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**GREEN PARTY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

B.C. GREENS 1991 WHAT IF WE'RE RIGHT?

GREEN PARTY PLATFORM FOR THE 1991 PROVINCIAL ELECTION

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GREEN PARTY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

B.C. GREENS 1991 WHAT IF WE'RE RIGHT?

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENS INTRODUCE ELECTION THEME

A Statement by Stuart Parker, Speaker for the Green Party

Friday, September 20th, 1991, 12:00 noon — VANCOUVER — "This province is hurtling toward an ecological crisis. Emissions of carbon dioxide and methane are contributing to global warming, causing rising sea levels, desertification and destruction of temperate rain-forest. Emissions of chlorofluorocarbons and halons are contribution to ozone layer depletion, causing rising rates of skin cancer and blindness and decreased agricultural yield. Emissions of dioxins and furans are contributing to rising rates of terminal cancer and mutation. According to Save Georgia Strait Alliance, during the first minute of this news conference, more than one million gallons of toxic effluent will pour into Georgia Strait. With extinction and depopulation of other species and rising rates cancer and other illness in humans, it is very clear that we are poisoning the planet which sustains us."

"The number one issue in this election is planetary survival. Government 'sustainable development' policies have contributed not to a curtailment of planetary destruction but to accelerating environmental decay. While mainstream parties effectively pay lip service to environmental concerns, all are committed to accelerated economic growth. If the planet cannot support the quantity of industry we have now, how can any responsible government advocate further expansion of industry? Economic growth means increasing emission of global warming gases; we cannot have our cake and eat it too. We must begin to practice restraint: not just fiscally but ecologically."

"In this election, the Green Party will advance responsible policies on all issues that address the fundamental issue of this election: survival."

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Green Concepts and Values

Sustainability

Right now, this planet is losing oxygen; it is being gradually asphyxiated. Every second, we humans are producing more carbon-dioxide than the plants of the world can cycle back into oxygen. And as we destroy forests to fuel the growth of our industrial power, we destroy our planet's capacity to absorb the pollution we produce. Modern economists and politicians term this 'economic growth' and see further industrial expansion as a measure of our economic health. Meanwhile, every second, our national debt increases more and more rapidly; we are spending money faster than we are paying off the debt we have incurred. And as we borrow more money to pay for our increased spending commitments, we increase the size of the debt we are paying. Environmentally and fiscally, we are behaving irresponsibly and fundamentally unsustainably.

As sustainable action is one that can be repeated indefinitely, without exhausting the resources that fuel that action. A sustainable community is one which consumes resources no faster than they are accumulated. Any practice that Greens consider, we test for sustainability. Greens reject unsustainable practices as they are ultimately self-destructive.

Bioregionalism

Many of those who have studied the social causes of the ecological crisis we are facing observe that humans have lost our sense of cause and effect. To more and more people, food comes from the store and garbage goes into the truck. We have so far removed ourselves from our relationship with the natural world, that we are making more and more mistakes. Ultimately, if we are to make sustainable decisions, we must relearn our interdependence with the ecosystems that support us.

'Bioregionalism' is the basis of Green Party policy. If we are to make ecologically responsible decisions, we must begin at home. We must take responsibility for the ecology of our local areas, and learn to support ourselves within the means of the regions in which we live. With the power to decide the destiny of our regions, we would have to be more careful to preserve our capacity to feed ourselves, to dispose of our own garbage, to produce our own energy. Bioregionalism is an idea; it is not something we can legislate; as humans, we must learn responsibility.

Grass Roots Democracy

The Green Party believes in the establishment of a decentralized, participatory democracy. If we wish to incorporate wisdom and leadership into our decision making, we must make decision-making accessible to as many people as possible. Greens advocate decision-making at the community level; jurisdictions now in the hands of provincial and national governments, such as forestry, health, and education must be decentralized to the community level, where decisions are made by locally elected boards and citizens' assemblies. Like responsibility, democracy begins at home.

