

Lower Island NEWS

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Victoria, BC

BC General Election called for May 14

The NDP candidates nominated in eight Lower Island ridings are:



Rob Fleming,
Victoria-Swan
Lake



Carole James,
Victoria-
Beacon Hill



Gary Holman,
Saanich North
and the Islands



John Horgan,
Juan de Fuca



**Maurine
Karagianis,**
Esquimalt-Royal
Roads



Lana Popham,
Saanich South



Bill Routley,
Cowichan Valley



**Jessica
Van der Veen,**
Oak Bay-
Gordon Head



Sketches of a new view: NDP will transform BC government

Carole James, MLA, describes how her party will fight:

- * To restore fairness
- * To support and expand the Middle Class
- * To promote equality of opportunity
- * To improve quality of life for all British Columbians.

By Jonathan Lee

With broad and clear brushstrokes, Carole James, Victoria-Beacon Hill MLA, today painted a picture of governmental renewal of purpose and direction that the NDP will bring to British Columbians, should the party win a majority of seats in the upcoming provincial election.

Just prior to the opening of her downtown Victoria campaign office, James, co-chair of the province-wide 2013 NDP Platform Development Process, agreed to foreshadow leader Adrian Dix's official election platform announcements.

James has never been one to hide her passions and she's not about to change her style this time around, either.

Without pre-empting her party leader she outlined the vision that the NDP has for the future of British Columbia.

She insists that British Columbians are ready for a change in the direction of their government.

"Change for the better. One practical step at a time."

This is the election message that Adrian Dix and the NDP will be delivering throughout their campaign. And the term "practical" was very much a theme of James' message.

James' party are taking nothing for granted. They expect a tight and aggressive race despite polling numbers that place the NDP many points ahead.

Carole James is clear that NDP voters will need to make a determined trip to the polling station if Dix's NDP message is to become reality. After more than a decade of Liberal government in BC a critical choice must be made to eliminate Liberal decline and begin to make the changes necessary to again restore quality of life for growing numbers of British Columbians.

James highlighted the key elements of policy upon which her party are focussed.

She began with "**Jobs and the Economy**". She insisted that NDP votes will enable more effective investment in the province's most valuable asset – "people". Under the present government the population has become "divided" and opportunity wasted.

When asked for examples of specific investment policy, without unwrapping the entire platform package, she did note that a new NDP government will "bring back non-refundable student grants in BC".

Students with low income will be able to apply for grants meeting the full cost of annual tuition. The policy will restore some equality of opportunity for many of the most academically worthy but economically disadvantaged students in BC.

A tax will be imposed on "large financial institutions" to fund the grant process. James notes that it is very much in the interest of business to assist in encouraging and funding the education of future workers. Here's a policy to achieve that purpose.

Further, James says that an NDP government will work to restore apprentice and training programs, reiterating that an NDP government believes in inclusive discussion with all interested representative entities – business, labour, education, etc. No longer will labour interests be excluded from policy planning, as has happened in Liberal years.

James takes the opportunity to stress that NDP policies are intended to be "fully costed and funded". That changes will be financially achievable and practical.

Nationwide, provincial NDP governments have enacted economic policies that are more sustainable, fairer and more balanced than other partisan political alternatives. A BC NDP government intends to follow that prudent record of fiscal responsibility.

NDP policy rejects unfettered "tax and spend" initiatives and insists that program spending is properly targeted and carefully funded.

To further demonstrate the NDP purpose in supporting business, both small and large, James explains the example of "buy local" pilot schemes that will encourage the marketing of local product. "Locally grown apples, for example, are just as tasty as Washington apples – providing local employment opportunity as well as many other cost effective savings!"

Next on her checklist is the issue of social "**Inequality**". James is derisive of Liberal policies that for eight years have marked BC as having the highest rate of child poverty in Canada. The NDP will instigate measurement of province-wide poverty rates, and will introduce plans, with clear targets, to significantly reduce poverty in BC.

James says that the NDP supports and intends to strengthen the middle class. "Support of a strong middle class is good for the economy and is the right thing to do."

"**Environment and Climate change**". James is crystal clear. The NDP government will immediately serve notice upon the federal government, upon taking office, that British Columbia will not accept the advancement of the Enbridge project in BC. She says that the party has established legal and social arguments that will support and sustain this position.

The NDP is committed to real and

sustainable "green" initiatives. No longer will the BC carbon tax simply be dumped into the general revenue pot. A more careful allocation of carbon tax funds will be administered, directed toward environmentally positive purposes.

