Nuclear Power and the Environment

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Former Leader of the Green Party of Saskatchewan (2009-2011)

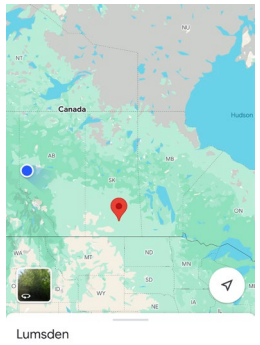
Presentation Goals

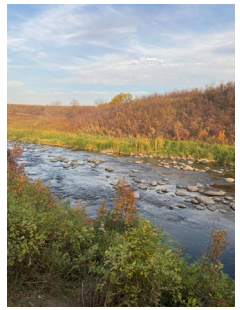
To provide information about perspectives on nuclear power development that are held by members of the environmental community

To discuss the politics of nuclear power as a potential climate change solution, with a focus on green party politics

To provide a history of the relationship between the environmental movement and the anti-nuclear movement, and to discuss the changing nature of that relationship

To highlight the importance and challenges of public engagement on nuclear power as a climate change solution





My background

- First became involved in climate change activism in 2006 while running as the Green Party of Canada candidate for the electoral district of Palliser (covering the Saskatchewan communities of Moose Jaw and the southwest corner of Regina).
- Elected as Leader of the Green Party of Saskatchewan in 2009
- Ran as a Green Party Candidate in three federal elections (2006, 2008, 2011), one Saskatchewan provincial election (2007), and one Saskatchewan provincial by-election (2010)
- Resigned as Leader of the Green Party of Saskatchewan in 2011
- Currently not a political member of any party
- BA Honours in Political Science, University of Regina, 2016
- Master of Public Policy at University of Regina, 2020
- PhD of Public Policy Candidate September 2020-present
- Researching public engagement of small modular reactors, including youth engagement, diversity (gender balance), and international climate change mitigation strategies
- Fellow of the Nuclear Energy Agency NEST Program (Nuclear Education, Skills, Technology) and the NEA Rising Stars Program

The politics of nuclear power

- Public perceptions of nuclear power can be complex and may vary significantly among the public.
- Areas where the public may perceive risk related to nuclear energy include **cost, waste, mining for materials, weapons proliferation, and concerns relating to health, safety and the environment** (Perrins 2009; Yeo et al. 2014; MIT 2018).
- Legacy events such as the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and, more recently, the 2011 Fukushima accident have resulted in a great deal of public fear towards nuclear energy (Kim et al. 2013; Yeo et al. 2014).
- Public perceptions of nuclear power are typically portrayed in media coverage as either ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ nuke which fuels political divisions over its appropriate use (Yeo et al. 2014).

What are Green Political Parties, and what are their connection to the anti-nuclear movement?

