



**GOVERNMENT FOR ALL THE PEOPLE**

*A Platform for the  
Renaissance of Democracy*

**DR BC 2005 Policy Handbook**







## ***A Platform for the Renaissance of Democracy***

*To come together on a mutual recognition of difference—that is, of equal value of different identities—requires that we share more than a belief in this principle; we have to share also some standards of value on which the identities concerned check out as equal. There must be some substantive agreement on value, or else the formal principle of equality will be empty and a sham. We can pay lip-service to equal recognition, but we won't share an understanding of equality, unless we share something more. Recognizing difference, like self-choosing, requires a horizon of significance, in this case a shared one.*

Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*,  
Massey Lecture Series, House of Anansi, 1991







## Preamble

### Fiscally Accountable—Socially Responsible

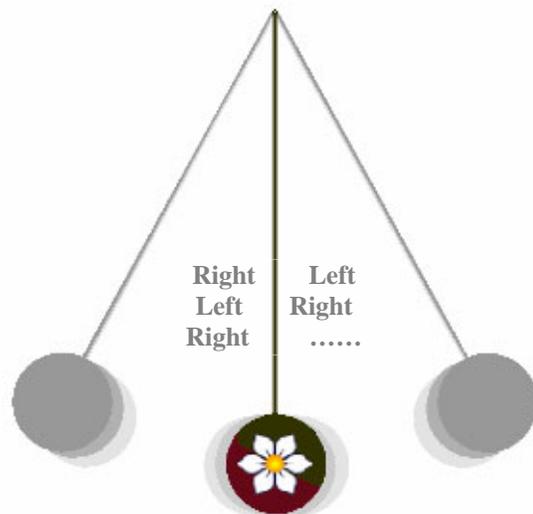
## GOVERNMENT FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

Every few years at election time in British Columbia a radical shift in the political environment occurs. Some have likened this to the hypnotic swing of a pendulum: Right-Left, Left-Right, Right ... and so on. Over time, subject to the forces of gravity, without a force, or thrust, applied to the Left or Right, a pendulum will eventually balance itself and settle like a plumb bob in the centre. The force that drives the pendulum of BC politics is special interests—Big Business on the Right, Big Labour on the Left.

British Columbia continues to have resource-based economy. Forestry, oil and gas, mining and other resource industries require the large capital investments and expertise that Big Business provides to compete effectively in world markets. Organized labour also has a vital role in safeguarding the security of its brothers and sisters. Under the current First Past the Post Electoral system two parties have tended to dominate BC politics--each representing one side of the Big Business--Big Labour dichotomy and each determined to re-write the social contract on its own limited ideological terms.

The irony of the swinging pendulum of BC politics is that in the long term it serves neither the interests of business nor ordinary working people. When business regulations and labour practices fluctuate wildly, business (big and small) lacks the stable conditions needed for a healthy investment climate and working people are denied the secure employment circumstances needed for strong families and individual growth. In the past BC voters have had little choice but to catch the latest pendulum swing and hope beyond hope that it land somewhere in the middle.

At last we have another choice—Democratic Reform BC, a party devoted to creating a renaissance for democracy and to finding practical rather than narrow ideological solutions. The process of creating this policy handbook, and the method by which DR BC has come into being are indicative of the way a Democratic Reform government will manage the affairs of British Columbia. The party is an alliance of like-minded people drawn from smaller political groups all of them committed



*The Pendulum Stops  
HERE*

to providing voters with an alternative to the extremes of both current BC Liberal Party and the latest incarnation of the NDP.

Beginning in March 2004, after more than a year of planning, Tom Morino, the Leader of Democratic Reform BC registered the B.C. Democratic Alliance.



The initial BCDA board of directors and general membership came from the former Progressive Democratic Alliance, a moderate party that had once been represented in the Legislative Assembly. In the following months an extraordinary series of events occurred. The membership of the BCDA began reaching out to other

political organizations and initiating policy positions that if implemented would bring balance to the electoral, economic and social environment of Canada's most westerly province.

In August 2004, with the advice of the leadership of the All Nations Party, the BCDA made a submission to the Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform which envisioned a new electoral system based on broad proportionality, enhanced voter choice and a representative relationship between electors and their MLAs. A significant feature of the submission was a proposal for creating aboriginal representation in the Legislature in proportion to the percentage of First Nations' citizens within the general population.

In September 2004, the All Nations Party of BC, a political group with a strong commitment to First Nations' concerns, made its own submission to the Assembly supporting the BCDA position and enhancing it by providing a rationale and description for how aboriginal constituencies might be created. The proposed aboriginal Electoral Districts were tentatively named Raven, Orca, Grizzly and Coyote.

The BCDA and the ANPBC shared a common vision of building an inclusive society in which First Nations' voices would be ensured a place in the Legislature. They also sought to heal the divisive relationship between successive provincial governments and aboriginal peoples, which has delayed Treaty negotiations, cost the province billions in lost economic opportunities, and for over 100 years subjected First Nations peoples to unconscionable social circumstances.



September 2004 was also a significant month in other ways. The CAER selected the BCDA submission one of the top 15 submissions recommended by members to members for meritorious consideration. The BCDA changed its name to the B.C. Democratic Coalition, the result of an agreement-in-principle achieved in Langley between the leaders of three other parties—the most significant of which was the BC Moderate Democratic Movement, a party with similar roots in the former PDA. Later that month, Gordon Henderson, Leader of the B.C. Labour Party joined the coalition.

Mathew Laird, the Leader of BCMDM joined the board of the party initially as second Vice-President and later became its President. A computer scientist, Laird also played a vital role in the creating the electronic framework for sharing ideas among the various groups that were coming together. Meanwhile, new developments in the coalition building process were underway.



In October 2004, the leadership of the BCDC met in Surrey with their peers from

Reform BC, a party with a 21-year history of support for electoral and democratic reform. Shirley Abraham, Leader and President of Reform BC, and Tom Morino, Leader of the BCDC, endorsed an agreement to seek an amalgamation of the two parties under the suggested name Democratic Reform BC. Later that month the two parties issued a joint communiqué which expressed support for the Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform, and the Assembly's recommendation for a new electoral system based on a Single Transferable Vote. The Citizens' Assembly's recommendation concurred with the both Reform BC's longstanding support of preferential balloting and BCDC's commitment to greater proportionality, broad voter choice and a representative relationship between MLAs and their constituents.



On November 7, 2004, at Kamloops, a joint meeting of executives of Reform BC and the BCDC was held. Don Moses, Leader of the ANPBC, and key members of his party participated, as did an independent member of the BC Legislature. Everyone was aware that they were present at rare moment in the history of British Columbia politics. If an accord could be achieved, a new political entity could emerge with a combined historic membership in the thousands, the potential to field candidates in every Electoral District in the province, and a sitting member in the Legislature.



What marked the meeting in Kamloops, like all preceding steps along the way, was mutual respect, an equal voice for all participants, and an awareness that any agreement achieved would require the consent of the general membership of the three parties. Ultimately, after passionate debate, all present decided to pursue an amalgamation. Two landmark resolutions of the combined executives expressed unanimous support for First Nations' representation in the Legislature and the principle of aboriginal rights and title.