There will be an increase in the corporate contribution to carbon tax revenues, again explicitly directed to pay for "green" initiatives, for example in "transit and retrofit projects". It seems that the cost of corporate environmental impacts and pollutions will now be measured and paid for, increasingly, from corporate revenues.

"**Good Government**" appears in James' list for early NDP attention. Adrian Dix will quickly seek to ban the use of public funds and tax dollars for partisan campaign advertising. His government will begin to look closely at the impact of corporate and union donations in the electoral process.

Returning to the theme of poverty reduction James points to the disproportionate impact that these "tough economic times" has had on First Nation communities.

She expresses deep concern with the disproportionate numbers of aboriginal children in provincial care. This needs rapid correction and NDP government poverty reduction programs will target low income families so that scarce tax dollars will be directed to maximum effect. She cites the proposed education grants as being especially valuable in beginning to improve the lot of low income and First Nations communities.

It is the objective of an NDP government to urgently enhance First Nations economic development programs, including policies to provide affordable housing and renewed infrastructures.

James noted that she was raised in the James Bay district of Victoria at a time when co-op housing programs were in place. James believes that the co-op housing model was important and successful in changing the lives of families, and can be again. "It's a model that is proven and successful," she says.

Carole James is clear that there is much to be done in the wake of so many years of Liberal government to restore the BC economy and society.

It will not be possible to make these changes overnight. One practical step at a time sends the most accurate and honest message to voters.

It's a message of respect and clarity. Carole James sincerely believes that the New Democratic Party, led by Adrian Dix, has listened carefully and respectfully to BC's electorate. Increasingly the economic

(Turn to NDP will transform, on page 2)

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NDP will transform BC government, from page 1

and social policies of the governing Liberal party are diminishing the quality of life for too many British Columbians and the message from voters reflects that concern. For James it is not an option to continue with policies that result in such wasted potential, poverty and environmental destruction.

Carole James' list of concerns is much longer than our interview time will allow but she's not going to end her platform outline without briefly covering NDP thinking on a further range of topics.

An NDP government will rapidly ban the use of cosmetic pesticides in BC.

An NDP government will examine the case and viability for P3 contracts. She says that it is clear that the use of P3 should rest on convincing business rationales – not catch-all ideological directives. NDP proposals will open P3 contracts to scrutiny and look to see where P3 contracts can be best used for the benefit of BC residents. The NDP government will insist that there

is public accountability in the creation and administration of P3 contracts.

It's time for a thorough review of what has happened with BC Ferries administration, says James. An NDP government will enable this process.

James is equally clear that the authority of the BC Utilities Authority be quickly restored. "Maybe the current difficulties with the introduction of Smart Meters could have been avoided," she says. Certainly improvements can be made.

James notes that the new federal crime legislation costs bear heavily on provincial budgets. BC expects to see a disproportionate increase in the incarceration of First Nations citizens. This is disturbing and must be addressed. An NDP government will encourage the input of all concerned entities, from prison guards to social professionals and organizations, in correcting the inequities that the federal crime mandates will cause at provincial levels.

James can't end her discourse without reference to health care policy. She sees many opportunities for greater financial efficiency combined with more effective and humane treatment protocols.

She would look to see the encouragement of greater engagement of nurse practitioners, thus using MD services more effectively. She would encourage greater homecare support for seniors and the creation of community health centres. For James, emphasis on methods of disease and injury prevention will pay large dividends in cost savings and improved community health.

She is disappointed with the federal policies that will reduce federal healthcare transfers and make things so much "tougher at the provincial level". An NDP government

in BC will make its concerns clear to the federal government, upon election.

"This is a most critical election" according to Carole James. It will decide the direction of British Columbia for a long time to come.

The broad message from the NDP is that increasing societal poverty and inequality, a shrinking middle class, ineffective administration of scarce tax dollars and risk laden and irreversible environmental policies have been, and are, the characteristics of the present Liberal government's legacy in British Columbia.

For these reasons, and others too numerous for Carole James to cover in this interview, she repeats the NDP message: "Change for the Better – One practical step at a time".

Where is BC's Poverty Reduction Plan?
Join the election campaign!

By Trish Garner

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition has launched a challenge to all political parties to meet its call for a poverty reduction plan for BC. BC has the highest poverty rate in Canada, but is one of the last provinces left without a poverty reduction plan.

The call for a legislated poverty reduction plan with targets and timelines is endorsed by over 375 organizations province-wide, representing over 300,000 British Columbians.

According to a recent poll commissioned by one of the Coalition members, the BC Healthy Living Alliance, 78% of British Columbians think it is important for political leaders in BC to address poverty with a provincial poverty reduction plan with clear targets and timelines. Clearly, the public is ready for political leadership on this issue.

