

Additional Questions for Candidates 2024

From the Mission Regional Chamber of Commerce All Candidates Forum

*The questions were sent to both candidates; however Reann Gasper for the Abbotsford-Mission Conservatives chose not to respond.

1. British Columbia is a beautiful province that attracts visitors from near and far. In 2022, tourism generated \$18 billion in revenue and contributed \$7.2 billion to our GDP, surpassing all resource industries combined. With 92% of tourism businesses being small, it plays a crucial role in our local economies. How will you make sure our natural environment supports small businesses and tourism initiatives in BC?

Pam: The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture works closely with the other ministries to ensure the needs of the sector are part of the discussions and policy shifts that will be beneficial. We absolutely see the economic advantages to communities that tourism provides.

2. Do you feel, by decreasing the amount of immigrants we allow, we will be able to afford housing better? Do you think they're part of the reason for high rent?

Pam: There are a number of reasons that rents have increased. Last year BC saw 10,000 people come to the province from across the country and from outside of Canada every 37 days. We need a greater supply to accommodate the growth and that's why we have been so focused on housing and increasing housing availability. Our measures are working, Rents are coming down in Surrey and Vancouver. Immigration is a federal issue.

3. Do you believe that vaccines are effective?

Pam: Yes I do.

4. What is your position on evidence-based management of fish and wildlife resources in BC, and will your government support increasing funding for these Resources? (The person who asked this question also asked for a response to this report but acknowledged that it may be too in depth for this format) New Socially Engineered Hunting Regulations Announced by Province | B.C. Wildlife Federation (bcwf.bc.ca)

Pam: The protection of fish and wildlife is absolutely a priority in British Columbia. We work alongside our federal counterparts to ensure that we manage the protection effectively.

5. What steps are you going to take to increase the amount of public transportation that we have?

Pam: Transit in Mission was not a priority in the past, so we are behind in service offerings. But we are catching up! The municipality and the province work closely together to determine new routes and areas that need service. We also need service to connect to neighbouring communities. Recent data shows that ridership has really increased over the last year. That puts us in a better position to expand service areas which I will be advocating for!

6. What will your government do to protect and increase reproductive rights for

Women?

Pam: We will protect and increase reproductive rights by reducing barriers many women encounter. By increasing the scope of practise for midwives for example, we can create better access for women especially in rural settings.

7. What are your thoughts on a woman's right to choose on her reproductive rights. will you support legislation to regulate or protect that choice?

Pam: I believe women have the right to choose. I will defend this vehemently.

8. Do you support banning the installation of fossil gas systems for heating, cooling & hot water in all new construction?

Pam: The use of natural gas is being phased out to allow for systems that are electrical. The emphasis on the use of electricity will ultimately see a reduction in emissions meaning we will be healthier as a result.

9. What is the FUTURE plan to support small businesses in adapting to the current economic challenges, ie inflation and labor shortages?

Pam: Recently we announced an ease of doing business review that will identify and review barriers leading to more success for small businesses. In addition we are going to establish an industrial land reserve which will help with price stability. Ongoing investment in programs like Innovate BC will help businesses purchase new equipment that save on labour.

10. Some feel that Mission-Matsqui is often overlooked in the Lower-Mainland. If the needs of this riding are ever at odds with the party's policy, how will you advocate for those needs?

Pam: I am constantly advocating for my community and have several opportunities to do this both at caucus and at the cabinet table.

11. Cross-partisan collaboration is important to democracy. In your view, what is one thing that the other party is doing particularly well?

Pam: I agree that collaboration is important. During my time in the legislature, I worked closely with my colleagues across the aisle, like Sonia Furstenau and Mike De Jong, finding the common ground perspectives we shared and fostering a culture of decorum. The one thing my BC Conservatives colleagues did fairly well, was stand behind their beliefs, no matter how extreme those views sometimes were.

12. The proportion of budget on renewable resource management has reduced to less than 2%. Is your party committed to a funding increase for wildlife Management?

Pam: Our province is home to Canada's richest, most complex and diverse ecosystems. David Eby and the BC NDP will move BC closer to our goal of protecting 30% of provincial lands by 2030 to preserve habitats species-at-risk rely on. This is the single strongest step we can take in our fight against biodiversity loss and is a critical part of our climate action plan.