Two weeks later the directors of the All Nations Party held a teleconference, and committed themselves to participating in a joint Annual General Meeting and Convention to be held in January 2005. The stage was set for the next step in bringing together the three parties—harmonizing the policies and constitutions of the three groups. Two harmonization committees were struck—one for policy, the other for seeking a new party constitution. The two committees would have equal representation from each party. Reform BC would host the Convention. The B.C. Democratic Coalition would become the custodian of the new party name.

Early in December 2004, Elections BC approved another name change for the party previously known as the B.C. Democratic Alliance and the B.C. Democratic Coalition. The BCDC would become DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC. The acronym for party DR BC (Doctor BC) would express the party's belief that a cure was possible for the democratic deficit and for a political system dominated by special interests. Already several clear policy positions had emerged that would distinguish DR BC from others in the provincial political arena.

Unlike the Green Party, whose Leader Adrian Carr had expressed opposition to BC-STV, or the Liberals or NDP who have been officially non-committal, DR BC would support the YES side in the forthcoming referendum on Electoral Reform. Our support of the YES vote would not however be so rigid that it would stifle regional dissent or hinder a candidate's or a party member's constitutional right to freedom of expression.

The party it was decided would be committed to a new kind of participatory democracy the hallmarks of which would be consultation, accommodation and respect for all opinion—the



same features that had characterized our own movement towards merger. Under a Democratic Reform government the people's wishes would not only be listened to, they would wherever possible be acted upon. DR BC candidates and MLAs first responsibility would be to freely, openly and honestly represent their constituents, not to be mere party ciphers leashed to the will of the party whip.

We would enhance democracy by strengthening recall and initiative legislation, creating First Nations' constituencies, and calling for free votes in the Legislature. And we would strive in all things, as a Government for All the People, to act in a manner consistent with the honour and dignity of the Crown. This latter principle is no better expressed than in the party's position on aboriginal rights and title, but it also has wide applicability to many other areas of public policy.

A voter who marks a ballot for DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC should have a reasonable expectation that we will not abuse the power of Legislature, as the BC Liberal elite have done, by jeopardizing individual privacy, diminishing the rights of women, tearing up duly-negotiated contracts, and violating international conventions on freedom of assembly and labour rights. A DR BC voter should also feel confident that we will not return to the fiscal irresponsibility that has too often been associated with the NDP, nor do we desire a socially engineered and overly regulated society. We value freedom of enterprise, freedom of choice, and the freedom to explore creativity and innovation.

Very early in the policy process, the members of policy harmonization committee determined that a majority vote would be insufficient for a policy position to be recommended to the general membership. The committee would proceed by consensus. All members, after consultation with their respective executives, would have to agree on the recommended platform. The first step was to work closely with the members of the constitutional harmonization committee to define the Mission Statement, Objective, Purposes and Statement of Principles of the Party. These elements would be incorporated within the DR BC Constitution and would be matters to which every party member would be expected to adhere. This was a tall order, but worth the effort. If two committees could achieve consensus, and the various boards of directors could arrive at a similar accord, then we had a framework for developing a platform that could be taken to the general membership and ultimately to the people with confidence.

No member of either harmonization committee sought a marriage of convenience, or a merger solely for the sake of achieving power. Our common heritage made that anathema to us. The moderate directors of Reform BC had endured a forced take-over bid by the extremists of Family Coalition Party and BC Unity that drained the party's bank accounts and diminished its public support. None of us shared Unity's adamant views on religion, abortion, First Nations and gay rights.

The directors of the BCDC too understood intimately the sense of betrayal that occurred from Gordon "Flip" Wilson's abandonment of the membership of the former PDA. Interim Leader Tom Morino, a former member of the BC Liberal Party, knew all too well what had happened to the values of true liberalism when Gordon Campbell hijacked his former party. And the First Nations members of the ANPBC had a centuries-old trail of shattered hopes and broken promises to consider as we all learned to trust one another.

The Mission Statement, Objective, Purposes and Statement of Principles represent the Party's philosophical bottom line. The "Platform for a Renaissance of Democracy," sets out the practical policies by which the philosophical bottom line may be implemented. The elements of the philosophical bottom-line contain commitments that, if properly understood, speak to values we believe many fair-minded British Columbians could agree upon.

The Mission Statement expresses support for British Columbia's future as a strong and equal partner in a united Canada. There are at the time of this writing 45 registered political parties in British Columbia and over the past year the leadership of Democratic Reform BC has reached out to most of them. Some of these parties are clearly separatist in their orientation, others are what might be described as "strategically separatist." Democratic Reform BC supports neither of these positions. We support the reform of Confederation to the extent that that is achievable through changes such a Triple-E Senate, but we would achieve changes through peaceful means and we would not hold the federal government hostage through cynical referenda that contained the threat of separation.

The Mission Statement also includes support for the idea that every individual should be equal before the law and should have the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law. On the surface this may appear to be a very idealistic statement, but it also has practical application in the Party's policies on education, health care, economics, legal aid and especially our position on electoral reform.

Under the current First Past the Post electoral system each of us is equal in our right to vote, but none of us is equal in our right to have our views or those of like-minded people represented in the Legislature. We are equal before the law, but we do not have equal "benefit" of the law. This principle is no more clearly illustrated than by the two most recent British Columbia elections. In 2001 the BC Liberals with 57.62% of the popular vote received 77 of 79 (or 97.47 %) of the seats in the Legislative Assembly while the NDP with 21.56% received the remaining 2 seats. Had the 1996 Legislature been fully proportional the Reform Party would have entitled seven members rather than the two it actually elected, while the Progressive Democratic Alliance, the parent party of BCDA and the BCMDM, would have had four seats rather than the one it actually received. The All Nations Party of BC was the sixth ranked party in 2001.

By combining forces, Reform, All Nations, BCDC and its component members and parties will speak for a broad base of the electorate currently disenfranchised by an antiquated electoral system. The historic performance of the political organizations coming together under the DR BC banner suggests we have a core electoral support, which rivals that of both the so-called major parties.

A realistic goal for DR BC is that we will wield the balance of power in the Legislative Assembly after May 17, 2005, and hold the party that forms the government to a moderate, fiscally accountable and socially responsible agenda. It is not inconceivable however that we will be the official opposition or the next government of British Columbia. This policy handbook sets forth how we will conduct ourselves as representatives of all the people, regardless of the outcome at the polls.

We begin with the Mission Statement, Objective, Purposes and 16-articles of the Statement of Principles, which summarize the Party's position as an advocate of human rights, enhanced democracy, fair justice, human liberty, protection of the environment, entrepreneurial innovation, transparent government accounting, adequate social services, effective education, and comprehensive health care. We follow with our Platform for a Renaissance of Democracy, which provides a more detailed plan of how we will achieve these goals.

This handbook was submitted for the approval of the general membership of Reform BC, Democratic Reform BC and the All Nations Party of BC, at the joint annual general meeting of the three parties, on January 15, 2005.

