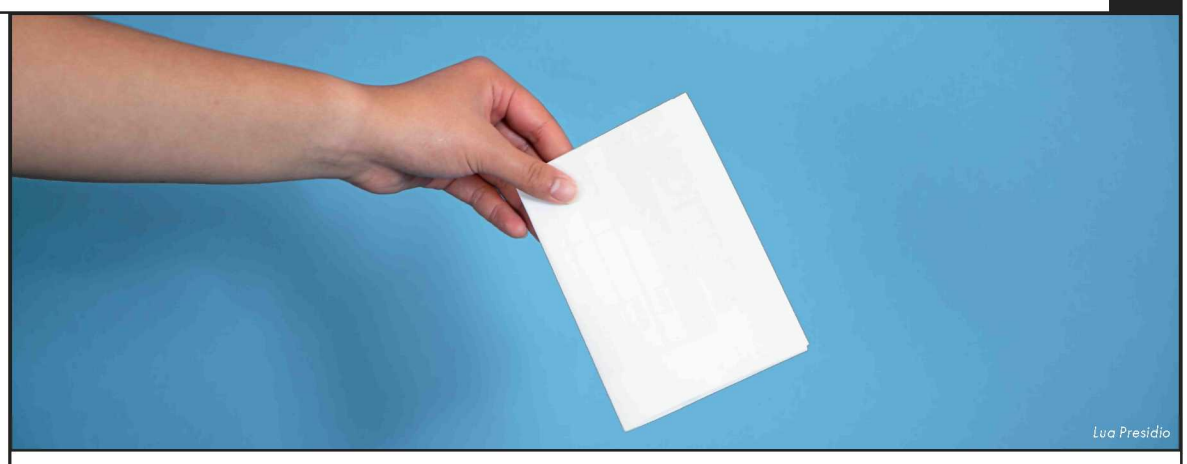


Lua Presidio

Op-ed

# This provincial election isn't normal. That's why you should vote.

Charlotte Alden and Andrew Ha

This isn't your typical provincial election.

Not only did BC NDP leader John Horgan call the election in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic — this election is taking place against a backdrop of systemic inequalities that the virus has laid bare.

As university students, those who make up the next government impact us directly.

The province has always been intertwined with UBC and its governance. The university's funding comes in large part from the province. In the 2019/20 fiscal year, the university received $657 million in provincial government grants, making up around 30 per cent of its total operating revenue of more than $2 billion.

That gives the government a considerable amount of control over UBC and as a result, your university experience.

And especially in this election, who's in government matters. The ruling party will have control over the future pandemic response and recovery. The pandemic has impacted us all, and while we've moved past the idea of it impacting everyone equally, how the government addresses the pandemic has the potential to impact the next years, even the next decade of life in BC.

On top of the simple pandemic response plan, this government also has the responsibility to finally address some long-standing issues in BC that the pandemic has made impossible to ignore.

Since the pandemic began, 244 people have died as a result of COVID-19. An additional 1,068 people have died between January and September from another public health emergency: the overdose crisis, which has taken more lives in these past nine months than it did in all of 2019. The government you elect will be the one to decide how to handle this crisis going forward.

Even before the pandemic, the past year has been one of activism.

Protests erupted in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en at the Unist'ot'en camp in northern BC and here on campus, making it clear that the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline finds itself at odds with the Indigenous right to self-governance.

Thousands gathered in the plaza outside the Nest as part of global climate strikes, calling for action from politicians to protect our water and land for generations to come.

UBC students joined demonstrations at the Vancouver Art Gallery downtown after the deaths of George Floyd and other Black lives at the hands of police — cases of systemic racism that society in both the United States and Canada is rooted in.

Our generation has a voice. And it's a strong one.

The next government will determine the path we take as a province to fight the overdose crisis, reconcile past and present wrongs done to Indigenous peoples, tackle the climate crisis and pursue an anti-racist future. With this election, we can influence where that path goes.

Yes, it's a pandemic. Yes, that might make it harder to vote. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't. If you want to go to the polls on election day, you can find your polling station on the Elections BC website. If you want to vote in advance, you can do so from October 15 to October 21.

Your vote matters, now more than ever.

*Want to learn more about the election? Stay tuned to @UbysseyNews on Twitter to follow our ongoing election coverage. Charlotte Alden and Andrew Ha are the news editors for* The Ubyssey.

Cover by Lua Presidio

BC politics

# Why the NDP government called an election during a pandemic

Joey He

When NDP leader John Horgan called a snap election in late September, a chorus of whys followed. Why now, during a pandemic?

With an election set for October 24, the province continues to see new daily cases of COVID-19. But Horgan said the pandemic is part of the very reason there should be an election right now.

"We can either delay that decision and create uncertainty and instability over the next 12 months, more speculation, more talk about what might be, or we can do what I believe is always the right thing and ask British Columbians what they think," he said at a September 21 press conference call.

This is the first time since the Second World War that BC is holding an election during a state of emergency. Fielding a question about whether he considered this in deciding to call an election, Horgan stressed why the province needs a stable legislature.

"We need a stable government to go step by step through the challenges as they emerge, not to be hamstrung by uncertainty about whether a bill or an initiative of government will meet the muster of a minority government."

Dr. Gerald Baier, an associate professor of political science at UBC, said the public's positive opinion of the NDP's COVID-19 response did play a role in Horgan's decision.

"There's no time like when you're high in the polls to try and get an election," he said.

His thoughts echo those of many British Columbians. Another reporter at the press conference asked whether Horgan would have called an election if the NDP was not leading in public opinion polls. Horgan said the challenges ahead were not about him or politics. He emphasized the benefits of "putting the politics behind us" and getting to work.

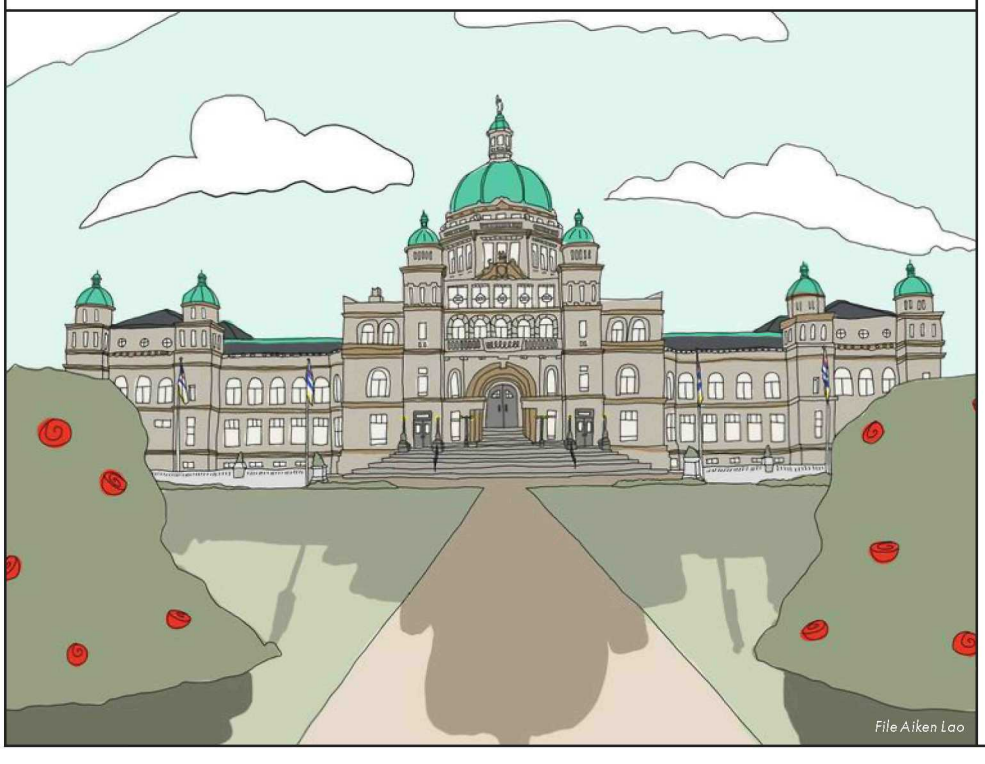
"I cannot imagine 12 more months of bickering, 12 more months of not knowing whether a bill would pass the legislature because of uncertainty in numbers," he said.