We'll also move forward with a made-in-BC strategy to protect BC's biodiversity and

ecological integrity - working with First Nations, communities, workers, industry, organizations, and the public.

John Rustad and the BC Conservatives have made it clear that they feel there is too much conservation in BC - they would reverse our progress and put old growth, at-risk species, and biodiversity at risk. Rustad is a risk we can't afford.

13. Does your party support engaging with the BCWF to drive evidence-based management of BC fish/wildlife resources?

Pam: In the face of challenges like climate change, David Eby and the BC NDP will take action to conserve habitat and strengthen supports for fish and wildlife. The BC NDP is committed to continuing to work with the BC Wildlife Federation on their members' priorities.

John Rustad and the BC Conservatives have been clear that they think protecting lands, waters, forests and wildlife is "nonsense." They would reverse our progress and put critical wildlife at-risk.

We need to make sure that we take care of our lands, waters, forests and wildlife in ways that support a healthy environment, people's enjoyment of our remarkable outdoors, recreation opportunities and strong local economies today and for the long term. We have seen the impacts of short-term thinking – at-risk wildlife, poisoned water, and contaminated sites. These impacts don't just cost the public money to clean up and rehabilitate, they threaten the ability of entire communities to thrive and succeed.

To do this work, the BC NDP will work together with local communities, First Nations, advocacy organizations like the BC Wildlife Federation, industry, and the public. Decisions will be based on science, expertise and engagement as well as First Nations' knowledge.

14. Is addressing the decline in BC's credit rating a priority for you and your party?

Pam: A BC is the only province in Canada with a triple A credit rating.

BC is growing faster than ever, and we will build the schools, transit, roads, housing and hospitals people need. John Rustad would cut and cancel projects, making it harder to hire, move goods, and retain workers. Despite having some of the strongest private-sector job creation in the country over the last year, people and businesses are struggling and need support. We will drive investment, grow the economy, and return to balance over time.

Our investments in people are paying off as our economy is one of the strongest in the country

15. Does your party have plans to make changes to the BC Land Act?

Pam: In February, Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, met with 650 representatives of stakeholder groups representing tens of thousands of British Columbians, from mining, forestry, oil and gas and clean energy, cattle ranchers, to adventure tourism operators, snowmobilers, hunters and anglers, and many others.

Throughout these conversations, the vast majority have told us they want reconciliation to work and they want to be partners in this work to create opportunity for First Nations, businesses and all communities through working together.

We need to take the time to further engage with people and demonstrate the real benefits of shared decision-making in action. We want to get this right and move forward together. For that reason, the BC NDP government decided not to proceed with proposed amendments to the Land Act.

16. Would you commit to supporting the creation of a non-profit, publicly-owned entity to install heat pumps in all buildings in BC, with home-owner cost based on Income?

Pam: David Eby and the BC NDP will continue to provide support for low- and middle income households so that fuel-switching and energy-saving upgrades are more affordable, including better windows, doors, lights and insulation. We are now seeing more heat pumps being installed in BC than natural gas furnaces for the first time ever. Our new CleanBC BetterHomes Energy Savings Program provides rebate amounts of up to \$24,000 - meaning that income-qualified households may be eligible to receive a free heat pump.

We can't let John Rustad's Conservatives undo all of the progress that we've made.

David Eby and the BC NDP have also committed to the bulk purchase of heat pumps, and will pass the savings on to you to help you lower your heating bill and make your home energy efficient.

17. Would you support banning deceptive, misleading fossil fuel advertising?

Pam: We expect all advertisers to tell the truth, and there are federal advertising standards responsible for enforcing this.

18. Looking at the many aging facilities in our community of Mission, will you advocate for sustainable funding to upgrade community facilities to have inclusive and equitable access?

Pam: Aging infrastructure is an issue everywhere in BC. Last year government gave money to individual municipalities to upgrade infrastructure, build recreational centres and support other initiatives that were needed as a result of increased populations. In Mission we did just that. More work needs to be done however to keep up with the growing need and I will be advocating for this on the community's behalf. We have been successful in receiving funding for the completion of the new sewer pipe, additional water infrastructure, and other upgrades in transportation, and education for example.