**Robert Allington**  
**DR BC Policy Chair,**  
*on behalf of the members*  
*of the Policy Harmonization Committee.*

# DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Members of the DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC are individuals who are progressive in their policies, democratic in their principles, and represent an alliance of interests reflecting the future of British Columbia as a strong and equal partner in a united Canada.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC members believe that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and that all persons are endowed with an inherent worth and dignity.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC holds that the role of government is to develop laws to protect the public trust, which is the environment; to provide law and order, which allows social harmony; and to provide comprehensive health care, relevant and effective education, and a social safety net for those who cannot otherwise provide for themselves.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is to bring intelligent, accountable, effective government to British Columbia on the basis of the Mission Statement and the Statement of Principles of Democratic Reform, and to provide constructive and inclusive representation on behalf of the people of British Columbia at all times.

## **PURPOSES**

The purposes of DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC are to operate as a political party within the Province of British Columbia, to be an open and effective advocate of human rights and enhanced democracy, fair justice and human liberty, and to promote these purposes through peaceful and democratic means.

## **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

DEMOCRATIC-REFORM BC believes that too often British Columbia has been divided by extreme ideologies, and that the Province deserves an inclusive participatory democracy devoted to achieving peace, balance and prosperity. Members pledge to abide by the Constitution, Bylaws, Mission Statement and Objective of DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC, and to adhere to the following principles.

1. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that the distinguishing marks of good government are consultation, accommodation, and respect for all opinion. We believe in freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of choice, freedom of religion and the freedom of all people to express their thoughts without fear of intimidation or suppression.
2. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports fundamental reform of the electoral process that will create and maintain a Legislature based on enhanced proportionality, voter choice and a representative relationship between the elector and the MLA.
3. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes in the common sense of the common people and in government that reflects the will of the people. We maintain that the first responsibility of Members of the Legislative Assembly and candidates for office is to represent their constituents, that free votes in the Legislature are essential for true democracy, that fixed election dates should be retained, and that MLAs should be accountable to the people through meaningful recall, initiative and referenda legislation.
4. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that governments and party members, should uphold the values of fairness and equality as expressed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and honour the Treaties and International Conventions to which Canada is a signatory, bearing in mind the best interests of British Columbia,
5. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that in the interest mutual respect, First Nations should be represented in the British Columbia Legislative Assembly and in the Government of Canada. A

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will create First Nations constituencies in order to ensure that First Nations concerns are addressed in the Legislature. Representation should be in proportion to the percentage of First Nations' citizens within the general population.

**6.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports an Elected Senate with tenure until age 75, that has Equal Representation from each Province and which is Effective in its constitutional duty to safeguard regional interests.

**7.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC asserts that government's task is to serve the general interest, and is neither a business, nor a means for a select few to wield power. Instead, it is a service organization, the sole purpose of which is to facilitate the betterment of its citizens.

**8.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that we must respect the right of individuals and families to live according their values and beliefs while observing the laws of Canada. We believe that support for the inherent worth the family unit and the community are the foundations for the well being of the province and the nation, that the wealth of the country should, as much as possible, remain with the people, that the economy is strong when family finances are strong, and the community is strong when local people have control over and benefit from community resources.

**9.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes in respect for all person's property rights, and, consistent with this belief, acknowledges Aboriginal Rights and Title. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will be devoted to bringing certainty and openness to Treaty negotiations with First Nations and with the Government of Canada. Government-to-government negotiations should be conducted on mutually agreed-upon principles.

**10.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is an advocate of responsible fiscal management, characterized by transparent methods of accounting which are comprehensible to the general populace, long term planning that provides for debt retirement and protection of Crown assets.

**11.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will strive to create an entrepreneurial climate in which the freedom to exercise talent, creativity and motivation are encouraged and the virtues of hard work and achievement are rewarded. We also acknowledge that freedom must be tempered by personal and collective responsibility.

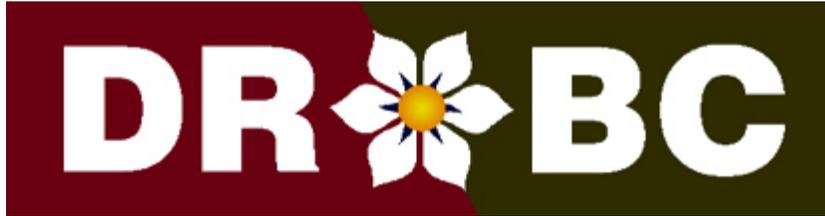
**12.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that real prosperity can only occur in a social environment characterized by compassion, equality of opportunity, fair labour practices, timely and effective health care, and access to education that strengthens each student's ability to lead a full and gratifying life.

**13.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC strongly supports and will effectively fund the independent offices of the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, Freedom of Information and Human Rights.

**14.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that public investment in Crown Corporations, public hospitals, highways, and municipal infrastructure help to create the stable circumstances in which commerce can flourish, and that all such investments should give priority to the long term needs of British Columbia.

**15.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC holds that the stewardship of the environment should be managed responsibly, no part being used in isolation without first considering the ramifications to the ecosystem within which it resides.

**16.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports reform to the administration of justice, including adequately funded legal aid, early intervention, protection for the victims of crime, and the creation of a system accountable to the common values of society and the supremacy of the Legislature.



## PLATFORM FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF DEMOCRACY

### *2005 Policies of Democratic Reform BC*

#### **1. FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

The Mission Statement, Objective and Purposes and Statement of Principles of DR BC are constitutionally embedded elements to which every member of the Party is expected to adhere as a condition of membership. The following *2005 Policies of Democratic Reform BC* are positions to which members of the Party have expressed broad general agreement. The Party however acknowledges that Freedom of Expression is fundamental to the maintenance of an open and effective democracy. The following policies shall therefore apply to public debate.

- a.) Any candidate of for office, or DR BC member of the Legislature may express themselves freely provided the opinions expressed are consistent with the Mission Statement, Objective and Purposes and Statement of Principles of DR BC, without fear of Party discipline.
- b.) If a candidate for office or DR BC member of the Legislature finds that any matter in the following *2005 Policies of Democratic Reform BC* is inconsistent with their personal belief, or is opposed by the reasonable concerns of constituents, such honestly held points of view should be expressed and public debate encouraged.
- c.) A Democratic Reform opposition caucus, or government, should observe the principle that it is better that the government should fall than not to have the wishes of constituents heard in the Legislature.
- d.) In a manner consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a Democratic Reform Government will encourage employees of the Crown and public institutions to discuss, without fear of intimidation or loss of employment, publicly available matters of government policy.

#### **2. FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY**

- a.) A Democratic Reform government will amend legislation, regulations, guidelines and procedures that are inconsistent with international conventions on freedom of assembly.
- b.) The above policy will specifically address, but not be limited to, the recent decisions of the International Labour Organization, which found the 2001-2005 BC Liberal government in violation of United Nations Conventions.

### 3. FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Freedom of Choice is integral to human liberty and has many applications to public policy, The opportunity to exercise choice in the marketplace, in medical procedures and treatment, in the delivery of government services is fundamental to the optimization of Freedom of Choice in society. A Democratic Reform BC government therefore will support various initiatives in legislation, policies and procedures that will enhance the opportunities for choice in the workplace, in medical services, and education.