Which political party will step up to address the crisis of poverty we are facing in British Columbia?

Now is the time to get the attention of candidates in your riding. The Coalition has lots of great election resources and links to help you prepare to talk to them about poverty in BC and what we can do about it. Please access them here: <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/join-the-election-campaign>

The fact is that the basic necessities of housing and food are out of reach to too many in our province. Over half a million British Columbians live below the poverty line and 87,000 of those are children.

This has long-term health implications. Lack of healthy food can lead to poor growth and development in children, poor school performance, and increased illness and susceptibility to disease for people of all ages (Cost of Eating in BC 2011).

Most poor people in BC have a job in the paid labour force (sometimes more than one).

According to the latest *Child Poverty Report Card* from First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, 43% of children living in poverty in BC, that is 41,300 children, lived in families with at least one adult working full-time for the whole year, and the vast majority live in families with at least some paid work. *HungerCount 2012* shows that 16% of households accessing food banks in BC this year had income from current or recent employment.

The sad reality is that a minimum wage job does not lift a person above the poverty line. Even with the increased minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour, a full-time worker living on their own in a large city in BC will still find themselves about \$3000 below the poverty line.

In the last 10 years, the average household income of the top 1% in BC has increased by 36% while, for the rest of us, real median incomes have stagnated, even though we're working harder.

We have the highest household debt in Canada and the highest debt service burden, meaning we pay on average one dollar out of every 10 dollars in disposable income to interest on credit cards and other personal debts.

Part of the government's role is redistribution and they are not

doing it as effectively as they used to. Personal tax breaks have disproportionately favoured the rich whilst at the same time affected the government's ability to provide the public services that, in general, the rest of us use more.

In BC, the tax breaks that the top 1% of households received over the last 10 years have put \$41,000 per year back in their pockets, more than double the yearly income of a full-time minimum wage worker.

Those who are on social assistance are working hard too – welfare and disability rates are so low that people are constantly struggling to meet their basic needs.

Welfare rates are deeply inadequate at \$610 for a single "employable" person and \$906 for a person with a disability. These rates have been frozen since 2007 so inflation eats away at what is already a subsistence income. We need a welfare system that helps people get back on their feet if they are able to work and allows them to live a life of dignity, without having to resort to charity, if they are not.

Low income is only half the story and we see the challenges individuals and families are facing in relation to skyrocketing rents, unaffordable childcare, high tuition fees and more.

BC's Hardest Working (<http://bcshardestworking.ca>) is a collection of 100 personal stories from around the province that highlights these challenges and reveals a fundamentally broken social safety net in BC.

A comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for BC would address these issues, for the health and wellbeing of all, not just a handful at the top.

If you think we can't afford it, consider that paying for the negative effects of poverty costs much more than dealing with it directly.

Poverty costs society \$8-9 billion per year in higher public health care costs, increased policing and crime costs, lost productivity, and foregone economic activity.

In contrast, the estimated cost of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan in BC is \$3-4 billion per year. Let's stop mopping up the floor and fix the hole in the roof.

It's time to ask "Where is BC's Poverty Reduction Plan?"

Trish Garner is the Community Organizer of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition: trish@bcpovertyreduction.ca



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Orca Network (Whidbey Island)
<http://www.orcanetwork.org/>



The Orca Project (Florida)
<http://theorcaproject.wordpress.com/>



MarineLand Animal Defense (Niagara)
<http://marinelandanimaldefense.com/>

Bring L-pod orca Lolita Tokitae home to the Salish Sea

Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca New Democrats!

Mark your calendars for our
Summer Solstice Dinner
Friday, June 21,
at Olympic View Golf Club Golf Club,
with our MP, Randall Garrison

and our
Annual Summer Barbecue
Saturday, July 27, in Metchosin

For more information, phone Fred Hiigli, 250-384-7374

Victoria Federal NDP
2013 Annual General Meeting

Sunday June 9, 2013, 2 pm
Oaklands Community Centre
2827 Belmont Avenue

Guest Speaker: Murray Rankin, MP (Victoria)

All Victoria NDP members and supporters are invited to the Victoria federal NDP 2013 Annual General Meeting. We will hear from our new Victoria NDP MP Murray Rankin, get a report from the 2013 federal Convention, and elect a new Executive team for 2013/2014.

Please contact Erik Kaye at president@victoriandp.ca or at 250-382-4370 if you are interested in standing for a position on the Executive.

Erik Kaye, President
Victoria Federal NDP
www.victoriandp.ca