However, Baier pointed out that snap elections tend to favour those who call them, referencing the time when Jean Chrétien, former leader of the federal Liberal Party, called a surprise election in 2000. His decision paid off for the Liberals as they won 172 of the 301 seats in the House of Commons at the time.

That is not to say the opposite cannot be true. Baier noted a famous defeat in the case of David Peterson, the former Liberal premier of Ontario, who attempted to secure a majority government by calling an election in September 1990 and "failed spectacularly."

Whatever happens as a result of the election, its consequences lie on Horgan, Baier said. There is a gamble involved, and it is difficult to predict what the pandemic might look like in the coming weeks. For example, public opinion could shift if the COVID-19 crisis was to become "really, really bad in the meantime."

"This is all on John Horgan. If people don't like this election, it's because he called it, not because he was forced to call it by the circumstances of the legislature."



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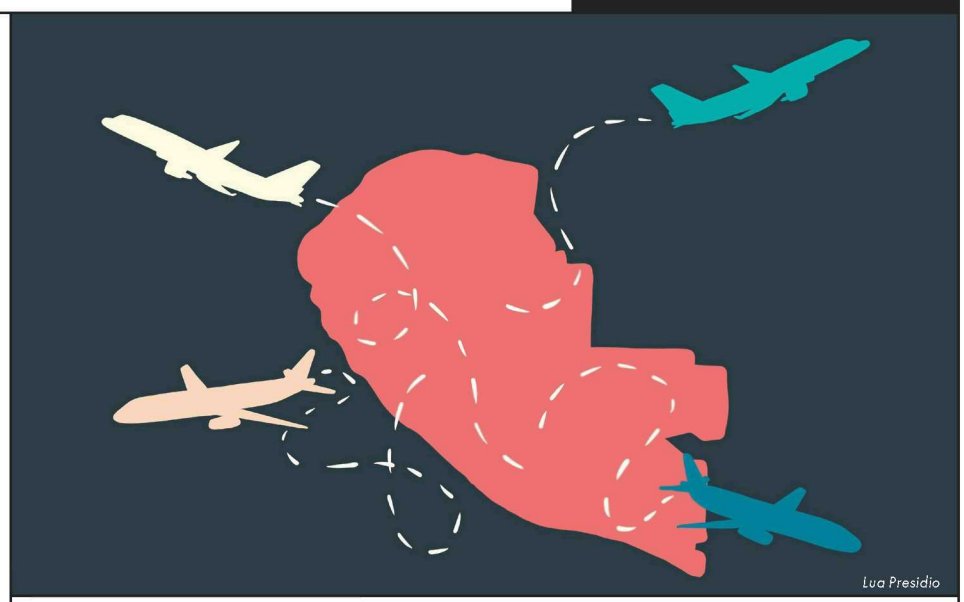


Lua Presidio

Demographics

# COVID-19 changed the world. What about Vancouver-Point Grey?

Owen Gibbs

One of the most unusual election campaigns in British Columbia's history is entering its final stretch. How have the atypical circumstances shaped the votes Vancouver-Point Grey will cast?

On October 24, British Columbians will head to the polls and decide whether to give John Horgan's NDP government another term in office or move on to either the BC Liberal Party or the Green Party.

The home riding of UBC's Vancouver campus is one that the NDP scored in the 2017 election on the back of incumbent MLA David Eby. Eby is running for re-election against BC Liberal candidate Mark Bowen and Green candidate Devyani Singh.

COVID-19 likely won't have any significant impact, according to UBC political science professor Allan Tupper. Vancouver-Point Grey is an unusual riding demographically, split between those living on the UBC campus and those living in the affluent West Kitsilano neighbourhood. Kitsilano tends to lean slightly towards the BC Liberals, and the neighbouring Vancouver-Quilchena riding elected BC Liberal leader Andrew Wilkinson by 28 per cent in the last election.

However, the UBC-associated electorate tends to heavily favour progressive parties, especially the NDP — offsetting the BC Liberal advantage in West Kits in recent elections. Elections BC advance voting data from last election shows that the votes cast at advance polling stations on campus were largely for the NDP.

COVID-19 could diminish this demographic's role. In a normal election, thousands of UBC students would be registered to vote in Vancouver-Point Grey, but many are away from campus and will either be voting in their home constituencies or not voting at all if they live out of province.

With the UBC electorate a skeleton of its normal self, could the riding swing BC Liberal? Not likely, Tupper said.

"The Liberals couldn't retain it when the candidate was premier-in-wait Christy Clark and she had to go to Kelowna," he said. "[Eby] certainly has a strong base of support. I can't see that being altered by any force at this point." In 2017, Eby won nearly 56 per cent of the total vote, as opposed to just 33 per cent for the BC Liberals and 10 per cent for the Greens.

Even with a much smaller student population, such a massive lead will be difficult for Bowen to overcome. According to Tupper, "anything can happen in an election but this is not a riding where one would anticipate the Liberals or Green Party winning."

All this to say that this election is the NDP's to lose in Point Grey, but COVID-19 may be the biggest factor in whether that happens. With the pandemic still ongoing, the NDP will be judged on its response to the pandemic.

Early on, BC managed to flatten the curve quickly compared to other provinces. Despite a recent uptick in cases, government officials, especially Horgan and Health Minister Adrian Dix, garnered praise for allowing Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry to lead the province's response, which many credit for its effectiveness.

"Citizens seem to be not impressed, but satisfied with the government's response," Tupper said.

However, the spike in cases could cause the government's hold on the situation to slip away, which could severely affect the NDP's support from British Columbians.

As election day approaches, if there is to be a change in MLA for this riding, the tide will have to turn quickly.

NDP

# David Eby

Lalaine Alindogan

Incumbent and NDP candidate David Eby is seeking re-election in Vancouver-Point Grey with a focus on strengthening student voices, childcare and ensuring money in real estate markets is coming from legitimate sources.

First elected in 2013, Eby has been BC's attorney general since 2017. He is also responsible for gambling policy, liquor policy and ICBC.