**MEDICAL SERVICES**--In the delivery of medical services, Democratic Reform BC will encourage the inclusion of dentistry, eye-care, and certified alternative medical practitioners (such as naturopaths, chiropractors, and homeopaths) into the publicly funded health care system as one of the solutions to our current health care crisis.

**EDUCATION**--In education, we will acknowledge the inherent worth and dignity of a teenage mother who has a child, by ensuring that adequate daycare is available to provide the mother with equal opportunity to continue her education in publicly funded educational facilities.

**WORKPLACE**--Democratic Reform BC will explore in consultation with workers, their representatives, business and public sector managers, the enhancement of Freedom of Choice in the workplace. For workers, unions and trade associations, business and government this may provide the opportunity to engage in alternative dispute resolution processes.

### 4. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

- a.) Democratic Reform BC supports what is commonly referred to as “the separation of church and state,” and acknowledges the right of religious congregations to self-determination and freedom of choice in religious practice.
- b.) A Democratic Reform BC will work to ensure the diversity of religious belief and practice within the province is treated universally without discrimination provided it is consistent with the laws of Canada.
- c.) A Democratic Reform BC acknowledges the right of any person to make such religious observances as religious practice may require. These include, but are not limited to right to bear or wear objects of religious practice, the opportunity for reasonable break periods and where possible alternative holidays coinciding with the conventions of religious observance, and the right of persons of conscience to offer sanctuary to those seeking refuge within a church, temple, mosque or other duly constituted place of worship.

### 5. DIRECT DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL REFORM

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports an enhanced democratic society, which will provide voters with more control over Members of the Legislative Assembly and meaningful opportunities for citizen initiated change. Enhancing democracy will mean British Columbians will have a genuine opportunity of providing input into the system, and participation will not to be limited to a mere vote at election time. Key components of our *2005 Platform for the Renaissance of Democracy* are:

- a.) **Support for the Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform**—Democratic Reform BC fully endorses the Citizens’ Assembly’s the direction on electoral reform. The group, composed of ordinary people, randomly chosen worked nearly a year in collecting information, listening to proposals and voted nearly four to one for this avenue of reform. It was a decision that was projected for the good of the people of the province, and not for the agenda of any political party. We therefore invite citizens to **VOTE YES FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM.**
- b.) **Election Finance Reform**—Under current election finance legislation,



special interests dominate the electoral system through their financial support of political parties. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports reform of election financing, which will limit contributions to provincial political parties to those provided by Canadian citizens who reside in British Columbia.

- c.) **Free Votes in the Legislative Assembly**—Allowing MLAs to vote freely in the Legislative Assembly, regardless of party line, provides an opportunity for the defeat of an unwanted government-sponsored bill. Thus the party discipline system is curtailed, thereby allowing elected representatives to more fully represent the wishes of their constituents.
- d.) **Fixed election dates**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports fixed election dates and will seek their continuance in British Columbia governance. The party however notes that the actual date established by the current BC Liberal government may inappropriately discriminate against certain classes of voters, for instance students in our post-secondary institutions.. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will therefore review the dates for fixed election times with a view to encouraging full and active participation in the electoral process by all citizens. We will also explore the potential for election cost savings by harmonizing provincial election dates with those for municipalities, so that local communities will not face unreasonable burdens resulting from by-elections called to replace council members and trustees who seek higher office.
- e.) **Recall**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that the existing Recall and Initiative Act is ineffective and should be amended or replaced. New legislation should provide that Recall procedures will be available upon completion of one session of the Legislative Assembly or upon the passage of twelve months from the date of the preceding provincial election, whichever is the later. The legislation should also provide for increased time limits for petitioners seeking to recall their representatives, and should take into account changes in the voting lists resulting from the death and/or mobility of electors.
- f.) **Initiative and Referenda**—Initiative is a mechanism of direct democracy, which should give the electorate the right to initiate a referendum to seek the repeal existing laws, or to propose a new law. Democratic Reform BC proposes that a referendum to repeal an existing law may be initiated by the electorate by presenting to the Provincial Secretary, within 90 days after the enactment date of a Bill, a petition certified to have been signed by electors equal in number to three percent of the votes cast for all candidates in the last provincial election. A referendum to initiate a new law would require a petition to have been signed by electors equal in number to six percent of the votes cast for all candidates in the last provincial election. Safeguards would be built into the legislation to ensure the initiative and referendum process would not jeopardize human rights, or the interests of British Columbia minorities.
- g.) **Provincial Referenda**—In addition to a referendum initiated by the electorate, the government would have the opportunity to hold a referendum before a Bill were passed by submitting to popular vote a measure proposed by the Legislative Assembly. In order to protect voters from inequalities from the distribution of B.C.'s population, DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC proposes to apply a double majority to referendum decision-making. In a provincial referendum, both a majority of the total votes cast and a majority of the regions would be required for the measure to pass. In a regional referendum, both a majority of the total votes cast and a majority of the constituencies would be required for the measure to pass.
- h.) **Municipal Recall, Referenda and Initiative**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports enabling recall, referendum and initiative for municipal governments and school boards.
- i.) **First Nations Representations**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that First Nations should be represented in the British Columbia Legislative Assembly and in the Government of Canada. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will create First Nations constituencies in order to ensure that First Nations concerns are addressed in the Legislature. Representation should be in proportion to the percentage of First Nations' citizens within the general population.

- j.) **Elected Senate**—As an article of its Statement of Principles, DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports an Elected Senate with tenure until age 75, that has Equal Representation from each Province and which is Effective in its constitutional duty to safeguard regional interests. Theoretically the Senate should function as chambre of sober second thought. Too often, however it is ineffective in this role, because its mandate is dependent upon a system of party-based patronage, rather than electoral support. Elected Senators will be responsible to the people, and accountable through recall legislation. Tenure until age 75 will enable them the security of office needed to truly be an instrument of judicious second thought. Tenure will also permit a transition period during which sitting Senators may retire with the dignity they deserve, and be replaced as needed with democratically elected peers. Equal Representation from all the Provinces while may not be fully achieved until the end of the transition period, will ultimately provide a strong and much-needed voice for the Provinces in Ottawa.
- k.) **Democratic Rights for Youth**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports enhanced democratic rights for British Columbia youth. We would support lowering the voting age to 16. The transition to the age of electoral responsibility should be accompanied by appropriate non-partisan public education, which would introduce the student to their Constitutional rights and responsibilities.

## 6. ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

- a.) **Recorded Votes**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will implement a computerized voting system in the Legislature to allow all votes to be instantly tabulated and recorded in Hansard. This would enable constituents to determine which votes their MLA was present for and how he or she voted on every issue—not just on votes where the division bells were rung. Local media in each constituency would be encouraged to report their MLA’s voting record.
- b.) **Patronage Prevention**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government would institute a confirmation process in the Legislature for the appointment of senior bureaucrats, Crown corporation heads and high-level government positions.
- c.) **Opinion Polls**—Government opinion polls can be a legitimate tool for ascertaining public opinion on policy options that will ultimately affect the public. However, any information gleaned through polling paid for by taxpayers should be available to the public within 30 days of the date on which it is received by government.

