

2019-03-08 ELIZABETH MAY TRANSCRIPT (ED)

Interview with Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada

11:40 a.m., May 8, 2019

Kings University College, Edmonton, AB

DJC: We won't have much time, but I did want to get from you your assessment, your thoughts, on the Rachel Notley NDP's approach to climate change.

EM: Oh, I think it's an abdication of responsibility. I think it's a betrayal of her pre-election promises, and of what she should stand for as a politician from the New Democratic Party. I would have, if I had been her advisor, and I certainly tried to communicate this to her, given the political landscape, I would have sought out reclaiming the moral high ground of Peter Lougheed. I would have distanced myself from trying to be to the right of Ralph Klein on oil and gas, which is where I think she's placed herself.

I've become friends with Kevin Taft, former Liberal leader of Alberta, and I thought it was very powerful when he said, you know, Rachel Notley may be *in office*, but the oil industry is *in power*. But when you go way back – and I only know this through Andrew Nikiforuk had a number of columns and I got interested. I knew Peter Lougheed, and I liked him very much. I even tried to convince him to join the Green Party in our last conversation ever (Laughs). But anyway, when you go back and look at his ideas for how the oilsands would be developed, he had a set of rules, and the first was *'Think like an owner.'* Now, if you're thinking like an owner, you don't decide to defy the Alberta Federation of Labor and ignore Unifor and go with what the corporate global masters want, which is to get raw bitumen to their refineries that they've already built in other countries, as opposed to having upgraders and refining here. And it was a completely political calculus on her part, it was a political calculus on the part of Trudeau and Butts to say, 'Well, we have to get Rachel the pipeline because that's how she'll be able to keep Jason Kenney out of office.'

But I think that Albertans are reasonable – and, obviously, all Canadians are reasonable people – and I think if you present the facts, and say, 'Look, we had this plan from Peter Lougheed, let's revisit it.' Let's look back at what he had had in mind, which was ancillary infrastructure. Let's look at taking a business case to the rest of Canada that we'd like to see them stop importing all foreign oil, and use Canadian product. I'd even branded it when I had my one chance to pitch this to Rachel Notley, which was in the few minutes before Barack Obama addressed the House of Commons. 'Cause I could never get a meeting with her, even though I tried.

I said, you should brand it *Fort Mac Strong*. And sell it across Canada as a branded Alberta product. I don't think there's a Canadian who wouldn't prefer, as long as we are using fossil fuels, to use *Fort Mac Strong*, than Saudi or Nigerian.

Now, of course, we talk about Saudi oil a lot, the reality is that only the Irving refinery in New Brunswick uses Saudi oil.

DJC: Right.

EM: But we're importing a lot of oil, and we could say, well, on a declining basis, in exchange for no expansion of the oil sands, this is a good way to go forward. And I think she could have sold that. But it's too late now. She's cast herself in a very, well, she's been vicious towards British Columbia.

She's ridiculed, specifically, people in my riding. You know, making fun of people from Saltspring Island. I don't know why she's so hostile. I guess she figures the more she appears to be unkind, and divisive, the better her electoral results will be. ... You know, I was so happy when she was elected. And of course she does better things on the social justice side of the ledger for Albertans. But on climate change, she's led the charge towards extinction. And it's not a good record.

DJC: Related to that question, I wanted to ask you about your assessment of the specific idea that having an effective carbon-reduction policy depends on having a pipeline to the coast.

EM: Well, she doesn't have an effective carbon reduction policy. She has a carbon *expansion* policy. The goal of the Alberta government is increase greenhouse gasses. And it goes against market forces. Now, given the market, are we ever going to get to 100 million tonnes of carbon? You know, she wants to go to 100 megatonnes of carbon a year. From 70 megatonnes of carbon a year. So the cap is *way* above where we are right now, and we're in a climate emergency. We can't afford to expand greenhouse gasses.

And where's the rest of her carbon reduction plan? Well, 'We're going to go off coal for Alberta's electricity.' Which would be fantastic *if* we were going to 100 per cent renewables. But she wants to go to fracked natural gas, burned in the same plants that were once burning coal. Which means it will be inefficient, well below best available technology. So in the end, there won't be much reduction.