"I've tried to deliver in Point Grey," said Eby. "So whether that was concerns about money laundering, real estate or tax evasion, affordable housing, concerns from UBC students about affordable transit — to deliver those messages and actually have some progress to report back on those is very satisfying."

Housing is an ongoing concern for Eby, something that he often brought up during the debate with Green candidate Devyani Singh. While Singh blasted Eby for his climate policy, his political experience showed as he defended himself during the face off.

"Cleaning up our housing market and making sure that families aren't forced into the situation of competing with people who are evading taxes or criminals is really important to me," he said.

At the debate, he refused to support defunding the police, instead saying he would support "increasing police resources" to fight money laundering.

Eby said he wants to listen to UBC students, especially on issues of SkyTrain to UBC, on-campus housing and financial support.

According to Eby, the NDP has various COVID-19-related initiatives that directly impact students, including a $1.5-billion economic recovery plan. NDP leader John Horgan also pledged to expand access grants for post-secondary students.

"We know that students were disproportionately impacted by layoffs," Eby said, adding that supporting students financially during their studies is one of his top goals.

Eby also highlighted the climate crisis and BC's relationship with Indigenous peoples as common student concerns. He said he recognizes the need to "pull our fair share of the weight in terms of reducing carbon pollution internationally."

"The future of our economy is a green, sustainable future," Eby said. "We need to invest in the industries and technologies that are going to help us get there. And we also need to do so in a way that is just and fair in our relationships with Indigenous people in the province."

But the NDP government has been criticized for its environmental policies. A 2019 report from Environmental Defence Canada said that the NDP gave $830 million to the oil and gas industries in subsidies during the 2017/18 fiscal year.

Students have also held several protests at Eby's office against Coastal GasLink pipeline construction over the last year. In January 2020, 25 demonstrators from various UBC activist groups occupied his Kitsilano office, and a few weeks later, students once again occupied his office to push for action against the pipeline.

Demonstrators made a number of demands posted outside his office and online to Eby as attorney general. In a statement to *The Ubyssey* at the time, Eby said his primary concerns centred on the safety of his staff and public documents stored in the office.

The NDP government was met with further criticism over its response to the Wet'suwet'en protests, with John Horgan refusing to meet with hereditary chiefs at the time.

But Eby said that the NDP has "made wonderful progress" in many Indigenous communities and has been advancing treaty discussions that have been "stalled for many years."

Eby said he has worked hard over his terms to show up at community events and be open to his constituents.

"It's critically important to me to be present in the community — to know what the issues are, hearing people's concerns and bringing the concerns forward." U

Green

# Devyani Singh

Alan Phuong

Green Party candidate Devyani Singh is attempting to defeat two-term NDP incumbent David Eby in Vancouver-Point Grey on a climate-centric platform.

Having completed a PhD from the UBC Faculty of Forestry on energy and climate policy, she said "she couldn't take the back seat anymore."

"As a frustrated scientist who just could not sit back and see our planet being destroyed, it was time for me to get into politics," Singh said. "... I decided to run as a concerned citizen, as a climate scientist, as a person of colour, immigrant woman and Queer — these voices have often been ignored in government."

While Singh's platform covers support for working families, affordable housing and greater health care coverage, her primary focus is on climate action.

She criticized Eby and the NDP for not doing enough for the climate, something the two clashed on in the debate. However, her climate policy contrasted with Eby's experience as the incumbent.

"I feel Eby and his party [have] been making false promises to just placate the public to make them think they are doing something for the climate, when they have gone ahead and voted on increasing fossil fuel subsidies and spending by 79 per cent over the Liberals," a figure *The Ubyssey* could not verify.

According to a 2019 report from Environmental Defence Canada, the NDP government gave $830 million in subsidies to the oil and gas industries.

In contrast, Singh said that the first thing she would do if elected is eliminate the fossil fuel subsidy. Singh was most likely referring to BC's Deep-Well Royalty Program, which is responsible for a major portion of fossil fuel subsidies. The BC Liberals created the program in 2003 while in power, providing royalty credits when producers drill deep wells.

However, Singh recognized that Eby supported the 20 per cent speculation tax and addressed money laundering in the province as attorney general.

Singh said she was ready to collaborate across party lines.

"I think that what we need as a government is working together — supporting ideas that are great across parties, and then raising issues where you don't think the ideas are great."

On student issues, Singh said she has the perspective of being a UBC student. She spoke on the difficulty of finding student housing on campus, saying she struggled with housing affordability and availability while finishing her PhD as an international student.

"A lot of us undergrads and graduate students, we end up living in Point Grey … Kitsilano. And it is expensive," Singh said. "I know. I was spending 80 per cent of my stipend on housing."

She stressed the need for more affordable housing on campus, and spoke about the Green Party's merit-based approach to supporting renters. The approach would give renters who spend larger percentages of their income on rent more support than renters who spend a smaller amount.

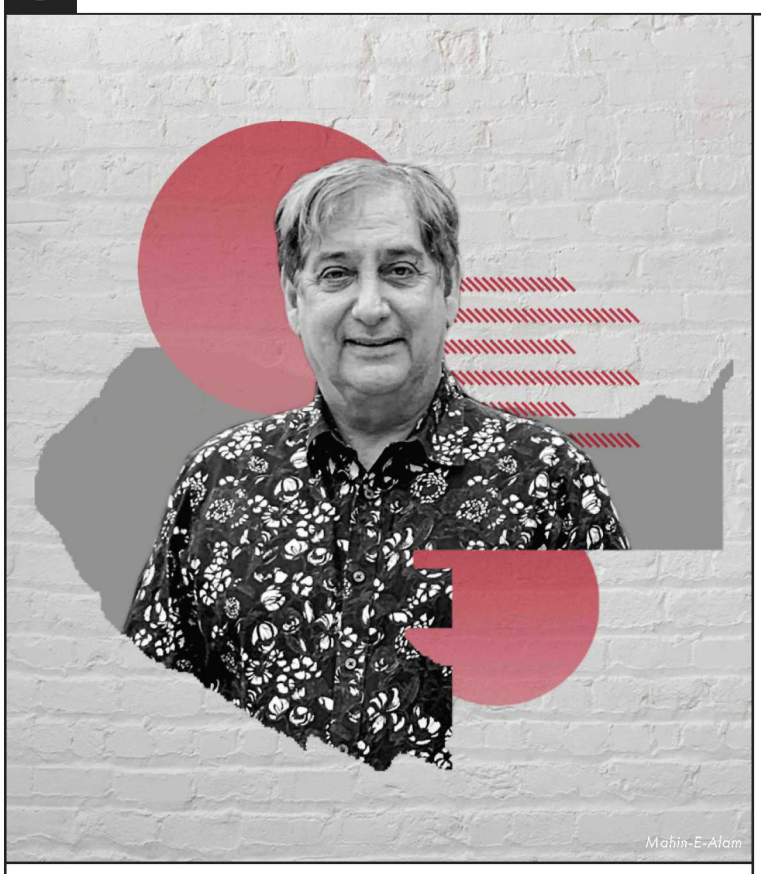
Asked whether she would support a universal basic income, Singh vouched for providing supplemental money to low-income earners under an income threshold. This would ensure all BC residents earn above a minimum income level, rather than a standard amount being distributed to every BC resident regardless of income.