## 7. FIRST NATIONS

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that the issues related to aboriginal peoples include some of the most challenging, complex and controversial that governments must address. Meaningful resolution of these issues requires an open, honest and thoughtful recognition of the distinct identity that First Nations have within the constitutional framework of Canada. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will seek a positive change in relations with First Nations, based on reconciliation and accommodation. Recognition and respect for self-determining First Nations, their history, traditional territories and political institutions must be the hallmark of this new relationship. The following statements and policies will guide a DR BC government.

- a. **Aboriginal Rights and Title**—Democratic Reform BC acknowledges the principle of aboriginal rights and title. Section 35 of the Constitution Act (1982) gives express recognition and affirmation of aboriginal and treaty rights.
- b. **Treaty Negotiations**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that unresolved disputes over land and resources have created an adverse environment for both the natives and non natives as our province continues to be developed over, under and through the very lands in question. The status quo is clearly unacceptable. In those places in the Province where treaties have not been signed, the extent of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal title remains suspect. This creates a barrier to business investment, uncertainty for individual property owners and frustration for First Nations who see the environment within their traditional territories being significantly altered without

appropriate consultation, consent, or compensation. The following directions should guide Treaty process and relations with First Nations

- i) **Political Negotiations Rather than Court Battles**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that the energy and resources devoted to legal battles by the government of British Columbia would be better invested in building constructive relationships based on mutual benefit. A Democratic Reform therefore will seek to achieve Treaties through good-faith government-to-government political negotiations based upon mutually agreed upon principles rather than continuing to pursue the failed concepts and strategies of successive British Columbia and Canadian governments, which have created barriers to honorable solutions. Agreements concluded should be equally fair both to aboriginal peoples and to all citizens of British Columbia.
  - ii) **Interim Agreements**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges that the Treaty process must be expedited, but equally important are interim agreements, which will help to maintain healthy communities and allow for mutually beneficial economic growth. As First Nations and the Crown in right of British Columbia begin to benefit from such agreements, this will help to offset the costs of continuing treaty negotiations for both parties. Mutually beneficial economic solutions will also facilitate resolution of broader issues: aboriginal governance, land and resource management, social development, and justice concerns. Interim agreements should not prejudice overall treaty negotiations, but rather should ensure that they continue in good faith.
  - iii) **Consultation and Accommodation**—A Democratic Reform BC government will acknowledge the duty of the Crown in right of British Columbia to consult with First Nations and to pursue appropriate accommodation for matters which may adversely effect land and resource values in territories which are subject to aboriginal land claims. We further believe that First Nations should have complete access to any and all project information on decisions that pertain to such settlements.
  - iv) **Inherent Right to Self Government**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges the inherent right of First Nations to self-government provided it is consistent with the democratic rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Canadian Constitution. Treaty negotiations provide the opportunity to recognize this principle in practice. Canada has a rich history of diverse political structures that have provided services to meet the needs of its citizens. First Nations have an equally rich and diverse tradition. As a resolution to treaty negotiations the powers, responsibilities, and jurisdiction of First Nations, the Province and the federal government should be carefully defined to clarify those areas in which jurisdiction may be exercised independently and those that involve joint authority and responsibility.
- c. **Historic Inequities**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges that the historic denial of democratic and legal rights to British Columbia's First Nations has created a divisive and frustrating social environment that has served neither the best interests of aboriginal nor non-aboriginal citizens. First Nations' citizens were denied the right to vote provincially until 1948 and nationally until 1960. The historic reality for aboriginal peoples is that indigenous cultural practices were outlawed, residential schools separated children from their families and the provisions of federal statutes for many years made it illegal to raise or spend money to advance land claims. The existing conditions created by the federal government's handling of the Department of Indian Affairs and the reserve system have created a costly and controversial third world existence within this land of plenty. Cultures that were once self-sufficient and the majority of the population when British Columbia entered Confederation

have by successive government policies been allowed to decline to a state of unsatisfactory dependence. As an advocate for the interests of all British Columbians, a DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will work proactively to ensure that First Nations share equally in the benefits of economic progress. Strong and self-reliant First Nations will contribute to the long-term social and economic health of the province.

- d. **Democratic Rights**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that it is essential to the peaceful progress of British Columbia, and consistent with legal and moral reason that First Nations should have through the democratic election process, voting and constituency representation within the Legislature of British Columbia. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government in consultation with First Nations will create First Nations constituencies. Representation would be in proportion to the percentage of First Nations' citizens within the general population, and under current demographics we believe this would mean four seats. Commonwealth precedent for such a provision exists within the Constitution of New Zealand, where Maori people enjoy a full and active political life encouraged by a constitutional guarantee of seats in the New Zealand House of Commons. Our position also reflects the recommendations of Lortie Commission (1991) and the Law Commission of Canada (2004). First Nations' representation in Legislature is in the best interest of not only of First Nations, but also of the general public and the government.. The unique status of aboriginal citizens within Confederation means that mutual concerns related to social services, the environment, health care, education and fair justice can only be effectively addressed through this sort of representation. It would also permit issues that effect aboriginal rights and title to be addressed in a timely and open manner.
- e. **Existing Treaties**—First Nations exercising their sovereign authority have a long history of concluding treaties with Canada. But over the years, representatives of the Crown have often not honoured aboriginal and treaty rights. For a new relationship with Canada's aboriginal peoples to be truly meaningful and lasting, the intent and spirit of treaties must be given form not by the breach of provisions, but by full and conscientious implementation.

## 8. EDUCATION

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes all children have the right to a quality public education that strengthens their ability to lead a full and gratifying life. We believe in an equitable system that ensures students' access to effective education is not limited by socio-economic status, cultural heritage, or geographic location. Public schools should provide a safe environment in which every learner has the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, a variety of learning styles are confirmed and achievements are assessed accordingly. The following principles will guide Democratic Reform education policy.

- a.) **Equitable funding**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that a growing inequality exists between students in various school districts around the province and that an unacceptable two-tiered education system has emerged. We believe public education should be equitably funded so that regardless of where a student attends school the same programs and resources are available to all. Core educational opportunities should not be dependent upon an individual school district's ability to supplement revenues received from the provincial government with non-governmental fund-raising. Public schools can and must be adequately funded under a formula that acknowledges regional differences in transportation cost, maintenance, and salaries, and the special needs of rural communities. The current abandonment of the principle of equity has meant that funds from non-governmental sources currently create disparities of as much as \$1100 per student between "have" districts such as West Vancouver and "have-not" districts such as Bulkley Valley. Equity should only be compromised when the social goal is to compensate for disadvantaged circumstances.
- b.) **Educational Entrepreneurship and Sponsorship**—While DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports equitable provincial funding to ensure similar programs and resources are available to all students, we are not fundamentally opposed to either educational entrepreneurship or

community business sponsorship of school extracurricular activities. The problem with the current system is that some students experience smaller classes, have better equipment and materials, superior facilities and more specialized teachers, while others in the same provincial system face school closures, shorter school weeks, extended hours in transportation and fewer teachers. The following approach should help to equalize the disparity.