Whereas the possibility is still there to say, 'We're going to go from the 70 right now.' Alberta's electricity sector because of the coal that TransAlta burns is roughly the same, only slightly less, than Alberta's oilsands. So she *has* the capacity and the potential to say, 'OK, here's the plan.' And I actually wrote this up in some detail and it was published on DeSmogBlog. If you ever want to search out an article that says, 'OK, let's crunch the numbers. We have a carbon budget.' What if we actually went to 100 per cent renewables in Alberta and set the cap, not at 100 megatonnes, which is

an expansion of 30 million tonnes of carbon a year, but set the cap where we are now, and then moved down? And in that period of time, we'd have to have more upgraders. But there's ways, you can see how this could work to reduce carbon.

There's a reason that the Alberta Federation of Labour and Unifor oppose a pipeline to the Coast: It's losing Canadian jobs with every solid barrel of bitumen exported. So to me it was a political trade off, but not one that was relevant to climate science. And that's a condemnation of *both* Justin Trudeau and Rachel Notley for being willing to sell out climate in the interests of kind of a papered-over political win. But it doesn't help the climate. ... It's like saying, well, you know, it's true to say the economy and the environment go hand in hand, because the transition to solar energy, and wind power, and massive improvements in the energy efficiency of our buildings, and of homes, institutions, and commercial buildings, all of those things, are good for the economy.

DJC: Right.

EM: But it's *not* true to say that you've aided the fight against the climate crisis by increasing greenhouse gases to get there. That's just like saying you need war to have peace. None of it makes sense.

DJC: I've been trying to come up with appropriate metaphors to describe that.

EM: *I know!* Bill McGibbon's first rule of holes is stop digging! So we're in an emergency. I recognize, there's requirements for just transition. There's reasons that no part of the country should be more disadvantaged than another in developing a climate strategy. But this determination, and also to lie to people. They spent \$23 million in ad campaigns from the treasury of the Alberta Government to *lie* to people and tell them that there's a cost differential, we're losing \$80 million a day. *That's not true!* And it doesn't take more than 15 minutes of Google searches for economists who've crunched the numbers to know that isn't true.

And the jobs are even bogus. ... If the jobs were in a pipeline, the unions would ... Actually the construction unions are a different category. But Unifor is the largest union representing Northern Alberta workers, the Alberta Federation of Labour represents Alberta workers, *both* opposed the Kinder Morgan Pipeline.

DJC: Well, you've got to be careful about that though, because the AFL is on board now.

EM: I know. But at the beginning of the NEB hearings ...

DJC: That's true. I'm just saying.

EM: I'm sure you know this, but I intervened in the National Energy Board hearing, and an old friend of mine was the lawyer for Unifor ... and they put together the evidence of *why* the Kinder Morgan pipeline would cost Canadian jobs long term.

And the National Energy Board refused to hear their evidence, refused to accept their evidence, and said that on the list of issues that NEB was supposed to investigate during this hearing, jobs and the economy weren't included. Then how on earth can it be that the National Energy Board tells the Trudeau administration, as they did in the first instance and now the second instance, 'We've looked at all these harms that will occur, but the benefits for the economy outweigh the harms'? Considering that they specifically refused to look at any evidence of economics or jobs. I mean, I'm very happy if I can fight the Kinder-Morgan Pipeline solely on the basis of economics, because it loses on the economics.

DJC: Right, right ...

EM: Particularly now that we've interfered with anything like free-market assessments of whether this pipeline is in anyone's interest – and will it make money? – because we are now owning it. But it's very clear on the record that Richard Kinder and Kinder Morgan had decided *not* to build the pipeline for economic reasons before they started issuing their ultimatums

DJC: That leads to another question I wanted to ask you ... What's your assessment of the level of opposition to the Trans Mountain Expansion on the Coast, in coastal B.C.? We hear these polling numbers, but I think that that's kind of a mile wide and an inch deep ...

