

## Air Quality in the Comox Valley: Questions for Candidates

**Help make sure our elected representatives know clean air is important to you and your family without even leaving home!**

**PRINT this and have it ready by your door or phone for when they come knocking or calling! Or take it to an all candidates meeting!**

Below are 4 possible questions to ask, with background notes to help you talk to the candidate about the issue. You can visit [www.breathecleanair.ca](http://www.breathecleanair.ca) to learn more.

### ***What did you hear?***

*We'd love to hear about your conversations with candidates! Email us at [info@breathecleanair.ca](mailto:info@breathecleanair.ca).*

QUESTION	Background
<p><b>If elected, will you work to ensure cleaner air for the Comox Valley and other wood smoke impacted communities?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Comox Valley has some of the worst air quality in BC because of wood smoke according to a number of different studies and monitoring data.</li> <li>• Wood smoke contains harmful fine particulate matter. BC Healthlink states that "Particulate Matter (PM) is considered the air pollutant of greatest concern in BC."</li> <li>• Just like cigarette smoke, wood smoke contains fine particulates and many harmful toxins that we breathe deep into our lungs. These toxins also get into our bloodstream.</li> <li>• Wood smoke increases rates of illness and even death. The fine particulates and other toxins impact the development of infants' lungs, increase asthma rates, worsen heart and lung disease, and much more.</li> <li>• Wood smoke pollution results in higher healthcare costs both for BC as a whole and individuals who are paying for more medications and air purifiers for their homes.</li> <li>• The wood smoke here comes from wood heating, yard waste burning, and open burning from forestry and land clearing.</li> <li>• As with cigarette smoking, the province has the authority to set standards and practices that must be met in terms of residential wood burning and backyard burning. But they currently leave it up to municipalities so people in every wood smoke impacted community have to deal with it, one at a time. We need leadership at the provincial level.</li> <li>• Even under recently passed provincial regulations about wood stoves, allowable emissions from new wood stoves will still be far worse than allowable vehicle emissions. Unlike vehicles, old and new wood stoves are stay in one location and 'idle' for hours on end, right where we live.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KEY POINTS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wood smoke pollution is toxic and is known to increase rates of illness and death.</li> <li>- Wood smoke pollution is expensive for BC healthcare system and individuals</li> <li>- Black carbon in wood smoke is a known climate change forcing agent.</li> <li>- The control of cigarette smoking was an uneven municipal patchwork of protection in BC until the province standardized rules for smoking in workplaces and public spaces. We need the same approach to deal with wood smoke.</li> <li>- We need provincial leadership to protect the health of all BC citizens.</li> </ul>	

**If elected, will you and your party work to increase incentives for people to move from wood heat to cleaner sources of heat?**

**KEY POINTS:**

- More rebates and incentives are needed for clean, healthy energy options.
- Taxpayer money should not go towards installation of new wood stoves, only cleaner alternatives.

- To reduce wood smoke pollution, we need to reduce the number of wood stoves. We can do this by helping people transition to cleaner, healthier heating options like heat pumps.
- The government currently provides funding for small rebates for removing pre-1994 wood stoves and switching to a newer stove, gas or heat pumps. The program should be expanded to encourage the removal of all wood stoves (not many people have pre-1994 stoves and many stoves that were once certified do not operate efficiently).
- No public funding should be provided to people installing a wood stove. Even new stoves pollute far more than other forms of heat.
- More incentives are needed for clean heating sources, and at larger amounts than \$250. Incentives for moving from oil to heat pumps should be extended to moving away from wood as well.

**If elected, will you and your party work to ensure amendments to the *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulations (OBSCR)* are implemented?**

**KEY POINTS:**

- Proposed OBSCR amendments will help protect communities from large scale burns.
- The amendments have been delayed for years; they need to be implemented.

- The *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulations (OBSCR)* are provincial regulations which regulate burning from land clearing type activities. This includes slash burning, and developer and agricultural land clearing.
- There have been draft amendments to the regulations for *many* years. These changes would reduce the amount of time open fires can burn and also restrict burning near populated areas.
- Affected industries have resisted improvements to these regulations.
- It is time for the province to finalize these regulations to help protect the health of communities.

**If elected, will you and your party work to ensure cleaner sources of heat are affordable?**

**KEY POINTS:**

- People are more likely to move to cleaner heat source if it is reasonably priced.
- It is not a solution to simply say “people can’t afford other forms of heat”. The solution is to make sure cleaner heat sources are reasonably priced or support is available to those in need.

- Affordability is a reason many give for using wood heat; however, this does not mean we should allow people to keep polluting our common air. The answer is to find policy solutions that will help ensure the costs of cleaner heating sources are reasonable, and polluting sources are discouraged.
- BC Hydro rates are predicted to increase. An increase in rates penalizes those that heat with electricity, the cleanest and healthiest form of heat.
- As electrical rates have increased over the years, many with baseboard heat have installed wood stoves to reduce heating costs. As a result, some communities are experiencing a worsening of air quality.
- At minimum, low income people should be supported so they can afford to heat their homes with clean energy sources.
- There is carbon pricing on gas, which is a cleaner, healthier source of heat. There is currently no carbon price on wood sales yet it contributes significant amounts of black carbon to the air, a known climate forcing agent.