On mental health, she supported the Green Party's platform of expanding mental health coverage under the provincial Medical Services Plan.

"Anybody who's gone to counselling for depression or other mental health issues that a lot of students, undergrads, graduate students ... face while we are in a university in an academic environment [knows] we need longer care," said Singh.

A major theme of Singh's campaign is the need to "listen to experts."

"Instead of placating some corporation or some sect of a population, we need to believe in evidence-based decision making," she said. "And that's why I'm running: to bring more science and justice into government." U




BC Liberal

# Mark Bowen

Priya Bhat

Mark Bowen feels our communities have become "increasingly unsafe" under incumbent David Eby and the NDP government's leadership.

The Vancouver-Point Grey BC Liberal Party candidate has centred "safe communities" in his campaign, assuring voters that a Liberal government in the province will prioritize safety and crack down on the criminal activity and open drug dealing that he claims have risen in BC.

The candidate did not provide an interview to *The Ubyssey* after multiple requests.

Bowen was the president of two national magazine publishing companies — Bowen Communications and Broadbased Marketing Inc. According to his LinkedIn profile, he spent the last two years volunteering on four political campaigns and said he wants to bring back a government that is fair and balanced.

Earlier this month, Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart introduced a $30-million housing action plan to support rapid housing around Strathcona Park where nearby residents say they have seen a spike in property crime after the tent camp grew.

But Bowen thinks the city should be doing more than increasing housing, he said in a tweet.

"I believe a pathway to recovery is about more than just housing people," tweeted Bowen after city councillors passed the plan.

A BC Liberal Party platform post from 2019 promises a pathway to recovery for people struggling with mental illnesses and addiction. However, it does not mention any specific action plan to address these issues.

In terms of a COVID-19 recovery plan, the BC Liberals included a safe return to schools, reopening regionally based small businesses and eliminating the two per cent small business tax among other promises in their platform.

"Now, more than ever, we need a clear economic recovery plan to jumpstart our economy and bring prosperity back to BC," Bowen said on the BC Liberals website.

The BC Liberals platform also promises action against hate crimes and racist incidents in BC.

The party has also put forward legislation to ensure transparency in pay scales for both men and women in the workplace and to end unequal pay. However, the party recently came under fire after a video went viral on Twitter which showcased BC Liberal candidate Jane Thornthwaite making sexist comments against NDP candidate Bowinn Ma.

Other candidates, the media and the public widely criticized the video, specifically how BC Liberal Party leader Andrew Wilkinson laughed along in the video. Wilkinson and Thornthwaite later issued apologies.

Bowen did not provide an interview, and therefore could not answer questions on how he would work to address sexism and racism within the party.

In a candidates debate organized by the AMS and Graduate Student Society on October 14, David Eby criticized the BC Liberals' plan to eliminate the speculation tax the NDP government introduced in 2018. The tax was implemented as a surcharge on houses and apartments left vacant for more than six months of the year in certain taxable regions of BC, including Metro Vancouver, to discourage housing speculation.

Bowen did not attend the debate, citing other commitments.

The BC Liberal Party, if elected, has promised a "complete overhaul of property taxation." It plans to scrap the provincial sales tax for a year and later reintroduce it at three per cent, as compared to the province's current rate of seven per cent.

The party wants to introduce a new capital gains tax on condo presales, which is a "tax on people who flip paper condo contracts before the building is even going up," said Wilkinson at an event in False Creek, as reported by the *Vancouver Sun*.

Bowen has also focused on rising car insurance costs in the province, a figure corroborated by a *Province* report showing that BC drivers pay up to 42 per cent more for their car insurance compared to Alberta drivers.

He supports privatizing ICBC and introducing competition to deliver more affordable rates for BC drivers.

"ICBC needs real reform not cheap election stunts," he tweeted. 𝔲

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Lua Presidio

10 years left

# BC climate platforms, explained

Myla White

Vancouverites awoke to some of the worst-rated air quality on the planet in mid-September. Carried in by southerly winds, smoke from wildfires devastating the west coast of the United States during week after week of record-breaking temperatures caused the quality of the city's air to plunge overnight and blocked out the following Saturday's morning sky.

The climate crisis poses a specific threat to the rich biodiversity within British Columbia — the province has been found to be at great risk to severe wildfire seasons, ocean acidification and glacier loss. With the climate crisis being one of the four major issues British Columbians are concerned about this provincial election, *The Ubyssey* summarized each major party's key climate platform points in an effort to assist your decision on October 24.

## BC NDP

In 2018, the NDP launched CleanBC, a climate plan outlining how the government will achieve the province's 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target by 2030, based on 2007 levels. The party's 2020 platform largely mirrors the CleanBC plan.

In early October, NDP leader John Horgan announced that a re-elected New Democrat government would pass legislation mandating that BC achieves net-zero emissions by 2050.

"Meeting this ambitious target of net-zero emissions will help us create good jobs through the recovery while we reduce air pollution," said Horgan in the announcement.

CleanBC predominantly focuses on clean and renewable energy, with a major tenet on zero-emission forms of transportation. The plan aims for every new car sold in BC to be a zero-emission vehicle by 2040 and currently offers up to $8,000 in rebates for those purchasing a new electric or hybrid vehicle.

The NDP's platform expands on this, offering an income-based incentive model on both new and used electric vehicles. If re-elected, the NDP would expand right-to-charge legislation that would put more electric vehicle charging infrastructure into apartment buildings, as well as remove PST on e-bikes.

Other CleanBC policies include providing rebates for home energy retrofits, assisting remote communities in reducing their dependence on diesel and developing a framework for carbon capture and storage.

The NDP has committed to reviewing old-growth forest protection standards. This September, the party banned the logging of almost 353,000 hectares of at-risk and old-growth forests.

Other platform points include pushing for BC to get fair rates on the bulk sale of water and banning single-use plastics.

While some aspects of the NDP's climate policy have garnered praise from climate strategists — including amending the Climate Change Accountability Act so the government communicates with British Columbians on its climate change initiatives yearly and becoming the first province to enshrine the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in law — critics argue that emissions targets without action constitutes greenwashing.

Within a year and a half of becoming premier after the 2017 election, Horgan oversaw enabling legislation for a massive, $40-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in northern BC. Before 2017, the NDP slammed the then-majority BC Liberal government's work on the Pacific Northwest LNG project.

"Even with the lowest-emitting LNG terminal in the world, emissions from oil and gas production and liquefaction [at the LNG Canada project] would exceed the CleanBC target in 2050 by 160 per cent, even if all other parts of BC's economy reduced emissions to zero by 2035," reads a July report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives think tank.

In other words, the LNG project emissions are completely incompatible with BC reaching any of the carbon targets the NDP have set.

During his tenure, Horgan has backed the Site C dam project, which would power LNG and other fracking projects. Environmental advocacy groups have also criticized the BC NDP for subsidizing $830 million in fossil fuel production and consumption between 2017/18. However, Horgan stated during the BC leaders' debate that

he would consider cancelling the Site C dam project "if the science tells us and the economics tells us it's the wrong way to proceed."