19. How will you support community-led solutions to address droughts and floods in our region?

Pam: Flood mitigation needs a multi government, including First Nations, approach. I am and always will be an advocate for increased infrastructure. Collaboration is the key.

20. Does your party plan to implement tolls on bridges?

Pam: No. The BC NDP eliminated bridge tolls, and I like to remind my constituents that Rustad called that decision "a huge slap in the face." And now several of his candidates have doubled down to defend tolls.

21. All ALR landowners are entitled to a 50% property tax exemption, does your party plan to limit the ALR's boundaries? How will you ease the burden on Farmers?

Pam: The tax structure on ALR land is going to be reviewed. We must increase food production to reflect our growing population.

22. Do you have a plan to improve efficiencies in Building Permits and Bylaws to avoid major delays in getting Building Permits?

Pam: The province has set expectations for municipalities to improve wait times for permits etc. which will ensure one standard across the board.

23. What is your party's plan to reduce the provincial debt? If cuts are involved, what services would be cut?

Pam: There's no question that governments across Canada have had their debt costs impacted by high national interest rates. I'm glad to see interest rates easing and hope there is more to come. Even during these high national interest rates, BC has continued to have one of the lowest debt-to-GDP rates in the country.

BC is an economic and fiscal leader among provinces - and we're going to keep it that way. Building our province and supporting people to build good lives here, will only make our economy stronger.

The BC NDP will not make cuts to the services people need. John Rustad will make cuts to services and increase fees. People can't afford that.

24. What is your party's stance on the clean bc plan?

Pam: CleanBC is one of the most ambitious climate plans on the continent - and it's working to reduce emissions.

We worked closely with the Green Party to develop our comprehensive climate plan:

- Passed the Climate Change Accountability Act - to legally require government accountability on emission reduction targets.
- Bringing in an emissions cap for the oil and gas industry.
- Creating good jobs and building a clean economy by supporting new opportunities in clean energy and technology.
- Rebates for heat pumps, electric vehicles, and home efficiency upgrades.

And it's working - we've got the strongest economy in Canada and emissions in B.C. are down despite our growing population

25. What is your position on increasing transportation options for those with disabilities, ie. transit, Handy Dart, taxi saver program?

Pam: Getting people in BC where they need to go, quickly and easily, is a key priority within our NDP platform. It will help us meet our climate goals and will allow people to spend less time in traffic.

If elected, a BC NDP government would connect our communities through expanded rapid transit options and make it more affordable for people to take public transit. The people within this province are diverse, and the way we get from A to B is diverse, too. For those who need to drive, we'll take care of core infrastructure to reduce road congestion, and we'll improve active

transportation for people that can't or don't drive, for whatever reason. Ensuring that universal design principles are incorporated into transit planning has been identified as a key government priority in response to the Accessible BC Act, and this is something we're keen to explore for upcoming transit projects.

As part of our platform, we've also determined that HandyDART will be government operated, which will ensure that when issues arise, government can take action to resolve them and prevent further issues in the future.

26. What changes will be made to development applications to ensure environment/jobs are protected once the project is over? ie: mills/gravel pits closing, etc.

Pam: Development applications already include closure procedure and failure to follow result in hefty penalties.

27. Many developments being built in Mission are luxury or investment properties, potentially unsuitable for families. How will you help make Mission family-Friendly?

Pam: Mission was known as the home of the single-family dwelling but over the last few years the focus has been on building more multi family density to respond to the need. Our Government knows this and is focused on making it easier to increase housing for our growing population. David Eby's Housing Action Plan will create 300,000 more middle-class homes in the next decade.

John Rustad will scrap the BC NDP Housing Action Plan, a plan that is making real progress in tackling the housing crisis.

28. Mission's Transit Oriented Area (TOA) is not like any other along the West Coast Express line, is your party willing to advocate for parking infrastructure in Downtown Mission? Why or why not?

Pam: TOA's are a way to increase density where there are transit options. The downtown core of Mission, will overtime, appeal to those who want services that are within walking or transit distances. The TOA's are setting us up for the future...