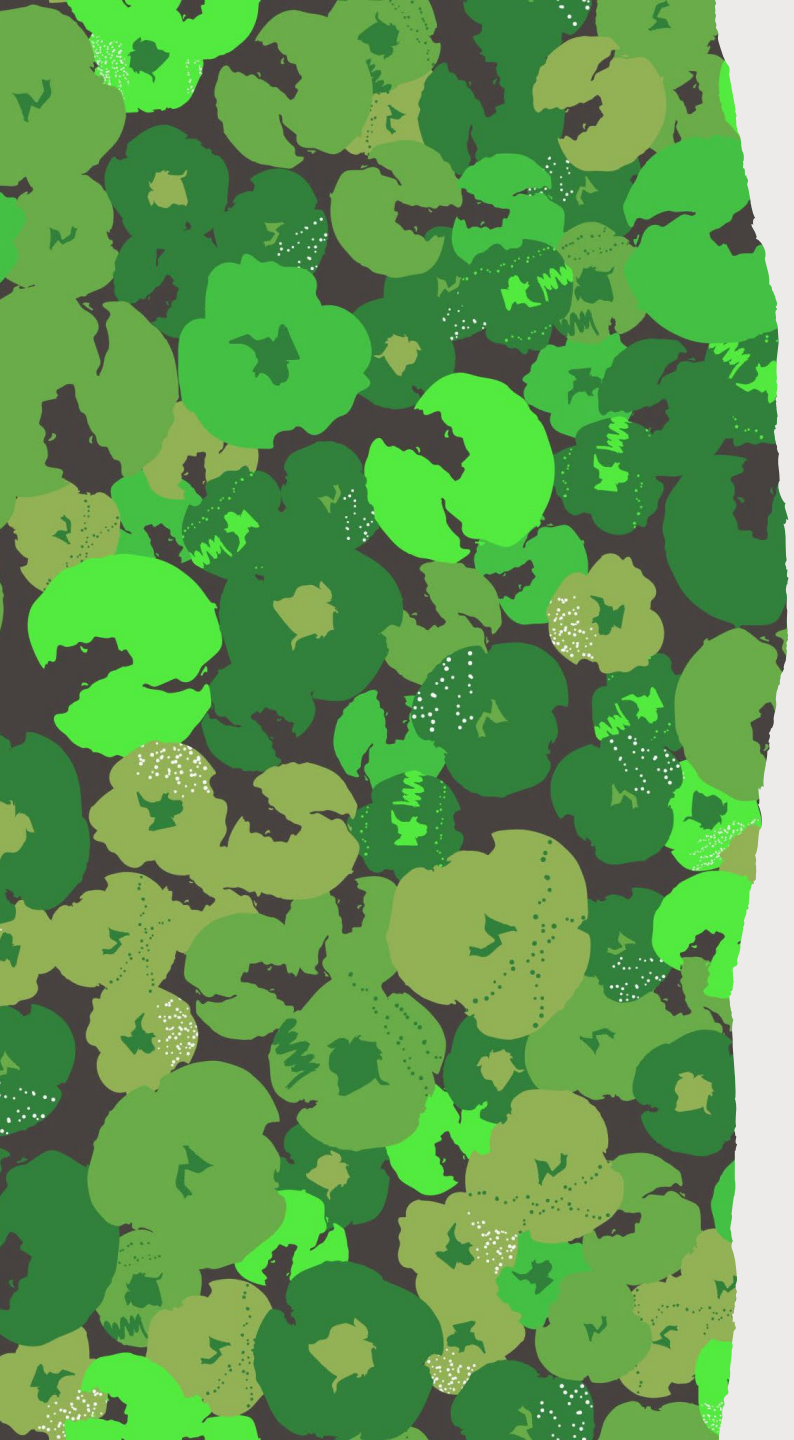
- Green parties arose out of the environmental movement and were strongly aligned with the anti-nuclear movement, with the first parties emerging in the 1970s
- For example, the Green Party of Germany website explains: “The Greens emerged from a smorgasbord of all kinds of different but primarily left-wing environmental and peace-focused groups and the anti-nuclear power movement. These are the roots of its green political principles. Their goal is to reconcile ecological, economic and social sustainability.”
- Over 100 Green Parties exist worldwide, with green members of parliament elected in a number of countries including Australia, Mexico, New Zealand, Italy, France, Germany, and Finland
- The parties are independent of each other but are connected through similar values and guiding principles
- The Global Greens is the international network of Green parties and political movements and is governed by the Global Greens Charter
- **Article 3.5 of the Global Greens Charter reads:**

  “Oppose any expansion of nuclear power and will work to phase it out rapidly.”

Green Party

ATOMKRAFT? NEIN DANKE

GLOBAL GREENS



History of the Green Party of Canada

- “The Green Party of Canada was founded at a conference held at Carleton University in Ottawa in 1983. Under its first leader, Dr. Trevor Hancock, the party ran 60 candidates in the **1984** federal election. The Green Party of Canada is independent of other green parties around the world but remains philosophically aligned with them.
- The Green Party begins with the basic premise that all life on the planet is interconnected and that humans have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world. The Green Party of Canada, like its provincial counterparts, supports green economics, progressive social planning and responsible and accountable governance.”
- Source: www.greenparty.ca/history

What does the Green Party of Canada say about small modular nuclear reactors?