### BC GREEN PARTY

The BC Green Party platform promises to invest in communities so they're more sustainable and resistant to future shocks stemming from the climate crisis. Many of its platform objectives focus on an economic recovery based on developing a green and sustainable economy during and after COVID-19.

If elected, the Green Party promises to work with local governments "to drive development of more walkable neighbourhoods, complete communities, and healthy community design" — including funding bike lanes and community spaces, investing in public transit expansions between cities, diversifying farming in BC to make agriculture more climate resilient and building public electric vehicle charging infrastructure along highways.

The Greens are proposing a $1-billion strategic investment fund for business innovation, with particular emphasis on innovations that assist in shifting to a zero-carbon economy. They would also establish a $500-million sustainable job fund and implement a just transition program to guarantee oil and gas workers a job in a green economy.

They have committed to BC becoming carbon neutral by 2045 and have set interim targets to ensure the government stays on track.

The party would immediately reinstate the scheduled carbon tax increase that the BC NDP paused during the COVID-19 pandemic and end all oil and gas subsidies, while directing those funds to the aforementioned investments. The Greens remain opposed to LNG projects.

BC Green Party leader Sonia Furstenau has criticized the NDP's promise of net-zero emissions by 2050, claiming the promise is baseless without a clear plan for achieving it.

"CleanBC only gets us 75 per cent of the way to our 2030 targets," said Furstenau in a media release from the beginning of October. "We hoped to be in the Legislature this fall to hold them to account to close this gap. Instead, Mr. Horgan forced an unnecessary election and is out on the campaign trail making more promises that he has no plan to actually keep."

However, while the Green Party's climate plan is ambitious, many of its points lack the specificity needed to judge just how feasible its promises are. For example, when discussing the long-term losses facing public transportation infrastructure such as TransLink and BC Ferries due to COVID-19, its platform simply states it will be "dealt with."

Other platform points may clash with immediate COVID-19 recovery and long-term sustainability.

The ethical removal of fossil fuel subsidies is much more complex than it may initially sound. Research has shown removing fossil fuel subsidies can slightly slow the growth of carbon dioxide emissions in oil-exporting countries such as Canada. But this would also increase the cost of fossil fuels, placing these fuels out of reach to low-income people before affordable, clean energy is more widely available.

### BC LIBERAL PARTY

Leader Andrew Wilkinson's BC Liberals frame their climate approach as one that establishes BC as a global leader in the clean energy economy while blasting the NDP–Green coalition's approach to climate policy.

Some specifics of their platform include working with the federal government to utilize research in carbon capture as a clean energy solution, encouraging the retrofitting of homes and businesses and prioritizing energy efficiency while developing the provincial building code.

The BC Liberal platform outlines fish and wildlife protections, stating that the BC Liberals will implement wetland protection for no net loss of wetlands in BC. They'll also work to control invasive species populations in BC ecosystems and use hunting and other wildlife fees to fund wildlife enhancement efforts.

If elected, the party promises to reduce the impact of climate-related disasters such as wildfires and floods, but does not specify how. The BC Liberal party supports LNG and Site C and pledges to get the controversial Trans Mountain pipeline built.

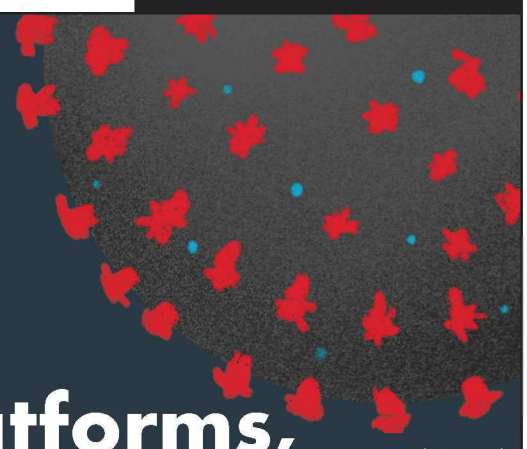
The BC Liberal plan suffers from many of the criticisms of hypocrisy the NDP plan faces — it's in favour of "expediting" the extractive projects most responsible for contributing to the climate crisis in the province, including LNG projects, and it hints at slowing carbon tax increases.

"The BC Liberals' plan to expedite liquefied natural gas development is concerning, especially without a commitment to meet climate targets and establish sector-specific targets to reduce carbon pollution," said Karen Tam Wu, BC director of the Pembina Institute in a media release.

"There is no wiggle room in BC's carbon budget for any new projects, such as new LNG plants, that increase BC's carbon pollution."

While the parties' climate platforms may seem dense and overwhelming, many of us belong to the generations that will be most impacted by the consequences of environmental degradation.

This election will decide who sets climate policy for the next four years out of what scientists say are the ten we have left to prevent irreversible damage from the climate crisis. ❦



File Lua Presidio

Pandemic

# BC COVID-19 response platforms, explained

Myla White

In early March this year, the NDP announced the BC Restart Plan, the province's phased set of guidelines for mitigating the impacts of COVID-19. So far, the NDP government has been helming the province's pandemic response, but the upcoming election has led each of the major parties to establish its own COVID-19 plan that they feel best aligns with the values of the province.

British Columbians consider the COVID-19 response to be their top issue when deciding who to vote for this upcoming election.

Currently, BC is in phase 3 of the Restart Plan. This phase's precautions include keeping your social bubble limited to those in your household and a few others, isolating when you're sick, keeping two metres from those outside of your bubble and establishing your own threat model if you or someone you're close with is at greater risk of experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19.

This phase has reopened K–12 in-person classes with restrictions, limited all gatherings to a maximum of 50 people at a time and while it originally reopened nightclubs and banquet halls, the government has since ordered them to close due to their high transmission rates.

In March, the NDP also put the COVID-19 Action Plan into effect. The party's platform for the 2020 election, for the most part, expands on what the action plan has already put into place. Over the course of the past eight months, the NDP government invested over $8 billion in services that included a $1,000 emergency benefit for workers, temporary rent relief and a doubling of the climate action tax credit.

If re-elected, the NDP promises to provide a one-time BC Recovery Benefit of $1,000 to families with household incomes under $125,000 annually and $500 to single people earning less than $62,000 annually. It would also freeze rents until the end of 2021 and provide free COVID-19 vaccines to all British Columbians when the vaccine is available.

### ECONOMIC RECOVERY

This September, the NDP enacted the BC Economic Recovery Plan to help individuals, businesses and communities recover from the impacts of COVID-19. The plan includes hiring 7,000 front-line healthcare workers and investing in short-term training for those who want to move into currently high-demand fields such as human-service positions.

The recovery plan would also introduce business recovery grants for approximately 15,000 businesses, a temporary 100 per cent PST rebate on certain machinery and equipment and invest $19-million to assist small communities support their tourism infrastructure.

While NDP leader John Horgan stated that the late roll-out for the economic plan was to ensure the NDP "got it right," BC Liberal Party leader Andrew Wilkinson criticized the delayed response during the BC leaders' debate.

"Every other province in Canada rolled out their emergency relief package in June or July," said Wilkinson. "You dragged it out until three days before the election because you thought it would serve your interests."

