

Green party platform unveiled and it goes well beyond just a climate-change plan ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Anyone labouring under the misconception that Elizabeth May's Green party is obsessed with climate change and nothing else got set straight at the Fairmont Royal York on Monday.

Bursting into the room with a spring in her step and quips at the ready, the Green leader spent a full hour laying out the sheer vastness of the party's ambitions to renew Canada with people-powered change, ending on a note of deadpan understatement.

"This tells Canadians we're certainly not a one-issue party," she told, wielding the newly published 82-page Green party platform. "Unless the issue is Canada."

For months now May had been promising a fully-costed platform that would "meet or exceed" the social ambitions of the Green New Deal advanced by progressive politicians south of the border.

This is the Green party's Canadian version — a document that ticks off all the progressive boxes and then some, from free post-secondary tuition, prescription drugs, dental care, **universal child care** and affordable housing to a Guaranteed Livable Income to help Canadians adapt to a transforming job market.

Yes, the Greens still care about climate: at the heart of the party's plan is a bold science-led pledge to double the action of the governing Liberals — a 60 per-cent cut in climate-changing emissions below 2005 levels by 2030, eventually reaching "net zero" by 2050.

To strip partisan politics from the equation, the Greens promise to establish a cross-party cabinet mandated "to ensure that Canada does its part to limit global warming to a level civilization can survive, and mitigate the impacts of climate change on Canadians."

The Green plan envisions as many as 4 million jobs emerging from a national program to retrofit existing buildings and overhaul the energy grid to meet the emissions challenge. It calls for a major ramp up in renewables, with solar, wind and hydro providing 100 per cent of Canadian electricity by 2030. The party acknowledges it will take "every tool in the federal tool kit, including regulations, public spending and pollution pricing," to get there.

In outlining how to pay for it all, May announced barely a stone's throw from Bay St. a pledge to shift the corporate tax rate of 21 per cent, together with a 0.2 per cent fee on financial transactions.

Party officials had hoped to release Monday's platform with independent parliamentary analysis of the cost — but bureaucrats in Ottawa are still crunching the numbers and likely will need another week to vet the pledges.

Given the brevity of the campaign, May and her team decided to proceed anyway. But she cautioned they wouldn't have done so without "a high level of confidence" that the numbers add up.

May noted that though it ranges far and wide, the Green party's climate goals are knitted throughout the platform. Though universal child care and emissions reduction seem potentially hard to reconcile, for example, she described a typical Canadian parent in 2030, climbing aboard an electric bus with their toddler and heading together to work — with an early learning and child-care (ELCC) facility either inside the workplace or very nearby, planned to account for both the parents' convenience but also climate goals.

She cited the new federal cannabis law as another example, ridiculing regulations that require energy-intensive growth under artificial lighting, rather than allowing private citizens to use the sun. Wondering aloud how it was possible that "Ottawa could lose money selling drugs," May pledged the Greens would overhaul regulation with more sensible, climate-friendly rules.

"We want to give people hope there is a party that doesn't do old politics," she said.

Having been knocked off message in the early days of her campaign over her party's apparent willingness to tolerate the presence of Quebec sovereignists and candidates opposed to reproductive rights, May restated the Green party is constituted as a grassroots entity in which the leader does not wield top-down dictatorial power or require blind obedience on every issue — but each candidate, she said, must

fully support the essential elements of the party platform. But unlike conventional political parties, she said, Greens do not whip votes from their member.

Flanked on the stage by 16 of her fellow Green candidates, with a half-dozen others spread throughout the audience, there was a whiff of progressive populism to the scene. May emphasized that whatever else you think you know about the Green party, removing corporate influence on government is a core belief.

Those ideals, she said, apply especially to the biggest corporate disrupters of the digital age — companies like Facebook, Google and Airbnb, which she pledged to harness with regulation and taxation to help offset the costs of a platform aimed at helping those who've been disrupted.

In a question-and-answer session with reporters, May, 65, noted that with government experience going back to the 1980s and after two terms in Parliament, "I am best qualified to be Prime Minister of Canada — but I also don't think it's very likely."

Nevertheless she sees, in the polls showing Greens drawing upwards of 10 per cent support nationwide, a chance for a block of Green seats to play kingmaker in a minority government — one with a potential to be as transformative as the one that introduced universal health care to Canada in the 1960s.

She pledged to stay positive in the coming weeks and not be drawn into any direct confrontations with the rival NDP. "Overtaking the NDP isn't a goal — ensuring we have good government is our goal."

But May couldn't resist a few jabs at her front-running Conservative and Liberal competitors. Asked whether the Greens are at risk of once again hemorrhaging support to so-called "strategic voting" in the final days of this campaign, she said voters aren't choosing the lesser of two evils, "we're faced with the evil of two lessors."

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