- i.) **Distribution of Revenues**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government would develop province-wide initiatives that will protect learners from the inequities resulting from the uneven distribution of revenues among school boards. The major source of non-governmental revenues for school districts comes from educational services to international students. School districts entered this field more than a decade ago. Under a DR BC provincially administered, and locally delivered system of offering Dogwood Diplomas to foreign students, this international educational exchange would be maintained and where appropriate enhanced while revenues would benefit all British Columbia young people.
  - ii.) **Sponsorship**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges that local business sponsorship of sporting activities, scholarships, cultural and extracurricular activities is a traditional part of community support for education. Similarly renting unused facilities and finding ways to initiate programs that will make use of school facilities year-round provide opportunities for local school districts to ensure public resources are used efficiently and effectively. Business and community mentoring can also be a valuable source of co-operative education experience for students.
  - iii.) **Branding**—Corporate branding within the core educational experience, or standard public school infrastructure is inconsistent with the children’s long-term educational, psychological and physical well-being. School buildings, playgrounds, auditoriums, libraries, cafeterias and classrooms should be commercially neutral territories where critical thinking is encouraged, and non-material values are fostered. Public schools should not have to depend on private sector branding to provide fundamental student resources.
  - iv.) **Parent Advisory Councils**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC maintains the primary role of Parent Advisory Councils should be to provide a voice for parents and an opportunity for parents to participate in the community school system. They should not be organized on a business model or function primarily as a funding mechanism for under-funded public facilities. Increased dependence on parent-raised funding amounts to backdoor privatization, which exacerbates socio-economic inequalities between school districts and learners.
- c.) **Rural Schools**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that rural schools are more than a place for children to be educated. They express the right of rural cultures to preserve their way of life and are an integral part of a viable rural economy. We believe rural education enhancement funding is fully justified by the provincial wealth generated rural communities. In recent years, more than 100 schools (most of them rural) have been closed, and this is clearly unacceptable to citizens who live outside metropolitan areas. The following principles will guide provincial education policy under a DEMOCRATIC REFORM government.
- i.) **School closures**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that rural school closures should only be a choice of last resort and must take into account the social and economic costs to individual families and rural communities that may result from the loss of local schools.
  - ii.) **Standardized hours of instruction**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports standardized hours of instruction for students across BC. School District budget

savings resulting for 4-day school weeks often in result in displacing costs from general taxpayers to individual families through increased child care responsibilities or reduced opportunities for meaningful employment by parents. Irregular school hours are also inconsistent with educational equity.

- iii.) **Strong Local Governance**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports strong local governance of education. Parents, early childhood educators, teachers, support staff, administrators school boards, post-secondary educators, the Government of British Columbia and communities should work in partnership to meet the needs of all learners. Integration of early childhood services and continuing education opportunities can be one way of keeping rural schools open, active and viable.
  - iv.) **Education Close to Home**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports providing elementary education as close to home as possible. Unreasonable hours spent in transportation to and from school, especially for children in the formative years of elementary education can have a debilitating effect on learning, and place burdens on the health and emotional well being of children and families.
  - v.) **Rural Recruitment**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that schools in the northern and interior regions of the province have unique problems attracting specialized staff to their school districts. Rural recruitment support is essential to maintaining province-wide educational equity and for addressing the specific needs of non-urban environments. Programs of assistance will be established to encourage special needs, music, mechanics, industrial arts, home economics and other specialty teachers and support staff to locate in rural areas.
- d.) **Educational Infrastructure**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will create separate funding arrangements for operational budgets and capital projects. Other government sectors budget infrastructure separately from maintenance and operations. We will apply this same fiscal management to school construction and seismic upgrading, ensuring that school boards do not have to choose between student safety and program funding.
- e.) **Maximum use of Investments**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the use of school facilities by community groups outside of normal operating hours. Presently school buildings are often under-used, representing a waste of public resources. To this end, we will encourage school boards to work cooperatively with community organizations when planning new schools to better maximize the facility's use.
- f.) **Child Poverty and Nutrition**--  
DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that poverty is a significant barrier to educational achievement for many children. Nearly one child in six lives in poverty in British Columbia. While poverty is endemic within certain socio-economic groups, especially single-parent families and aboriginal communities, even in economic boom times, one third of all children can expect to experience at least one year in five living below the poverty line. Hunger and inadequate nutrition can often be a consequence.
- i.) **School lunch programs**—For the above reasons, DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC strongly supports and will fully fund lunch programs for children through the Ministry of Education. We believe piecemeal approaches that target only inner city children, or at risk communities, are inadequate to fully address the problem. A healthy start in life, based on sound nutrition is essential for the future of our society.
  - ii.) **Junk Food in Schools**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will mandate that only healthy food choices are served and available in elementary and secondary

schools. Properly funded school districts so should ensure that schools no longer have to depend on junk food revenues.

iii.) **Nutritional Education**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes the importance healthy eating habits in reducing healthcare expenditures. We will place special emphasis on nutrition education within curriculum development initiatives to help offset the impacts of preventable disease on health. Diabetes II, for instance, an entirely preventable disease, currently costs the provincial health budget \$750 million annually.

g.) **Broad-based Education**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports broad-based education, which includes aesthetic, artistic, cultural, emotional, social, intellectual, academic, physical and vocational components.

h.) **Respect of Diversity**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that school districts and the provincial government should maintain standards of education that embrace diversity, prevent discrimination in all its forms, acknowledge physical, spiritual and intellectual differences and respect the inherent worth of all young people.

i.) **Special Needs Funding**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that children learn in different ways and at different rates. Many children need special support to be successful in education. Without targeted funding, the goal of responding to special needs can not be achieved. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will seek to eliminate the waiting lists and bureaucratic obstructions, which currently frustrate parents of children with special needs. Funding formulas will ensure school districts direct adequate resources to programs, resources, and support services.

j.) **English as a Second Language**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes the importance of support for English as a Second Language teaching within the public school system. We believe dedicated funded should be provided to School Districts for ESL curriculum components, so that needs of children coming from homes where standard Canadian English is not the first language will be ensured a place in school district budgets. ESL programs should permit students to develop the social and academic fluency necessary for meeting the expected learning outcomes of the provincial curriculum, and services should include integrated citizen development and family counseling where appropriate.

k.) **Early Childhood Development**—

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the establishment of programs of early childhood development that take into account the needs of both working families and stay-at-home parents. Publicly we spend more than \$6000 per-learner per-year on K-12 education, but less than one sixth of that in all the other five preceding years. The inequalities in child development that emerge in pre-school years, if appropriately dealt with should help to offset the long-term costs of addressing inadequate school preparedness. The following approach will be taken to early childhood development.

i.) **Universality**—The principle of universality should ensure that no child is left behind. The inequalities of early childhood development reflect many social factors and are not limited to students in high-risk neighborhoods. A recent Vancouver study cited by the Human Early Learning Partnership of BC indicates that while about 20 percent of children who are ill-prepared for the transition to school live in the three poorest neighborhoods, the other 80% were spread across the rest of the city.

ii.) **Comprehensive Planning**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government in consultation with municipalities, school districts, First Nations, parents, educators, health care providers and community agencies will establish a task

force on early childhood development with a mandate to address a wide range of related social issues. The goal will be to establish within two years of assuming office a comprehensive approach to early childhood which will take into account the need for prenatal and preschool care, neighborhood safety, family income support, and appropriate daycare. Daycare should be integrated within a program of universal family care, which acknowledges the value of both at-home and communal child-care.

