



CLAYTON WELWOOD

**Candidate - North Vancouver-Seymour
BC LIBERTARIAN PARTY**

Clayton has been actively involved in the Party since 2015, and ran as a candidate in North Vancouver-Seymour in 2017. He works as a project manager in the construction industry, and lives with his wife and children in his hometown of North Van. He has a BA in International Development and Anthropology from Trent University. As far as political philosophy, Clayton is a classical liberal, and takes an interest in how public services can be delivered through institutions other than the state. He's a strong advocate of political decentralization and the ability of local communities to experiment with different models of governance.

QUESTION 1. *Impacts of COVID.* The availability of rapid COVID testing is a critical issue for local business as they work to ensure a safe work environment for their staff and customers. Staff/kids are back...Businesses need their staff back at work, staff need to get back to work. Given the economic impact of uncertainty around COVID in the workplace, what would you do to address the ongoing availability of rapid COVID testing?

CW Response: The demand for COVID tests has surged because the government and media have identified case numbers as the most important metric in tracking this virus. It is not. A better metric to use would be the rate of hospitalizations or deaths, both of which are very low in BC, not increasing, and in line with those of a seasonal flu. In fact, excess mortality due to COVID was only detectable during March and April. Furthermore, there are serious medical doubts about the validity of PCR tests. Some have speculated that the false positivity rate of these tests could be higher than 50%. Without testing that can yield accurate results, a more sensible approach to having staff return to work should be used, such as encouraging staff who have any symptoms to stay at home. Lifting the provincial state of emergency will give employers confidence to apply common sense when bringing employees back to work.

QUESTION 2. *Costs on Business.* Many small businesses are desperately trying to get their customers back. They are struggling to find ways to get the revenue they need to survive through COVID. We see the increasing burden on business related to costs that government can control such as Property Tax Assessments and the Employee Health Tax. What would you do to help keep the costs for business down so they can maintain the jobs they provide and survive this tremendous downturn?

CW Response: This tremendous downturn is mostly the result of government policy. The state of emergency and public health orders that severely limit normal commerce have been extended for months longer than was necessary to flatten the curve. Lifting the state of emergency and repealing these orders (with the exception of those for long term care homes) will allow customers and businesses to get back to normal. If elected, the BC Libertarian Party will also repeal the Employer Health Tax. The cost and administrative burden that this tax places on smaller employees is significant, while conferring no clear benefit of the system of MSP premiums.

QUESTION 3. *Transportation & Housing.* Employees working in North Vancouver are not able to find reasonable transportation or affordable local housing options. Businesses are suffering, choosing to move, or simply closing as a result. What would you do to ensure transportation and affordable housing investments are made to support the needs of the community and the future of our local small businesses?

CW Response: The cost of housing remains a major issue on the North Shore. Lack of new supply has resulted in prices that are not affordable for many. While this is mostly the result of municipal red tape such as excessively strict zoning, the province can help by reducing the property transfer tax, and other taxes on housing introduced by the current government such as the school tax. For the many people that work on the North Shore but live elsewhere, public transit for commuting is often not the preferred option. What would be more helpful to them would be more options for private group transportation, such a mini-bus service from Burnaby or Vancouver to the parts of North Vancouver where employers are located. Such private options do not exist because the Passenger Transportation Board effectively forbids them. The BC Libertarian Party would scrap the PTB to allow private transit and deregulate ride-hailing services to make them more affordable as a commuter option. We would also study the possibility of implementing modest tolls at major crossings and choke points in order to reduce peak congestion. This would go hand in hand with eliminating the carbon tax and reducing fuel taxes so that motorists do not end up paying more.

QUESTION 4. *Climate Change.* The issues of climate change remains a concern for the business community. What is your position and your party's position on the most important steps that need to be taken in the next year to address this issue?

CW Response: Given the fact that because BC's greenhouse gas emissions are a fraction of 1% of the world's, we recognize that even if British Columbia were to reduce emissions to zero, this would not affect the climate. We feel that government's proper role is to monitor the effects of climate change and provide unbiased data. As a matter of principle, government should eliminate all subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. If climate change does pose a serious threat, and the world's largest emitters are not able to curb their CO₂, that means that technological solutions are the only realistic ones. BC's contribution could be to develop technologies for the capture and sequestration of greenhouse gasses. I would scrap the current climate programs under the Clean BC Plan and devote this money to an Innovation Fund that would commit to purchasing CO₂ captured by BC businesses and research projects at a certain price per tonne.

QUESTION 5. *Retraining Underemployed Workforce to Meet Opportunities in the BC Tech Sector.* The NV Chamber has championed a provincial call for the funding of retraining and skill enrichment that will help more fully employ new Canadians and other individuals with technical aptitude to support the growing needs of our growing local and provincial technology sector. What is your position on this and what steps would you take to tap into this talent and economic potential in our community?

CW Response: The success record of government retraining programs is dismal, and a waste of taxpayer dollars. The high salaries and deluxe benefit packages offered by tech companies for qualified programmers and software engineers should be enough to induce workers to switch to that industry if they are not satisfied in their current one. One of the main problems in attracting and retaining talent for the tech industry is the high cost of living in BC. Taxes are a major component of this, so the BC Libertarian Party would triple the basic income tax exemption, which would especially help those just starting in a new career. As noted above, we would also reduce provincial taxes on housing, and encourage a larger supply of rental accommodation by reforming the Residential Tenancy Act to make it less biased toward tenants' rights.