

**Eat Think Vote**

**Questions for Kootenay-Columbia Federal Candidates**

1. **Given the lobbying power of industry and retail, how would you ensure that civil society organizations and interests are represented at the federal level in creating a national food policy?**

**Bill Green, Green Party Candidate:** Canada needs an innovative forward-thinking food strategy – one that promotes food security, food safety, and healthy food. We must protect the soil we depend upon. The Green Party believes strong national leadership is required to promote agricultural sustainability, energy efficiency and support farm families.

To succeed in creating a national food policy that meets these goals strong involvement from civil society is of paramount importance. This would include a broad range of non-government representatives including grassroots food security, food production, farming, poverty reduction, health promotion, food safety, animal welfare, organizations as well as citizen representatives.

To eliminate conflict of interest the Green Party will remove food and agri-business representatives from all federal food policy advisory bodies. In addition we will amend the Canadian Food Inspection Agency mandate to remove any obligation to promote Canadian agri-business, ensuring the focus is on food safety and food safety only

**Wayne Stetski, NDP Party Candidate:** The NDP has a comprehensive food strategy called ‘Everbody Eats: Our Vision for a Pan-Canadian Food Strategy’ which you can find at <http://xfer.ndp.ca/2014/food-strategy/FoodStrategy-EN-PRINT.pdf>

Ensuring that the public interest in food policy comes first would require that all parties be at the table. Canadians need to be able to trust what they eat and they expect the highest standards.

**David Wilks, Conservative Party Candidate:** As your Member of Parliament, I would put forth a recommendation to the Chair of the Health Committee that we conduct a study and that we invite industry and retail leaders to provide evidence on what they see as a road forward.  I have met with organizations that provide food hampers to the less fortunate and discussed how major food chains can cooperate on providing additional food to food banks.

**Christina Yahn, Libertarian Party Candidate**: by reducing the power of government you automatically reduce the power of large industry lobbying. Government should not have the authority to favor large business. Creation of policy to reduce or eliminate competition is an age old tactic used by industry.
When it comes to our food security for all Canadians a priority should be placed on organizations evolving around working to feed communities and especially the most vulnerable of those communities

1. **Four million Canadians experience food insecurity, including 1.5 million children. What steps will you take to reduce this number?**

**Bill Green, Green Party Candidate:** Food insecurity is largely a result of poverty. The National Council of Welfare has estimated that over 15% of Canadians are living in poverty − about 4.9 million people. In a wealthy country such as Canada, this is unacceptable. Eliminating poverty while supporting healthy communities will pay for itself in reduced health care costs, as poverty is the single largest determinant of ill health.

We can eliminate child poverty in Canada.  The Green Party will phase-in a national Guaranteed Livable Income, to ensure that no person’s income falls below what is necessary for health, life and dignity.  Through the Council of Canadian Governments we will work with the other levels of government whose inadequate poverty band-aid solutions (such as welfare, disability programs) can be rolled up in order to fund the Guaranteed Livable Income.

**Wayne Stetski, NDP Party Candidate:** To address food insecurity we must also address poverty. The NDP proposed a National Poverty Elimination Act that would create a federal plan to reduce, and eventually eliminate, poverty through coordinated policies such as investment in affordable housing, providing parents with universal, affordable and available childcare, and reforming the Employment Insurance system.

We must ensure that every child has access to healthy food, we must implement a whole-of-government approach to food security, and improve incomes and supports for working families so that they can spend more of their household budgets on healthy food.

**David Wilks, Conservative Party Candidate:** A two pronged approach must be taken:

1. Economic measures such as reducing the GST from 7% to 5%.  This has resulted in approximately $1.2 billion dollars in benefits annually to low and modest income Canadians.  Implementing increases to the basic personal amount - the amount of income that an individual can earn without paying federal personal income tax. This puts more money in the hands of Canadians.

1. $2.3 billion dollars has been invested in Social Housing.  Approximately 570,000 households benefit from social housing support through CMHC.  Having a place to call home is essential.

**Christina Yahn, Libertarian Party Candidate**: There is no legitimate reason for any number of children to go without access to healthy food, these numbers are unacceptable. I would ensure that all communities have partnerships and programs that address this issue through creation of community gardens, greenhouses, green spaces, farming education and organized charity from farms with excess to deliver to food cupboards.

1. **Does your party support undertaking a feasibility study for a basic income floor for Canadians (similar to what is in place for Canadians 65 years of age and over) so that all Canadians have enough money to buy food?**

**Bill Green, Green Party Candidate:** The Green Party has committed to work, through the Council of Canadian Governments (federal, provincial and First Nations governments) to develop and implement a Guaranteed Livable Income.  The use of a GLI could eliminate poverty and allow social services to concentrate on problems of mental health and addiction. The essential plan is to provide a regular payment to every Canadian without regard to a needs test. The level of the payment will be regionally set at a level above poverty, but at a bare subsistence level to encourage additional income generation. No surveillance or follow-up is required.

**Wayne Stetski, NDP Party Candidate:** The NDP is committed to reducing, and ultimately eliminating, poverty. And we are committed to making food security a priority throughout government.

**David Wilks, Conservative Party Candidate:** The basic income floor for an individual in Canada in 2015 is $11,327.  The government is constantly reviewing this rate.

**Christina Yahn, Libertarian Party Candidate:** the Libertarian party has already undertaken a feasibility study on a basic income and has run the numbers into our budget. There is some divide on a basic income in the party however I am a huge supporter of the concept. I think that this would help ensure security for all Canadians. Welfare recipients are punished for making money by deduction income from their cheques, this traps people into poverty. A basic income would allow for people to make money on top of the minimum income up to the tax exemption level tax free. We also want to raise the income tax exemption and give significant claims for elderly, disabled and families.