- l.) The Rights of Teaching Professionals**—Democratic Reform BC notes with considerable dismay the actions the current government which have tended to limit the democratic rights of teachers. Democratic Reform BC believes that teaching professionals should share with other citizens equal rights to freedom of assembly, association and speech. A government that values the best interests of children and families should have nothing to fear from the fair and open comment of teaching professionals. Teachers like other employees in the public sector have endured the humiliation of abrogated contracts, poor faith bargaining, and the willingness on the part of government to abuse the power of the Legislature by over-ruling the reasonable decisions of the judiciary. Teachers should share with all citizens the right to fair collective bargaining. Their right to bargain in good faith for provisions, which ensure adequate program delivery, child safety, and support for children’s needs should not be arbitrarily limited.
- m.) Post Secondary Education**—Democratic Reform BC recognizes that student debt for post-secondary education has reached unacceptable levels. Since 1993 it has tripled. In 1993, the average student owed just over \$8,000. Today it is almost \$25,000, according to Statistics Canada. At the same time British Columbia loses some of the benefit of an educated population since many bright young graduates leave the province or the country to seek employment elsewhere. To address these questions we will not freeze tuition fees. Capping tuition would only limit the ability of universities and colleges to respond to market forces, attract and retain world-class professorial staff, enhance facilities, and ensure British Columbia maintains high standards of research and post-secondary teaching. Instead we will adopt an integrated approach to education finance which will include the following features.

  - i.) Loan Forgiveness**—BC post-secondary students who graduate and remain in British Columbia will benefit from a system of forgivable loans to remove the burden of tuition. In exchange for living and working in British Columbia after graduation, we will forgive student loans over a five-year period.
  - ii.) Student Employment Development**—We will work to enhance on- and off-campus employment opportunities for students with a special focus on first and second-year students. This is the time when students find it most difficult to find meaningful employment related to their educational goals. It is also the period in their education when they are most in need of experience, which will ensure them well-paying future student employment that will contribute to debt avoidance as their education continues.
  - iii.) Affordable Housing**—Tuition fees are only a small part of education costs for students who must live away from their families for post-secondary education. Through a combination of tax incentives for private property owners, and affordable public sector housing, we will seek to help students to avoid long-term debt by making more affordable housing available.
- n.) Apprenticeships**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes the need for not only university professionals, but also skilled trades. To this end, we are committed to establishing strong apprenticeship programs in cooperation with the private sector and trade associations. However these programs, including student evaluation and classroom training will remain in the hands of public institutions.

- o.) **First Nations**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that the public school system has failed to meet the needs of aboriginal students. Only 40 percent of aboriginal pupils finish high school. This compare with nearly 80% for non-aboriginal students. The difference in educational achievement for First Nations’ children begins in elementary school where aboriginal students perform significantly lower on standardized tests of reading, writing, and mathematics. Improving academic achievement for aboriginal citizens will require a coordinated approach which will include:
  - i.) **Recognition of Culture**—Improving academic achievement should begin by creating an environment within the public education system that is respectful of aboriginal culture and recognizes the historic, socio-economic, linguistic and geographic factors that may adversely affect aboriginal academic performance. Many others in our society share the barriers to equitable education that are experienced by First Nations. But inequality is exacerbated for First Nations citizens by distinct funding arrangements which make funding First Nations education a federal responsibility, inadequate institutional mechanisms for addressing aboriginal needs, and differing systems of educational delivery for students who attend reserve schools and those integrated within the general school population.
  - ii.) **General Programs of Equal Benefit**—Wherever possible a DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will seek to extend to all students programs which will have equal benefit for aboriginal students. Provincial standards designed to prevent discrimination should be of equal benefit to First Nations’ students and other minorities. Early childhood enhancement, health and nutrition programs, daycare for teenage mothers and renewed focus on rural community schools should strengthen educational opportunities for the socially disadvantaged in both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal population. English as a second language programs should apply equally to First Nations students whose home language is not standard English, and to the children of Canadian immigrants.
  - iii.) **Advocacy with the Federal Government**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will be an advocate to the federal government for improved aboriginal education. While the federal government funds First Nations’ education, the social cost of Ottawa’s failure to address aboriginal education needs has a significant effect on the general social fabric of British Columbia placing pressures on health care, social services, and the justice system, which concern all British Columbians.
  - iv.) **Aboriginal Education Initiatives**—Working in consultation with First Nations, a Democratic Reform BC government will encourage aboriginal education initiatives and new mechanisms for dialogue, communication and cooperation between Federal, Provincial and First Nations governments and School Districts.

## 9. Forest Sector

British Columbia’s forest industry has long been one of our primary economic drivers. The economic health of this industry reflects on all British Columbians. The challenge in 2005 is to respond to continuing softwood lumber dispute with the United States, to effectively address forest health issues related to the mountain pine beetle, reinvigorate the silviculture sector, diversify the markets for our products, and ensure the sustainability and stability of the industry. To achieve these goals a DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will follow an integrated approach to forest sector economic development.

- i.) **Industrial Co-operation**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes that provincial policies should support cooperation between the forest industry, resource communities,

First Nations and the province in order to promote sound forest stewardship, mutual benefit of all the stakeholders and priorities that support sustainable yields and stability in the forest sector.

- ii.) **Market Diversification**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports market diversification within the forest sector, which will reduce BC's dependence on cross-border trade with the United States and create enhanced opportunities for BC business to participate in value-added manufacturing.
- iii.) **Softwood Lumber**—The continuing dispute over softwood lumber exports to the United States has crippled the potential of the forest sector and put Canadian industry and workers at risk. Working in consultation with the industry, DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will explore the potential of placing a reforestation surcharge on provincial stumpage. Higher stumpage fees would help to defeat the US Dept of Commerce argument that BC logs are unvalued, and aid in resolving the softwood dispute. The surcharge would be applied to the growing backlog of unsatisfactorily reforested lands that has resulted for wildfires and relaxed reforestation standards, and would help industry and the province achieve long-term sustainability and atmospheric goals. At the same time it would create increased employment for silviculture contractors and workers, as we invest co-operatively in the future of our forests.
- iv.) **Intensive Forest Management**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC would establish a intensive forest management program which would include appropriate harvesting systems, prompt reforestation, stand tending, commercial thinning, fertilization and a program of advanced research. These could provide an excellent opportunity for smaller forest communities to be involved and add to their economy by way of small contracts or community wood lots.
- v.) **Small Business**—Government should encourage small business in the forestry sector by ensuring that a reasonable share of the available timber supply be made available on a fair, competitive basis.
- vi.) **Value-Added Manufacturing**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will vigorously pursue a program of “value added” manufacturing so that BC retains the benefits of its resources and BC employment opportunities are maximized.
- vii.) **Raw Log Exports**—We strongly oppose increases in raw log exports. Timber harvested from British Columbia Crown Lands should be processed in British Columbia.
- viii.) **Forest Inventory**—An accurate and current forest inventory must be maintained that reflects all of the values of the forest. In addition a provincial seed harvest and seed-stock program is essential to ensuring the continuing bio-diversity and integrity of our native forest stocks.
- ix.) **Forest Husbandry**—A program of forest husbandry would be established to salvage damaged stands and, where feasible, to salvage normal stand mortality by allowing small business to get involved through a direct sale program. Where feasible small business should be involved in timber salvage from newly logged areas. We also support very liberal access to the pine-beetle affected trees based on a minimal application fee, and limited bureaucratic interference.
- x.) **Forest Ministry Decentralization**—Democratic Reform BC supports the decentralization of the Ministry of Forests. Forestry staff should, wherever possible, be located in the resource communities that they serve, should be the eyes and ears of the forest, and be integral part of regionally focussed forest planning.

