

Green Party leader unveils plan to help towns

By Katie Schneider
The Eagle

The contaminated former-Domtar site became the "perfect backdrop" for federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May on March 9 when she announced a plan to fund areas of municipal concern, including brownfield sites.

"The initiative we are announcing today is aimed at sustainable, serious funding for municipalities," she said at the Nan Boothby Library, adjacent to the former-Domtar site.

The proposed \$3 billion-a-year plan will create six municipal funds that will pay for the reconstruction of crumbling infrastructure. The "Super Six" funds will replace the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund to target brownfield remediation, water and wastewater treatment facilities, sports and recreation facilities, mass transit, promotion of cycling and walking, and

affordable housing.

Due to climate change, she said municipalities have a need to improve and upgrade wastewater. For mass transit, "it's not just a one-time announcement to throw in money in Toronto like some leaders whose names I forget at the moment."

Her initiative would "deal with sustainable funding for what every community, big and small, needs."

As for remediation of brownfield sites, formerly used for industrial or commercial purposes but left contaminated, she said the former-Domtar area is an example of the "legacy of past mismanagement of toxic waste." It was contaminated with creosote used by the company to treat railway ties from 1963 to 1987.

"Addressing (brownfield sites) holds the key to unlocking billions of dollars worth of great real estate across Canada that right now is locked up in this mix of hazardous

materials that can be cleaned up," she said.

"Unlocking brownfield sites for future development holds the key to fighting the problem of urban sprawl, holds the key to better land use decisions within communities, and of course, fundamentally, protecting the health of people in communities for their children and for their grandchildren."

Sean Maw, Green Party candidate for Wild Rose, said the plan proposes cleaning up all contaminated sites in Canada so communities can choose how to develop them. Currently, developers have the advantage to dictate how brownfield lands are developed because they foot the bill, he said.

"What we're suggesting is we're willing to invest in Canada to clean it up properly and let the communities decide how it's going to be developed properly," he said.

Maw, who finished sec-

ond in the January 2006 federal election behind Conservative MP Myron Thompson, said Wild Rose is experiencing rapid growth and municipalities cannot keep up with infrastructure needs.

"The federal government has a role to play here to do something constructive to help the average Canadian interested in sports and cultural facilities, water and wastewater treatment and

in building cycling and pedestrian infrastructure across all communities in Canada so we don't have to drive everywhere."

May's announcement came a day after Premier Ed Stelmach announced his plan for oilsands companies and coal plants to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 12 per cent between July 1 and Dec.

31 or pay into a technology fund. She said she has high hopes for Alberta, but will wait to see how the Alberta government will follow through.

"(Stelmach) has hit there will be regulation, that it will be serious, that there will be targets," she said.

"We certainly can reach

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Cochrane High's Ryan Hoyer, left, talks to Green Party leader Elizabeth May and local candidate Sean Maw on the school's roof where a solar energy project is located, which Hoyer and other students are involved in.

Greens expect to win seats

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Kyoto targets and we can do it in a way that stimulates the Canadian economy. It's still doable," she said.

She said Canadians need to pull together in a way that they have not since the Second World War. Referring to an analogy in *Corporate Knights* magazine, she said, "If Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt had

had the same attitude as (Prime Minister) Stephen Harper and (former Environment Minister) Rona Ambrose at the beginning of the Second World War, we would all be speaking German now," May said.

"We've got to show leadership and we've got to show a willingness to try and so far we haven't seen that from political leadership of any party."

In terms of an election, May said the Green Party is ready, and she expects to win seats, "between a couple and a majority government."

"As we are more ready than we've ever been, we do not have, as Mr. Harper has, \$15 million in the bank, but we do have more volunteers, more commitment and more energy than we've ever had before."