1. **Two out of three Canadian children don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables to support their health, and more than half of all healthcare spending in Canada is for the treatment of chronic disease, a good portion of which is caused by unhealthy eating. Will your party commit to support the health of our children by funding a national school food program?**

**Bill Green, Green Party Candidate:** The Green Party has made fundamental commitments in this regard.  Green Party MPs will develop a National Agricultural and Food Policy which will establish federally funded, community-guided school lunch programs across Canada to ensure that our children have daily access to healthy local food and can learn about sustainable food production and healthy eating.

To further promote the goal of healthy food for all children we will

* + Work to reduce the use of pesticides, growth hormones, antibiotics, and other chemical and pharmaceutical agents in agriculture;
	+ Promote environmentally sustainable, organic farming practices that protect the health of the land, farmers, and consumers;
	+ Institute a National Junk Food Tax for non-essential, empty calorie foods and beverages including high-fat, high-sugar, and high-salt snack foods;

**Wayne Stetski, NDP Party Candidate:** The NDP is committed to working with industry and the provinces and territories to establish a Pan-Canadian School Nutrition Program, sourced locally as much as possible, with excellent nutritional standards. We are committed to working with all levels of government to identify where healthy food is inaccessible and address the unique needs of urban and rural communities.

**David Wilks, Conservative Party Candidate:** Our government continues to increase the CHT (Canada Health Transfer.  In British Columbia the CHT is 4.4 billion dollars in 2015/16.  The Provincial Government is responsible for Health and Education within the province and oversees food programs within the school system.

**Christina Yahn, Libertarian Party Candidate:** I feel that every school should have gardens, greenhouses and indoor gardens for education as well as for food in schools. Everyday healthy organic whole foods could be harvested, prepared and served to all the children at no cost to the families. This would set children with healthy eating habits for life and bring back the knowledge of how to grow, prepare and store food as a common understanding. This is how we create future food security, with the next generation being educated. Regardless of eating habits or income levels at home each child has an equal opportunity to consume food that is nutrient rich and nourishing at school.

1. **More than half of the Canadian farming population is over 55, 80% will retire in the next decade, and ¾ of which have no one to take over the farm. What would you do, if elected, to support and encourage a new generation of farmers in Canada?**

**Bill Green, Green Party Candidate:** We believe that Canadians who want to enter into agriculture should be supported to do so. We will fund community supported agriculture, farmers’ markets, small-scale farms and producers, and the wineries and microbreweries that Canadians love.

We will shift government-supported research away from biotechnology and energy-intensive farming and towards organic and sustainable food production

The Green Party will work to:

* Provide transitional assistance for those switching to certified organic farming practices
* Reduce corporate control of the food supply
* Support local food markets
* Stop the loss of agricultural land to development
* Assist farmers in climate change adaptation

**Wayne Stetski, NDP Party Candidate:** The NDP understands the need to ease entrance barriers for new and young farmers. Those who have a desire to farm need access to the capital and land they need to gain entry to the farming sector. We need to promote best practices in incubator programs and shared risk models, and provide educational tools and support for succession planning between generations. We must support farmers with young entrant hiring, enhanced skill training and mentorship programs. And we have to review the tax code so that it supports new entrants into farming, such as through an increase in the restricted farm losses exemption.

**David Wilks, Conservative Party Candidate:** The cost of farming today is cost prohibitive for anyone new to get into and unless the farm is going to be handed down it is next to impossible to finance the purchase of a farm.  There are incentives through Farm Credit, but even at that, the cost is prohibitive. Further, let alone the borrowing costs you have start up and machinery costs as well.

**Christina Yahn, Libertarian Party Candidate**: I know that there is a powerful movement of youth who are interested in farming, beekeeping, healthy and local eating. The main issue I have seen and experienced for young farmers is access to farm land. Land is too expensive to buy and farmland is rare to rent. I would encourage partnerships and programs with older farmers to train and allow younger farmers to lease or rent farming land, open up crown lands to sustainable farming and agroforestry projects and protect the agricultural land reserve for future Canadian farmers.

1. **What would you do to ensure that local, sustainable and organic farmers get the supports they need to make a decent living without having to work a second job or take on large debts?**

**Bill Green, Green Party Candidate:** Many of our answers to this question have been provided in our answers to the first five questions.  But there is more!

The Green Party approach to Canadian agriculture policies is clear: reduce the dependence on chemical inputs, rebuild and protect natural soil fertility, value quality produce and support local economies, reduce waste and increase the number of farm families.

Carbon Fees will result in small scale organic being more competitive economically - By moving to ‘true’ or ‘full-cost’ accounting, whereby products and services are priced according to the positive or negative impacts they cause throughout their life cycle, our society can make rational market choices that will guide the economy toward environmental sustainability.

**Wayne Stetski, NDP Party Candidate:** The NDP supports the expansion of local, sustainable, organic farming. Government should provide support for the scaling up of organic productions. We must help organic producers to expand production and market opportunities, and encourage market linkages between organic food producers and specialty retailers and restaurants. And we must ensure adequate resources for organic certification and market development.

**David Wilks, Conservative Party Candidate:** In order to have a farm that is sustainable, it needs to be large enough and have access to secure markets.

**Christina Yahn, Libertarian Party Candidate**: Farming is one of the most valuable jobs in our country, yet I know very few farmers who can support themselves or families from it. This needs to change in order to ensure food security. I believe programs that assist farmers in marketing products could help to increase income, changing policy so that Farmers can bring products to market with ease and with less cost and Supporting buy local initiatives and encouraging stores to carry local produce and products.