EDUCATION DECENTRALISATION ACT

Many of the challenges our education system faces right now have been brought about by the changes of educational needs in diverse communities throughout the province. If we are to continue to serve communities within the education system effectively, we must become more versatile in responding to the differing needs of those communities. A monolithic provincially controlled education policy is not longer sufficiently dynamic to deal effectively with challenges that arise. To reform the education system, the Green Party proposes an Education Decentralisation Act. Such an act would include:

- changes to school district boundaries to better reflect watershed, community and bioregional divisions.
- transferring provincial tax base to school districts, including the right to tax industrial property, incomes, sales and carbon output
- transferring jurisdiction over core curriculum from the provincial education ministry to local school boards
- encouraging a community based second language program based upon ethnic and native communities existing within school districts
- suffrage for all students in the school system to vote in local school board elections
- establishment of the provincial education ministry as a coordination body and information clearinghouse for the purpose of cross-district information sharing

PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICES ACT

Many of the pressures placed upon the healthcare system in British Columbia are increasing rates of cancer and heart disease. While the traditional political solution is to throw money at this problem through buying more hospital equipment or expanding the hospital system, the Greens advocate a preventive approach. Rising rates of cancer and heart disease are being increasingly linked to environmental and dietary factors. Through stricter controls on the release of carcinogens into the environment and an increase in health education, the Greens believe that long term solutions to reducing the quantity of illness in society could be effected. The Greens propose a Preventive Health Services Act, which in concert with other environmental and health legislation would begin to address widespread health problems. The act would include:

- zero discharge targets for industrial release of dioxins and furans
- health and life-style programs to reduce risk of cancer and heart disease as recommended core curricula for all school districts
- establishment of regular regional testing for the presence of carcinogens in the environment
- medicare coverage for visits to chiropractic and naturopathic physicians
- stricter standards and more rigorous standards against carcinogens in food

HEALTHCARE DECENTRALISATION ACT

In many areas of the province, health problems vary by region, in their cause and manifestation. To make healthcare more responsive and accessible to local users of the system, Green propose a Healthcare Decentralisation Act. The act would include:

- establishment of healthcare districts with boundaries based upon watersheds, communities and bioregions
- local election of health boards in the same manner as school boards
- transferring tax base to local hospital boards, including the right to levy taxes on products and activities which have a negative impact on health (tobacco, pesticides, dioxins, etc.)
- transferring final authority over health projects from the provincial health ministry to local boards
- establishment of a provincial health board to set provincial direction for health services, made up of delegates from local health boards
- establishment of the provincial health ministry, under the jurisdiction of the health minister solely as an information clearinghouse

ETHICS IN AGRICULTURE ACT

As Canada has become more and more integrated into the world economy, our standards for ethical production and consumption of food have slumped. In the 1984 Ethiopian famine, Canadian food imports from Ethiopia increased, as part of our 'international aid' strategy. As the meat industry has become more internationally controlled, Canada has led the way by contributing to research on the inhumane intensive factory farming of many species and leading the way in intensive lamb farming. As our food imports have increased, local ethical producers have found themselves unable to compete with food from the third world, produced with cheap labour and abundant pesticide spraying. In the interest of our own health and the health of our planet, we must revitalize local ethical production of our food. The Greens call for:

- phase out intensive animal farming
- phase out synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- strict standards for protection of groundwater quality from food animal contamination
- regional food self-sufficiency incentive programs to encourage balanced agricultural production geared to community needs
- legislation in contravention of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade agreement to place disincentives on purchase of food produced outside of the region in which it is being consumed
- incentives for co-operative farms and regional collective bargaining for farm workers
- banning destruction of agricultural land if it jeopardizes the ability of that area to support itself agriculturally
- establishment of bioregional agricultural land commissions with final authority over agricultural land use in their area (commissions would be comprised of delegates from local government)

ATMOSPHERIC PROTECTION ACT

The spectre of global climatic change through ozone depletion and global warming threatens every lifeform in the biosphere. Rising seas, increased ultraviolet radiation and rising temperatures means that forests will die whether they are logged or not. Skin cancer rates will tax the medical system and increase rates of lethal forms of cancer. Extinction of many species, including the human race is expected if uncontrolled destruction of the planetary radiation continues

unobstructed. A Green government would enact an atmospheric protection act to ensure that British Columbia does its part in guarding against global climatic change. The act would include:

- an immediate ban on products which release ozone destroying chemicals into the atmosphere during their use or manufacture
- a licensing and monitoring system to regulate the production of greenhouse gases
- establishment of a licensing system for large producers of global warming gases with the target a 'carbon stability' for British Columbia, whereby British Columbia produced no more global warming gases than plant life within the province is capable of cycling back into oxygen
- establishment of regional carbon stability targets to phase in local control over carbon output

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY ACT

British Columbia has a history of basing its economy on the forest industry. If we are to continue to depend upon our forests to provide us with jobs, we must log sustainably. The Green Party supports an increase in jobs in the forest industry, to make up for the decimation of forest jobs in the 19080s due to mechanization. Responsible forest management strategies must be adopted by communities depending upon the forests for their economic survival; and communities must be empowered to carry out those strategies through local government. It is in the interest of logging communities to protect their means of support and Greens believe that given the chance to do so, loggers will make responsible choices to see that their children's children can log in the same watershed.

- establishment of a local forest tenure requirement whereby any corporation with forest tenure to a region would need to have over 50% of its ownership held by individuals living within that region
- establishment of local forestry boards to be comprised of either locally elected officials or delegates from local/regional governments
- incentives for local selective/horse logging of forests so as to harvest timber without destroying forest ecosystems
- a ban on chemical pesticides and fertilizers in harvesting and reforestation programs

NATIVE NATIONS EQUITY ACT

Since the arbitrary formation of Canada in 1867, by colonial powers, the legal governments of North America have not been recognized. Many of these nations are still asserting their sovereignty. In the interests of fairness and equality, we must recognize these governments and begin negotiations with them on the destiny of this continent. The B.C. Greens do not believe that we should legislate solutions for native people; rather, we must empower those people to implement solutions themselves. In government, the Greens would:

- publicly acknowledge the wrongs committed by colonial governments against native peoples as genocidal and offer financial compensation for forced internment and other offences
- enter into equal bilateral negotiations between native nations' self-chosen representatives and representatives of existing governments

GENDER EQUITY ACT

The Green Party views many of the social and ecological problems we are facing as originating from the same source: our society's ethic of patriarchal domination. One of every four women will be raped at least once in their life. As long as women are facing fear, violence and past life abuses, they will be unable to be equal participants in society. Equal influence and participation of women is a necessity for a healthy, well-balanced society. As violence against women and violence against nature share a common cause, it is crucial that we develop an egalitarian society. As well as endorsing gender equity legislation, we must make a personal commitment to change our own behaviors to address these issues. In legislation, Greens call for:

- affirmative action targets for privately, as well as publicly owned businesses
- establishment of quality childcare centres available to all parents and guardians of children
- establishment of a guaranteed income program whereby single parents have the opportunity to raise their own children with adequate economic means
- government financial support for women's centres
- full government financial support for assault and rape relief shelters
- a sexual harassment grievance process for employees
- establishment of a post secondary institute of post patriarchal studies
- an intensive feminist education program for all employees working within the education system
- full medicare coverage for abortions performed by abortion clinics
- introduction of women's studies to core curriculum in elementary and secondary education
- equal pay for work of equal value legislation
- guaranteed spaces for women's centre information in government licensed media

HOMOSEXUAL WOMEN AND MEN EQUALITY ACT

Like other oppressed groups in society, homosexual people are under constant threat of violence and other forms of oppression. Despite documentation of this, their rights have not been enshrined in legislation or in social values. The Greens would seek to change this by:

- establishing provincial legislation against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation
- refusing to recognize any constitutional settlement that does not safeguard the rights of homosexual people in the charter of rights and freedoms
- beginning the establishment of affirmative action programs for openly gay people in the public sector
- creating a provincial ministerial responsibility for the status of homosexual people
- changing education programs, particularly high school guidance curricula to reflect both heterosexual and homosexual life-styles