Civil society groups and MPs reject industry hype about Canada's "glowing" nuclear future

April 25, 2023

Green Party calls on Moe to hit the brakes on nuclear plans in Saskatchewan

May 09, 2022

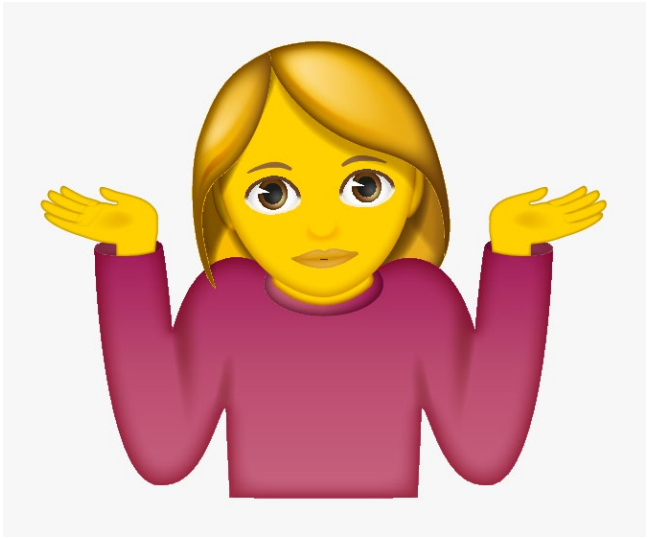
The government of Canada's nuclear policies are profoundly misguided, say Greens

April 21, 2021

Greens call on federal government to abandon nuclear and invest in renewables

November 10, 2020

Nuclear power?
No Thanks



- In a Green Party of Canada policy vote held online in the summer of 2021, “39.6 per cent of party members voted "red" to reject a resolution for "ceasing all federal funding for nuclear energy research," while 37.3 per cent of members voted "green" to endorse it.
- Twenty-three per cent of the members chose a third option, a "yellow" vote, meaning they needed to know more about the issue before deciding”
- https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/green-party-nuclear-vote-1.6150577

What about the Green Party of Alberta?

- Nuclear power is not mentioned in the Green Party of Alberta 2023 Platform

However, the party's platform does include a commitment to "cut GHG emissions to Net-Zero by 2040" which specifies: "Diversifying our energy portfolio and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Electricity production would be decarbonized by ***adding renewable energy and low carbon sources like solar, wind, geothermal, and green hydrogen.***" (pg. 14 – Environment)

Saskatchewan Green Party nuclear power policy

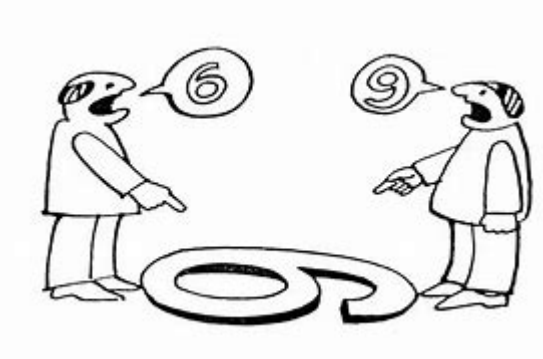
- **2013 3.6.1 University Research Guidelines** A Green Party of Saskatchewan government will disallow Saskatchewan universities and colleges from conducting research on uranium/nuclear development, GE foods, carbon capture, and enhanced oil recovery or receiving monies from corporations promoting those activities
- **1999.6 Nuclear Power** The Green Party of Saskatchewan resolves: That no further provincial money be spent on nuclear power. The provincial government further directs all Department, Agencies and Crown Corporations to abandon any proposals to develop nuclear power programs for the Province. That the province direct all Departments, Agencies and Crown Corporations to categorically refuse to partner themselves in any way with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL). That the province pass legislation prohibiting the transportation and/or storage of nuclear reactor waste across or within provincial boundaries
- https://assets.nationbuilder.com/saskgreen/pages/21/attachments/original/1694272119/SaskGreenParty2023Policy.pdf?1694272119