The BC Liberal Party's COVID-19 response platform promises action within the first 60 days of taking office. This ranges from implementing a new economic response plan and launching an independent investigation into the province's COVID-19 response within long-term care and assisted living homes.

The BC Liberals also promise to establish a fair tax commission to immediately review all provincial taxes and recommend which should be adjusted or eliminated to "most effectively fuel economic recovery."

One of the most controversial pillars of the BC Liberals' economic response is their plan to scrap the current seven per cent PST for a year, before lowering it to three per cent until the economy has recovered. This is projected to deduct $10 billion from provincial coffers.

"After 3.5 years in opposition, the best idea the BC Liberals can come up with is a sweeping, antiquated tax cut. This shows an astounding lack of imagination," said BC Green Party leader Sonia Furstenau in a media release shortly after the promise was announced.

"During their 16 years in government the BC Liberals made countless cuts to vital social services that people rely on everyday," she said. "We have seen how service cuts simply create more costly social and economic problems. We need to invest in our people and in our future."

The Greens' platform takes a holistic approach, with almost the entirety of the platform marketed as part of their COVID-19 response. The party combines elements of its pandemic and climate crisis responses into investments for building sustainable, liveable communities.

Some of their platform points include support for small business rent payments through the winter, a new grant to assist renters and ending the privatization of long-term seniors' care. Their economic recovery plan nestles their climate response plan at its centre, promising $1.5 billion in support for business innovation and sustainable jobs, and the implementation of a just transition program for workers in oil and gas toward more sustainable jobs in a clean economy.

"The pandemic has closed our social networks and cancelled our travel plans. People are using outdoor spaces as one of the only areas where we can socialize while adhering to social distancing guidelines," said Furstenau in a media release.

"As we recover from COVID-19, we need to think about how we can build stronger communities." ❦

> **"People don't want people to die, but at the same time, people are still dying."**
>
> **Sarah Blyth**
> founder of the Overdose Prevention Society in *The Tyee*

State of emergency

# Overdose crisis platforms, explained

Bailey Martens

With the rise of COVID-19, British Columbia has been fighting two public health emergencies. This has left the province trying to protect the public against the deadly virus and the growing overdose crisis.

BC declared a public health emergency in response to the overdose crisis in 2016. Since then, more than 6,000 people have died as a result of the overdose crisis making it the leading cause of unnatural death since 2015.

According to the BC Coroners Service, August once again trumped previous monthly records with 147 — 4.7 a day — suspected drug overdoses. August saw a 71 per cent increase in overdose related deaths in comparison to the year prior.

UBC is not immune from the reality of the overdose crisis. There is little data on drug usage among the UBC community but advocate Sara Fudjack said the problem persists.

"There's a huge gap in services for students in recovery at UBC," Fudjack told *The Ubyssey*.

UBC's recovery community, the first of its kind at any Canadian university, started in 2019 after Fudjack was looking for support and discovered a similar model in the States. There are 138 student-led recovery communities across the United States.

"I broadened the scope to what's going on in the province and then what's going on across Canada and really discovered that there are no student recovery communities in all of Canada," Fudjack.

It is not just UBC that is struggling. The provincial plan is not working.

"People don't want people to die, but at the same time, people are still dying," Sarah Blyth, founder of the Overdose Prevention Society, told *The Tyee*. "We just need to make sure it's a priority in the election."

## BC NDP

The BC NDP hopes to "scale up" its overdose crisis efforts with increased prevention, harm reduction efforts and a push for decriminalization.

Its platform promises to "crack down on the toxic drug supply." It claims it is looking to "free up" police to focus on serious crimes like those who sell drugs.

In terms of medical options, the BC NDP hopes to create more safe prescription alternatives. In March, the party greenlit a safe supply program for those at risk of experiencing COVID-19 and an overdose.

The program has since expanded, allowing any registered nurses to prescribe non-tainted drugs.

Advocates say a safe supply should be a priority but have not been happy with the implementation, which has had delays, thus far.

The NDP is also in favour of decriminalization of simple possession of personal use amounts of illicit drugs. It claims it will work with local police to put pressure on the federal government or create a BC-specific plan.

A 2019 report from Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry urged the province to create its own regulations that stop the police from upholding jailable offences for personal amounts of drugs. The provincial government rejected Henry's push by putting the responsibility on the federal government.

As a part of a proposed 10-year Pathway to Hope mental health plan, the NDP promises to create more beds for treatment. Dr. Perry Kendall, BC's former provincial health officer who declared the overdose public health emergency in April 2016, said that more beds is not enough.

He told *The Tyee* that the current approach to handling the crisis is fragmented — it's either harm reduction or abstinence instead of a holistic middle-ground approach.

The NDP is also calling on WorkSafeBC to provide better and more timely care to those with chronic pain as a result of workplace injuries.

## BC LIBERAL PARTY

If it is elected, the BC Liberal Party promises to address the cause of addiction and prevent harm by increasing the number of treatment and recovery programs. The BC Liberals platform claims this is in opposition to the NDP who is "warehousing people with addictions." According to the NDP platform, this is an inaccurate reflection of its promises.

The BC Liberals support a safe supply but are also pushing to help get people off drugs altogether. In 2016 it was BC Liberal Health Minister Terry Lake who implemented overdose prevention sites. This time around, they are pushing for greater mental health services in public schools, specifically noting psychiatric nurses and support for abstinence-based programs.

They also target young people through the creation of a Safe Care Act which would "safely and ethically" help them access treatment.

The BC Liberals hope that they can level the treatment playing field by ending the funding "discrimination that continues to disqualify abstinence-based treatment programs."

Advocates warn against this approach. Leslie McBain, co-founder of Moms Stop the Harm, told CBC that while abstinence-based treatment programs may help some, it is not the vast majority.

"Every single person who is addicted to a substance and wants to have treatment, wants to recover; their path is as individual as they are," she said.

When people use while at an abstinence-based treatment program, they risk being kicked out.

"That's what's happening at virtually all facilities in BC. That's not helping people and it's setting them up for a fatal overdose," former addictions treatment nurse Byron Wood told CBC.

They are also looking to create a prescription monitoring system to aid in early intervention. In 2016, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC implemented a similar program. According to Pain BC, this sparked outrage from chronic pain patients who claimed their ability to obtain their medication was hindered. The program also did little to combat the crisis as overdose related deaths continued to climb.

## BC GREEN PARTY

In its 2020 platform the Green Party has committed to support harm reduction efforts, increasing a safe supply and decriminalizing drug possession.

The Green Party's platform is the only one to specifically mention community consultation, which it addresses in regards to safe supply and accessibility such as dispensing machines. Its platform also promises to encourage participation in existing programs within the colleges of physicians and pharmacists to increase a safe supply.

