

## **Alternatives North Federal Election Questionnaire**

### **Roland Laufer (Green Party) Replies**

#### **QUESTION 1**

Background: Emergency mobilizations require social cohesion, but inequality undermines such collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic has further lifted the veil on the inequities in our society.

Question: How do you propose to tackle the climate crisis and these inequities at the same time? One required element of doing so is referred to as Just Transition – what is the role of the federal government in ensuring no one is left behind in the grand decarbonization transition before us?

The Climate Crisis coupled with the housing and water crisis in our communities have highlighted the inequalities that exist in our society which we too often refuse to address. We have known about this housing situation for decades yet it has been allowed to spiral out of control right across this country making housing something that is available to the few and not the many who need it. Why did this imbalance occur in the first place? Who let the prices get so out of reach of the average Canadian and certainly those in need and the young. They cannot even consider having homes.

This summer we had floods hit the lower part of the territories and then COVID which attacked people in the NWT and also in Nunavut where housing is also in such a serious state of crisis in the communities. People too often and for too long have lived in overcrowded accommodations where the virus was allowed to spread like wildfire. No one was safe. Why is that? This is, after all, their land.

Because of these two events alone, many people were and are displaced because there is absolutely nowhere for them to go. And the building efforts in the NWT to replace those homes destroyed by the floods has yet to begin. And did you know that in the north, people in the communities too often have to choose between keeping their housing or going to a larger center such as Fort Smith or Yellowknife to pursue higher education. Why is that? Why should they have to choose between status quo or improving the quality of their lives? This is not the people creating this, it is because their needs, year after year, continue to go unnoticed and they are largely ignored. Further, we know that people in many communities here do not have clean drinking water yet has been done to address that? Why is this happening to people who own the land and struggle so hard to survive? Year after year they are frozen out of their homes and have to move in with family because they cannot get basic repairs done. The people in Yellowknife did not suffer these same kind of imbalances and also had the health services to help them through their greatest time of need. People in the communities have none of this.

This government has been good with its words and its visits yet still little has been done by either the federal or territorial governments to correct these problems. Even though helping people who are at the fabric of our society should be a priority, it is mostly in the larger centers where essential needs are addressed. I believe that this may even call for a review of how funding is administered to the territories and that the money being funneled here is channeled to those who need -- not the Yellowknife safety net. The events of this summer alone proved that this needs to be done.

## **QUESTION 2**

Background: The path forward has to be one of true cooperation and partnership, and one that honours and respects Indigenous title and rights. We need a path forward that seeks to make right the injustices of the past and fundamentally breaks with the colonial practices that have marked so much of our politics and economic development for centuries.

Question: What are you hearing from Indigenous communities about the climate crisis? How can you and the federal government walk a path forward on climate that respects and honours Indigenous title and rights?

People in the communities have been saying for many years as well that there are serious changes on the land and in the waters. They have said the wildlife is disappearing and land along the waterfront is being swept away. They have stated clearly that some natural food sources are disappearing and are often miles ahead of us on what is happening and what will happen but we do not listen. It is one of the sad state of our colonial past that we think we have all the knowledge and all the answers but over and over again, they are the ones that tell us what is happening. They have lived in close rhythmic cycle with the land and animals for centuries yet we are veritable newcomers to this place. How could we think the cursory knowledge we have supersedes what is in their genes?

Let's not forget this land, like their children were stolen from them and we know some of the consequences. We must work hand in hand with the elders and at regular round-table meetings with the chiefs to plan a way forward. We do have some answers for them – we do. We can talk about sustainable gardens, innovative ways of meeting their basic needs and at the same time, we can listen to them when they say what they want and need to preserve their own cultural identity. We may think the colonial way forward is somehow superior, but that is in the mind of the colonialist only. They have a wealth of natural knowledge that we know little about. They are the true navigators of this land, just like they are the true owners and it is contingent upon us to listen. Our goal needs to be moving toward returning this land to them...that is what proper and honest reconciliation is about.

## **QUESTION 3**

Background: During the COVID-19 pandemic, our governments committed to spending what it takes to ensure the safety of our citizens. According to climate and economy experts, we need to spend 2% of our GDP on climate action and green infrastructure

and another 2% on just transition and social infrastructure to ensure no one is left behind. That would be about \$80 billion annually.

Question: Given the urgency of the climate emergency, are you prepared to spend what it takes to contribute to the global effort to avoid the worst of the climate crisis?

We have no choice but to spend whatever it takes to get the climate crisis under control. Further, we need to spawn a whole new innovative industry that can help us navigate these difficult times if we hope to survive. This is no longer a choice but a necessity. COVID is merely a symptom of the catastrophe yet to come...a first wave if you will. What are we doing right now to deal with what lies ahead? What heating sources work here and cause the least amount of harm to the environment? Do we really need massive infrastructure if it threatens the health of the environment and the animals which it will inevitably do. Is bigger necessarily better and who says that?