Greens for nuclear energy

- “**We believe that the increasingly urgent need to deal decisively with our emerging climate crisis makes continued opposition to nuclear energy irrational for environmentalists and reduces our chances of averting a climate catastrophe.**
- We therefore oppose the early decommissioning of existing nuclear reactors, unless it can be shown that continued use of any given plant is a present threat to human life, the environment or property.
- We support the research and development of new advanced nuclear power technologies and the continued use of existing nuclear power plants until each power plant reaches end-of-life.
- We are pro-renewables and strongly advocate for their deployment where topography, geography and climate permit, where a positive local environmental case is made and where there is no consequent reliance on the burning of Fossil Fuels.
- **We therefore respectfully urge our fellow Green Party members to approach the nuclear power debate with an open mind and not fall victim to the ‘easy way out’ of dogmatic, hard-wired anti-nuclear ideology**.”
- https://greensfornuclear.energy/

CRITICAL
Greens For Nuclear Energy
REELMEDIA FILM and GREENS FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY presents CRITICAL a film by TIM WEBSTER
with MARK YELLAND, MARK BRAY-PARRY, JOSH MORRIS-BLAKE, MATT STRATFORD, COUNCILLOR DR.ROSI SEXTON
KEVIN ANDERSON, TEA TORMANEN, PROFESSOR GERRY THOMAS, COLIN TUCKER, SYLVAIN RENOUF, and ERIC POIROT.
Researcher ATYANA GANE Illustrator KATE WILSON Motion Graphics RICHARD GLADMAN Sound JOE VINCE
Director, Camera, Editor TIM WEBSTER Greens for Nuclear Energy MARK YELLAND and DUNCAN ROY.

Competing Narratives Amid Changing Stories



- As climate change and the need for low carbon electricity sources intensifies, competing narratives among environmentalists on the role nuclear power have become apparent
- Areas of concern arising in environmental opposition to SMRs include fears that SMRs will “crowd out” investment in renewables, that public engagement will not be adequate - including concerns that Indigenous peoples and local communities will not be engaged with adequately, that radioactive waste will not be managed, and that SMRs will lead to nuclear weapons proliferation
- Concerns among environmentalists who *support* nuclear power include the need for more government leadership, challenges surrounding capacity building, the need to prioritize addressing energy poverty in regions that do not have access to electricity, a lack of gender balance in the nuclear sector, and that political division may lead to delays in deployment of new reactors (Key takeaways from the Second International Conference on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power, Vienna, Austria, October 2023)

Radiation: "A big scary word" – The Influence of Popular Culture Narratives About Radiation on Public Perceptions

Nuclear Power and the Environment in the Current Era – Why Public Engagement Matters

- Dueling ideologies over nuclear power as a climate change solution exist among those who are concerned about climate change: Is nuclear power too risky or is not using nuclear power too risky?
- In addition to those who either support or oppose development of SMRs are a number of people who are uncertain and would like more information and public dialogue before forming their opinions
- Furthermore, disinterest in learning more about nuclear power poses barriers to public engagement that is inclusive of community members (such as those historically left out of nuclear power conversations)
- The oversimplification of perspectives often leads to debate instead of dialogue, which can result in political inaction or conflict instead of solving problems (such as climate change) collectively.

the end

References

- Kim, Younghwan, Minki Kim, Wonjoon Kim. 2013. “Effect of the Fukushima nuclear disaster on global public acceptance of nuclear energy.” *Energy Policy* 61: 822–828.
- MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). 2018. The Future of Nuclear Energy in a Carbon Constrained World: An Interdisciplinary MIT Study. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Perrins, Dan. 2009. *Future of Uranium Public Consultation Process*. Accessed November 12, 2017. http://www.leaderpost.com/pdf/UDP-Report.pdf
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- Yeo, Sara K., Michael A. Cacciatore, Dominique Brossard, Dietram A. Scheufele, Kristin Runge, Leona Y. Su, Jiyoun Kim, Michael Xenos, Elizabeth A. Corley. 2014. “Partisan amplification of risk: American perceptions of nuclear energy risk in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi disaster.” *Energy Policy* 67: 727-736.
- Global Greens: https://globalgreens.org/
- Green Party of Canada: https://www.greenparty.ca/en/our-history
- Green Party of Alberta Platform: https://www.greenpartyofalberta.ca/platform_2023
- Saskatchewan Green Party: https://www.saskgreen.ca/party_documents
- Greens for Nuclear Energy: https://greensfornuclear.energy/