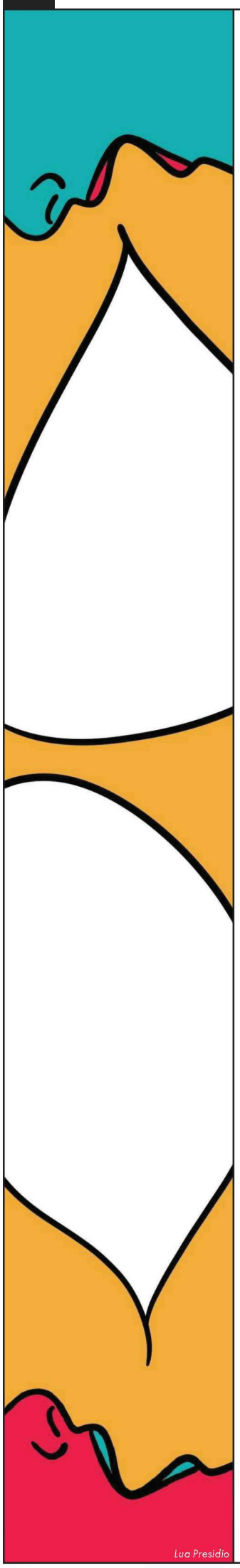
The Greens are the only party to specifically mention the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and the overdose crisis, which has caused an uptick in overdoses in part due to isolation forcing people to use alone.

Sonia Furstenau, leader of the party, told *The Tyee* that the overdose crisis needs the same urgency that the coronavirus disease has been met with. She said that all parties need to work together to reach this common goal as they are with COVID-19.

The party aims for decriminalization on a provincial level and the deprioritization of policing in accordance with Dr. Henry's proposed amendments to the Police Act.

Advocates say the bottom line is that decriminalization and greater harm reduction efforts are what will save lives.

The BC Centre for Substance Use's Dr. Carson McPherson told *The Ubyssey* that "the reality is for someone who is no longer alive because we don't have harm reduction approaches available to them, we can never find that person recovering." U



Lua Presidio

Recap

# Eby and Singh duel over defunding police, climate, housing at Vancouver-Point Grey debate

Paloma Green

Green candidate Devyani Singh and NDP incumbent David Eby faced off at a Zoom debate for Vancouver-Point Grey on October 14.

At the AMS and Graduate Student Society-hosted debate, candidates discussed climate issues, housing and food accessibility along with the current overdose crisis and defunding the police.

BC Liberal candidate Mark Bowen declined to participate due to other commitments.

Singh, a climate scientist, blasted Eby and the NDP for their handling of climate issues, while Eby, a lawyer turned MLA, showed his political experience as he defended the NDP's actions throughout the debate.

## 'I SUPPORT INCREASED POLICE RESOURCES,' EBY SAYS

One of the most riveting moments of the debate came near the end when Eby refused to support defunding the police, unlike his opponent.

"I support increased police resources," he said of his plan to increase police resources around anti-money laundering. Recognizing that as attorney general he can't direct the police to ignore drug laws, Eby said that combating money laundering is the best legal route for fighting the overdose crisis. The NDP has said that money laundering is tied to fentanyl trafficking and launched inquiries in February.

Eby added that he supports increasing mental health resources — and both candidates agreed that police should not be responsible for mental health and that there should be other social services in place.

Singh responded by affirming support to redirect police funding to social services, saying that policing should change to serve the people. "As a person of colour, I am privy to the disproportional impact it does have on marginalized communities," she said, although adding that she can't imagine how much worse it is for Indigenous and Black communities.

Earlier in the debate, Eby had acknowledged how his privilege could lead to gaps in his knowledge, as he illustrated with an anecdote about his time working as a lawyer in the Downtown Eastside.

"I learned really quickly. I had no idea what people needed, what their realities were. That my idea of help for people might make their realities significantly worse," said Eby.

## CANDIDATES COME HOME TO CLIMATE AND HOUSING

Both candidates had key talking points and often brought the discussion back to them, making the majority of the debate focused on the climate and housing.

Singh slammed Eby over the Site C dam, a contentious environmental issue in this election, and Coastal GasLink pipeline construction, which drew the NDP criticism for its response to protests supporting Indigenous sovereignty. Singh often brought up Site C when given the chance.

Eby blamed the Site C project on the BC Liberals and said he personally doesn't support it because he doesn't like it — however, he acknowledged that it provided clean energy. Singh said the NDP didn't do enough to stop its construction.

In response to criticism of the NDP's relationship with Indigenous communities, Eby mentioned his party's Indigenous members and projects supporting Indigenous peoples. "A lot of my work has been with Indigenous people who have lived off reserve and I have built relationships with friends on the Musqueam reserve," he said.

Both candidates agreed that the government should consult Indigenous communities and help Indigenous communities become financially secure. Eby cited the NDP gaming fund as to how the NDP will continue to support Indigenous peoples. In October 2019, the NDP government began providing Indigenous peoples seven per cent of the BC Lottery Corporation's income.

Another hot topic of the debate was affordability for students, especially around housing. Both candidates recognized that many UBC students face housing insecurity, with Singh speaking to her financial hardships as a graduate student at the university.

Again agreeing, both said their parties support investments for building housing around UBC. Eby said he would continue working with the AMS to protect students living in residence who aren't covered under the BC Residential Tenancy Act. Singh said the local government should look into funding housing co-ops for students, especially those who live off campus — a 2020 AMS survey puts this number at around two thirds of UBC students.

## PIPELINE SPARKS TENSION

Eby did not hesitate to point out that the BC Liberal Party has opposing views on many of these issues, mentioning on several occasions that Bowen was absent — something he said was "disappointing."

Singh said that an energy revolution is coming. She argued for creating jobs in clean energy to make BC a leader in clean energy and to protect residents from being "left behind" in the revolution.

The housing crisis in Vancouver was of great importance to Eby, who said having good welfare infrastructure in place is the best way to move forward on many issues affecting housing security.

Again butting heads on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, Singh criticized the NDP for not doing a provincial assessment of the project, to which Eby said the NDP had fought the project in court, albeit unsuccessfully.

"You had an opportunity to call for a BC-based environmental assessment, which the NDP totally ignored," Singh said.

Eby responded: "Dr. Singh, I'll respect your climate advice if you respect my legal advice."

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Humour

# Three winners and two losers of the Vancouver-Point Grey debate

Sam Smart

On Wednesday, the AMS and the Graduate Student Society hosted a debate between the candidates for MLA running in UBC's riding, Vancouver-Point Grey. Moderated by our coordinating editor, Pawan Minhas, the night was full of talk between NDP incumbent David Eby and Green candidate Devyani Singh about the environment, policing and housing. The BC Liberal candidate Mark Bowen was absent.

But instead of taking a partisan approach to determining the winners and losers of this debate, I'm going to focus on the *real* winners and losers of this debate.

**WINNER: AMBIENCE**

Singh had very nice plants behind her and a bicycle as well, setting a very cool and green backdrop for her end of the debate. Eby's background featured the sun shining so hard through his window he had to move the camera, which revealed a microwave that later went off. Very good vibes from both candidates' respective debate rooms. Also, moderator Pawan Minhas was using a virtual background of *The Ubyssey*'s office, which is always nice to think about when we're all stuck at home.

**LOSER: MY ATTENTION SPAN**

I cannot stress how many times I spaced out staring at the screen and forgot what the topic was. I guess this is life now?