EM: Well, I mean there *has* been an impact. Rachel Notley's ad campaign, which we now know from access to information requests was premised on the idea of getting people to be angry at B.C. It was a very targeted attack at the people of British Columbia and our government. And interestingly enough, John Horgan, also being NDP, has not responded in kind. He's been very reticent to respond in kind. But I really regret that he hasn't taken on the lies in the ad campaign, clearly, so that people can see that they're lies.

Within British Columbia, it's regional. So, I was just doing town hall meetings in Prince George, and Kamloops, and talking about what the alternatives are, and why pipelines aren't good for jobs. But when you get into, municipally, the City of Victoria strongly opposes the pipeline, so does the City of Burnaby, the City of Vancouver. So does, by a vote, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. ... Individual communities are unbudgable. And, so of course are the key First Nations: The Tsleil-Waututh, the Musqueam, the Squamish, who will be most impacted because the operations are closest to them. So, opposition in British Columbia isn't going away. The Mayor of Vancouver was elected mayor *after* being arrested. Opposing the pipeline.

DJC: Do you feel any sympathy with Ms. Notley's political problem?

EM: Yes. But I think she'd done the absolutely worst thing for her own self, strategically. I don't think the NDP can win an election in Alberta by being more pro-

oil than Jason Kenney. It's a political miscalculation. Do I feel sorry for her? Sure. I'm a charitable person. But she's done something that is essentially unforgivable in that she is fighting, hard, to eliminate a viable future for our children. And *that* is not acceptable. She *has* to know better. ...

And that's why it's tragic. It's on the level of large scale tragedy. *Jim Prentice* would have cared more about climate than Rachel Notley. And I miss Jim Prentice. I knew him. ... When she beat the Conservatives in this province, we were all exulting across the country. Regardless of party – except for Conservatives. But I mean people of any form of left were very thrilled. I just never thought that she would wage a campaign so bitter, and so nasty, and so ... *ummm* ... well, it's been very personal, right? Really awful. I wouldn't respond to *her* that way. On the policy issues, she had a chance, and I think that chance was to seize moral high ground. Instead she dove for the gutter.

DJC: Does this create a situation where there's an opportunity for a breakthrough for the Green Party?

EM: I hope so. I mean, Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes as the leader of the Green Party of Alberta is so charismatic and so clear. And if there is anything happening Canada right now that is noticeable, it sure seems to me to be the integrity of Indigenous women is getting noticed. So, yeah, I'm hopeful. I don't know the situation on the ground the way Cheryle and other Alberta Greens do, but across the country right now, as we look towards the federal election, I think *anything* is possible. We're going to have a lot of seats. And my hope is, particularly thanks to Maxime Bernier and the rise of a new splintering party on the Right, that we'll have a House of Commons with Members of Parliament from six elected parties.

DJC: So you can play the traditional role of the NDP?

EM: Right.

DJC: Be the party of conscience?

EM: Right. And also, in a minority Parliament, we can exercise a balance of responsibility. And I'm more than happy to work with New Democrats, or Liberals, or responsible Conservatives, wherever we find people who want to think about the issues, and come to a consensus of what do we need to do now really. You know, forget about partisan politics. Let's take this seriously and find the solutions that advance the interests of Albertans, and the interests of British Columbians, and of people from Ontario. We're a *country*, not warring factions.

I've been to these town hall meetings right across Canada, and they're wide open. I mean, you may say people who are likely to come are people who are interested in the Green Party, but anyone can attend. And no matter where you are, Canadians ask questions about the same issues, and have much the same concerns. We could

pull that together and actually have a consensus approach in Parliament. Particularly, if and when – as I think will happen this election – there is a Parliament where no one party even manages a false majority of 40 per cent of the popular vote.

... Federally, we'll have candidates in every riding. And they're good. ... Federally, we are seeing really significant changes. Look how Chris Turner came *so* close, and the Greens, to winning a seat in a by-election. So we've never thought that Alberta wasn't fertile ground for us, but we're feeling it all more now all the time.

END OF RECORDING