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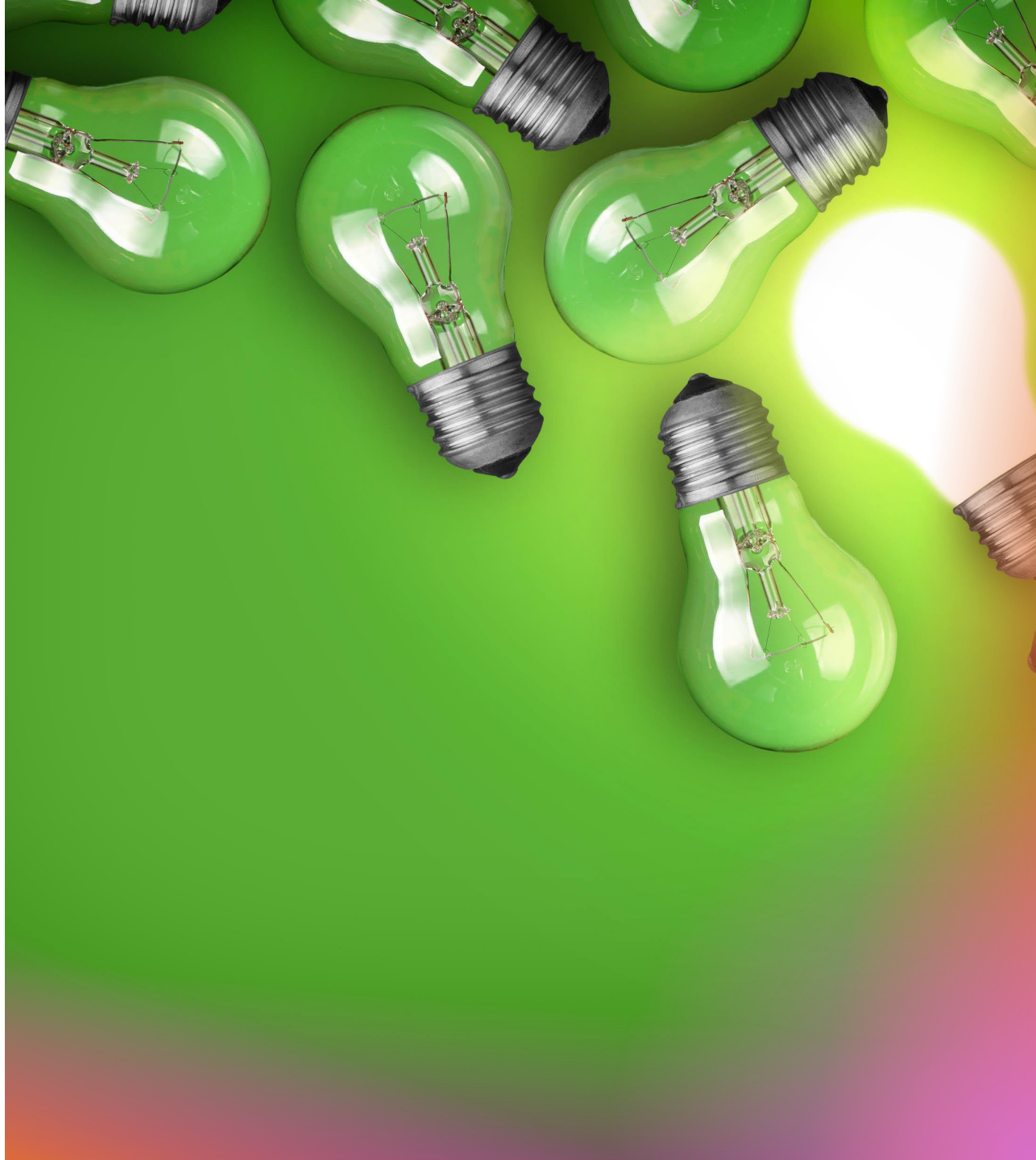
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