We are on the brink...if we have not learned that lesson yet then we are not as smart as we think we are. And if we are going to pull through, we must all get on the same page.

We are all for a government that is not afraid to take on big business and even the general public to encourage and even enforce them to new standards that will help us in this battle. No more single use plastic. Let's deal with recycling properly. What products must we ban? Tim Horton and McDonalds coffee cup lids? We will. We are not afraid. If we work at tackling the low hanging fruit such as that, we might quickly mitigate the need to spend 80 billion a year on a climate change strategy. And while we are at it...how are we educating the young? Are we teaching them the truth at school about the dilemma we are in and are we educating them on how to reduce their footprint on this earth? Are we encouraging planting of more trees, healing over farmed soils and reducing and even eliminating factory farming.

So much of the work we need to do to alleviate this crisis is in education and working hard to do whatever it takes to get people on the same page. Mass public education is one move in a direction that must happen overnight – not 10 years from now—NOW.

#### **QUESTION 4**

Background: During World War Two, in order to meet the military production and social needs of its population, Canada created 28 new crown corporations. Within two years, Canada increased manufacturing of aircraft 25 fold. Before the war, shipbuilders numbered only 2000, at the end of the war, there were 30,000 shipbuilders.

Question: Given the scaling up that is necessary to combat the climate crisis, how can the federal government create new institutions to get the job done, or leverage existing institutions?

We believe that so much of the work that needs to be done is not just about playing strong arm with businesses who refuse to comply with tough environmental regulations

and standards, but also working hard within the communities to help the public understand the critical nature of this crisis. Yes, they will be concerned about jobs but the economy is one we have created and can be recreated to meet this challenge.

In Alberta during the final days of the fossil fuel industry, workers there were crying to be retrained in energy efficient technologies. This was not done. If that would have gone ahead, and that is only one example, we could have a workforce that is working for the good of the planet and our continued existence instead of living in survival mode.

We need to take a long hard look at our educational models to see that they are giving a true picture of the times in which we live. We are at war. We are in a fight for our lives. We are in world war mode but the problem is, we are ignoring it or in denial.

This is far reaching but it can be done. We can make talking about and acting to slow and reverse climate change affects the norm rather than something still on the fringe even though it is killing us right now. COVID showed us that, the fires showed us that (this year was the worst on record) hurricanes showed us, floods...we are at war and we have to help people understand what part they can play to help us win the greatest battle of our lives.

#### **QUESTION 5**

Background: The pandemic has seen our governments issue health orders and take strong actions to shut down non-essential parts of the economy when needed. When it comes to the climate emergency, however, actions taken to date have been almost entirely voluntary. We encourage change. We incentivize change. We offer rebates. We send price signals. But what we have decidedly not done is require change. We need to set clear, near-term dates by which certain things will be required. For example, we should mandate that all new buildings will not be permitted to use natural gas or other fossil fuels for heating as of 2023.

Question: Are you prepared to switch from incentive-based and voluntary policies to mandatory measures to combat the climate crisis? What would those mandatory measures be?

We are totally in favor of mandated measures. Canadians are nice guys and we have allowed those who pooh pooh vaccines and masks to rule and allowing that has taken its toll. Alberta is in crisis mode as a direct result of these lax efforts to enforce measures to deal with COVID. Now they are begging the military to come in and asking medical staff from across Canada to help. No more. How many people have died because people were more concerned about their individual rights that the public good?

We are not afraid of stronger enforcement measures, we are not afraid of fines, we are not afraid of public backlash....we want to support our medical personnel and we want people to live. We will do what it takes.

## **QUESTION 6**

Background: The leaders we remember best from the Second World War were outstanding communicators and orators who walked a careful line. They were forthright about the gravity of the crisis, yet still managed to impart hope. Similarly, that's how our present governments have modelled emergency communication throughout the pandemic. We receive daily press briefings. We hear regularly from public health officials. The media has taken seriously its duty to provide the necessary information on a daily basis. Government leaders and the media have listened to science and health experts, and have acted accordingly.

Question: Are you prepared to implement emergency-level communications about the climate emergency? What does that look like for you?

Absolutely we are prepared to implement emergency-level communications about the climate crisis because we feel that public awareness and education is the key to reversing the crisis. We have not been taking the issue seriously enough because it has yet to become part of our everyday dialogue which needs to happen immediately. We need it talked about in our schools and ways to combat it. We need to talk about it at work and what we can do (reduce paper and plastic use). We need to encourage everyone to pay attention and become part of a team working toward a higher good which people generally want to do anyway. This is our way forward; bringing Canadians together to work for the good of each other. We are not afraid. We can and will do this.