29. How will you work alongside school boards to advocate for the many needs for all students in each community?

Pam: Ensuring that our schools are safe for all children is a major priority for our government. This means ensuring that we are meeting minimum seismic safety standards to ensure kids are safe in the event of an earthquake. It also means ensuring that all of our new schools are built to maximize accessibility for kids and staff with a diverse array of accessibility challenges.

Making sure that every child feels welcome and part of the school community is also a vitally important part of accessibility, and a big priority for us. Part of this work includes ensuring that children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives and unique needs are welcomed into the school community as full participants in school life.

We hear from students, educators, parents, and school districts every day. We know there's more work to do and we're up for the challenge

By preventing bullying, by ensuring that hateful protesters are kept at a distance from our schools and our kids, and by underlining the importance of creating a welcoming school

environment, our school trustees and the provincial government can ensure that every child is valued and welcome.

Since 2017, we have more than doubled funding to school districts, helping kids who need additional support to meet their full potential. With the largest school food program in the province's history, we're ensuring that students are well-fed and ready to learn. And, for families who need extra help, we're taking action to cover the costs of school supplies and class trips, as well as sports and music programs.

In addition, we have launched K-12 literacy screening and learning supports, helping all students, especially those with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, get the support they need to achieve their best. We know there's more work to be done here – and we're ready to do it.

Our commitment to school accessibility and inclusivity stands in stark contrast to that of our opponents. Disturbingly, John Rustad's BC Conservatives are promising to establish a school textbook censorship committee if elected. This represents a huge risk to the progress we've made in ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for every student in BC's public school system.

30. Will your party ensure the BC Watershed Security Fund gets investment to ensure communities have needed resources to plan and prepare for another water crisis?

Pam: All BC NDP candidates stand united in recognizing how vital the health of our watersheds is to the well-being of ecosystems in our province. John Rustad's Conservatives have a track record of rejecting science, selling off public lands to the highest bidder, and failing to keep wealthy and powerful interests accountable for environmental destruction. This is a risk we simply cannot afford.

The upcoming election offers a stark choice to British Columbians: we can accept the divisive, backwards path offered by John Rustad, or we can choose to move forward – together – in partnership with the BC NDP.

If elected, I look forward to working alongside the Watershed Security Coalition and other stakeholders to continue advancing meaningful progress on ecological stewardship as your MLA.

31. What is your plan to make affordable and inclusive housing a reality for people with disabilities?

Pam: The delivery of suitable and secure housing for people with disabilities is a priority area for us. When our NDP government passed the Accessible BC Act, BC Housing was selected as a pilot organization to respond to the Act and report back on progress. Early measures were completed with the understanding that engagement work would continue.

We intend to increase the supply of suitable housing by using the BC Building Code, which will require all new housing units to be adaptable, starting spring of 2025. At least 5% of homes built through provincial funding must be fully wheelchair accessible. All common amenity spaces must also be fully wheelchair accessible. The BC NDP platform includes further funding for non-market housing, and we're in the process of determining how this funding will be used. Finally, we're working to improve housing for people with disabilities that live with a

caregiver. The BC NDP will improve homeshare rates through Community Living BC. This also opens up opportunities for more people with disabilities to stay with their loved ones

32. Will you commit to a review of the accessibility act? What is your position on making more spaces accessible in accordance with the act?

Pam: If elected, we would continue to work on implementing the Accessible BC Act with the guidance of people with lived experience and organizations that support people with disabilities in the community.

The BC NDP will also continue to work with people with disabilities to implement the first two standards - Accessible Service Delivery and Employment Accessibility - which will remove barriers for people with disabilities to access services and goods, and to prevent barriers in hiring, training and retention.

All relevant organizations must uphold their obligations under the Accessibility Act, which does not permit organizations to hold off on implementation until they receive a specialized pool of funding. At the same time, a BC NDP government would work through the Directorate to ensure that organizations are resourced to meet expectations across the board – including equitable and accessible services for disabled British Columbians.

33. Will you commit to sign the BC Watershed Security Coalition's Watershed Security Pledge to show support for protecting healthy watersheds here and across BC?

Pam: I have signed the Watershed Security pledge.

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I thank them for raising the critical issue of protecting the health of BC's watersheds. This is an important moment for British Columbia, and many within BC are thinking about the future of our lands and waters.

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