**WINNER: AGREEING ON THINGS**

Both candidates in attendance agreed on a whole lot. Oftentimes it felt like during the open debate period they used that time to say extremely similar things about their platforms.

**LOSER: THE ZOOM Q&A FEATURE**

I only saw one person publicly ask a question in that feature, and it was about where Mark Bowen was. People sometimes asked questions in the general chat, which is not what the chat is for. The lonely Q&A feature went neglected despite numerous reminders to the chat from *Ubyssey* news editor Andrew Ha and that makes me sad.

**WINNER: THE 'FUTURE VOTER' IN THE BACKGROUND OF DAVID EBY'S AUDIO**

There was the voice of a child yelling in the background whenever Eby spoke, and he referred to them as a "future voter." I wanna hear what this kid has to say!

Lua Presidio

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utown.ubc.ca/communitygrants

# Your COVID-19 Financial Health: Fall Semester Check-in for Students

Balancing books, life and a budget has never been an easy feat in the best of times, but managing it all in the midst of a global pandemic means that even the most organized among us are feeling a little overwhelmed and a lot off-kilter nowadays.

Indeed, as you settle into one of the most unusual school years, it's completely normal for you to be experiencing stress or anxiety – especially when it comes to finances.

"So much has changed in the last six months, and many students at UBC are understandably having a hard time getting settled or planning ahead financially," comments Kendra Coleman, RBC On-Campus Advisor at UBC. "However, with a few weeks under your belt, you may be starting to get a clearer picture of your financial situation for the school year ahead. Checking in with your financial needs now is a great way to feel more in control of your money, and to make sure you stay on track this year."

As the first half of the semester comes to a close, ask yourself these three questions for a quick financial check-up:

## 1. How healthy are my credit habits?

Credit can be a great financial tool to manage your cash flow and to tap into benefits such as rewards, but in an uncertain year, it may become tempting to stretch your budget by leveraging credit in unhealthy ways. As you begin to settle into a financial routine for the year ahead, it's a good idea to check in with yourself and ensure your credit habits remain under control.

Ask yourself: are you paying your credit card bill off in full, and on time, at the end of your billing cycle? Does your monthly balance fall under 35% of your total limit? If you find that you're struggling to meet these conditions, you may want to think about methods to manage your credit use, such as limiting your number of monthly credit transactions, or using your credit card only for major purchases only and cash or debit for the rest.

Your credit history can impact many aspects of your life down the road. Making sure you have healthy credit habits now as a student will only help to prevent costly mistakes and make your life easier later on!

## 2. Are there easy ways to save time and money?

As a cash-strapped student, one of the smartest things you can do is to make sure your money works for you. Whether you're shelling out on everyday purchases or even on rent, rewards programs can ensure that you're getting some of your money back in the form of points or rewards – meaning that you get the most out of every dollar you spend. Likewise, don't forget that time is money, too! Look for solutions to help you streamline your daily life – such as speeding up your job search with Prepped, which offers free career resources and a personalized program to help you land your dream gig. Your time is so valuable, and by tapping into the right tools, you can make sure every minute counts!

## 3. Are your financial tools working hard for you?

Seems basic but making sure you have the right bank accounts set up for your specific needs is more important than ever this year. Especially if you're living away for the first time or are an international student, the last thing you need is the stress of being far from home while undergoing a financial hiccup!

As physical distancing requirements may place pressure on your access to basic services, ensuring that your financial institution offers secure, online banking services will be increasingly critical for keeping connected to your finances. For students coming from abroad, you may also want to look closely at the timing and type of your study permit, as these can potentially impact your access to credit or influence the accounts that work best for you.

If you're unfamiliar or feeling confused by the various types of credit cards or bank accounts available, feel free to reach out to an advisor at RBC or another bank. They're happy to walk you through your options, to help you select the right account or service, and to ensure you're always connected to the banking solutions you need.

Remember: when it comes to finances (or otherwise), this isn't the year to be perfect, and it's okay to feel overwhelmed! But by starting out strong and checking in with yourself early, you can ensure you stay on track through the new school year ahead.

To connect with an RBC advisor for support or advice, please visit rbc.com/oncampus or drop by your On-Campus branch!

RBC®

BC's provincial election is fast approaching with the general voting day on October 24. Here's your guide on

# how to vote during the pandemic.

## CAN I VOTE?

*Eligibility requirements*

- Canadian citizen
- 18 years of age or older on October 24
- BC resident for the past six months

## HOW DO I VOTE?

There are three options for voting: **advance voting**, **voting on election day** and **voting by mail**.

### Advance voting

**October 15 to October 21 —**
You can vote in the Nest or off campus at a voting station near you. Voting stations will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
You can also vote at a district electoral office until 4 p.m. on Saturday, October 24.

### General voting day

**October 24 —**
Voting will take place at an on-campus voting station in the AMS Nest from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m, or you can vote at an off-campus voting station.

Students are able to vote in either their home riding or the electoral district of Vancouver-Point Grey where UBC Vancouver is located.

To vote in person, you will need a **valid ID with your name and home address.**

If you register to vote online before general voting day, you will get a card in the mail explaining where to vote. Bring it with you to speed up your voting process. If you did not register online, you can register at the voting station when you go to vote.

To reduce the risk of COVID-19, you may bring your own pen to mark your ballot and wear a mask. Elections BC encourages all voters to wear a mask and election workers won't ask voters to remove their masks when voting.

Not comfortable going to vote in person this year? Don't worry, you can **vote by mail.**

### Vote by mail

Elections BC recommends **requesting your vote-by-mail package before October 17** — after that date, voters will have to visit a district electoral office.

Once your package arrives, you'll need to provide the following:

- **Name**
- **Date of birth**
- **Address**
- **Identification number**—*one of the following: BC driver's licence number, BC ID number, the last six digits of your social insurance number* **or** *the last six digits of your personal health number.*

If you requested your ballot **before October 2**, you will receive a ***write-in ballot***. Write in the name of the candidate you're casting a vote for or the political party the candidate is from. If you requested **after October 2**, you will receive a ***regular checkbox ballot***.

**Elections BC must receive your completed package by 8 p.m. on Saturday, October 24.**

## SERVICES FOR AT-RISK VOTERS & VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

Elections BC said on its website that it's "committed to a safe and accessible election for all voters." Election officials are available to help with the voting process and provide services for voters with disabilities and underlying health conditions. Aside from voting by mail, these services include:

- **Translators**
- **Voting by telephone**
- **Assistance marking a ballot**
- **Resources for blind or sight-impaired folks**
- **Making voting places wheelchair accessible**

## WHAT ARE THE SAFETY PROTOCOLS?

In addition to releasing a COVID-19 voting places plan, Elections BC has announced it will take the following precautions:

- **Physical distancing**
- **Capacity limits**
- **Election officials wearing personal protective equipment** (*such as masks and face visors*)
- **Protective barriers**
- **Hand sanitizing stations**
- **Frequent cleaning of voting stations and frequently touched spaces**
- **Election workers trained on safe workplace guidelines and pandemic protocols**

If you're sick or self-isolating, stay home. Instead, request a vote-by-mail package.

Words by **Guneet Pooni**
Design by **Bernice Favis**