- xi.) **First Nations**—Democratic Reform BC will seek programs of mutual benefit that involve First Nations in forestry initiatives and Tree Farm Licenses, through effective consultation and accommodation within their traditional territories.
- xii.) **Regional Citizen Involvement**—Regional residents must have a direct say, in any future land use plans that fundamentally restructure the forest industry and have an impact on job security and community stability. Where appropriate these should be subject to regional referenda.

## 10. ENERGY AND MINING —

**Oil and Gas**—In recent years a much improved the investment climate for oil gas development has been created through targeted royalties, upgrading of roads, the adoption of summer drilling incentives, enhanced tax competitiveness and streamlined regulatory processes. New oil and gas discoveries in the North East have been a significant benefit to the provincial economy. However prudence must be exercised to ensure that the province obtains retains long-term benefits from the extraction of non-renewal resources. Long-term oil and gas prices can be expected to increase as world supplies as depleted. Alternative energy resources must be developed, and oil and gas exploration must be consistent with maintaining environmental values.

- i.) **Petroleum Heritage Fund**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC in consultation with industry and northern resource communities will explore the potential of establishing a Petroleum Heritage Fund similar in structure to that established in Alberta and those in Norway and Alaska. Under such a plan 25 percent of petroleum revenues would be applied to the permanent fund. Over the life-span of North East reserves this could generate a fund in the order of \$10 billion, and the interest could in part be used to aid in the continuing viability of North East communities once the oil and gas is gone.
- ii.) **Offshore Oil and Gas**—Despite the economic potential that oil shore oil and gas exploration on North West Coast provides. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the continuation of the current moratorium on offshore oil and gas development. In the fragile environment of this seismically active zone, where people depend on the rich biological resources of the sea which have sustained them for centuries, the short term benefits of exploiting unproven oil and gas reserves do not merit the risk to traditional sustainable economies.

**Alternative Energy**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the development of wind, geothermal and tidal energy production through public investment by BC Hydro, or a similar Crown agency. Where independent private production has progressed to the point where it can be expected to fulfill public energy needs, it will not be impeded and efforts will made to integrate it into the public power grid through public policy directives.

**BC Hydro**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is committed to maintaining and continuing to invest in publicly owned electric power generation, both to increase capacity and replace aging facilities. A secure supply of affordable energy is essential for creating the climate in which both industry and ordinary citizens can flourish. Public investment will ensure energy prices remain fair and development is environmentally sensitive.

**Mining**—Historically British Columbia’s development has been closely linked with and highly dependent on mining. Because it is endowed with great mineral wealth, it may, on a worldwide basis, continue to be a significant player. However, it can only do so by maintaining a viable mineral industry through security of title, and realistic taxation, which are fair to both industry and the province.

- i.) **Security of Tenure**—Security of Tenure is of paramount importance to investors who, after allowing for exploratory risk, may not be able to realize a return on their investment for several decades. Rules of tenure must be clearly defined and stable.

- ii.) **Tax Regimes**—Mineral tax regimes must be designed to recognize the high capital cost of mineral development. Taxes should be based on profitable operations, which are economic without direct capital funding from government.
- iii.) **Co-operative Development**—Provincial services to the mineral industry will be geared to foster cooperation between the industry and the various government ministries involved in mineral development. Environmental requirements that are equitable and realistic should be established using an open process, which provides for public input, and appropriate consultation and accommodation of First Nations.

## 11. FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY

- i.) **Stable Taxes and Debt Reduction**—Democratic Reform BC supports lower taxes and smaller government but acknowledges the ratio of government program spending to GDP is now lower than it has been in decades. We conclude therefore that dissipating the projected government surplus through increased tax reduction is neither responsible nor realistic. Applying a portion of the projected \$1 billion surplus to debt reduction is however appropriate. Much of the projected surplus is accountable to one-time increase in federal transfer payments and increased commodity prices for oil, gas and forest products. Should the latter trend continue tax reductions may be achievable over the four-year cycle of a DEMOCRATIC REFORM government, but in the short term, restoration of services for crime prevention, health care, and education, and new programs to address early childhood development should be given priority. If tax reductions are achievable, we will focus on reducing regressive taxation, such as eliminating the sales tax on restaurant meals. Our immediate goal will be to achieve a relatively stable taxation environment, rather than increases or decreases.
- ii.) **Balanced Budgets**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is committed to balanced budgets. While we recognize borrowing is at times required for large capital expenditures, maintaining a balanced budget is in the interests of all British Columbians.
- iii.) **Dedicated Accounting**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will establish a system of dedicated accounting, where certain specific revenues are directed to set programs rather than flowing into a single pool. The public can better accept a tax or fee if they know where it is used.
- iv.) **Long Term Planning**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is committed to long term planning; provincial budgets for programs such as health and education will require a 12 year forecast of the direction government plans will take.

## 12. RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Democratic Reform BC believes citizens should have the unqualified right to security and confidentiality of our private information when held by public institutions. This should include, but not necessarily be limited to, all health and income-related information, and personal addresses. Such information must be guarded with the utmost trust. Data collected by credible governments should be for the purpose of delivering programs and benefits not for corporate or private profiling or profiteering. Contracting out of government services, which have access to confidential information, is inconsistent with the public trust.

## 13. CRIME AND JUSTICE

Crime rate statistics clearly indicate the BC government's failure to address crime and protect citizens and private property. Abbotsford, Vancouver, and Victoria are now among the leading metropolitan areas in Canada for criminal code offenses. The crime rate (expressed as the number of overall offences per thousand of population) in these communities was double or more than double that experienced in either Toronto or Quebec City in 2003, according to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Abbotsford had 134 crimes per thousand of population; Vancouver, 116; and Victoria, 106. This compares with 53 for Toronto and 51 for Quebec City.

Crimes such as breaking and entering, fraud, theft and possession of stolen property have substantially increased, giving BC the ignominious title of having the top property crime rate of the 10 Canadian provinces. From 2000 to 2003, the number of property crimes in BC increased by 11 percent. In Quebec, by contrast, property crime actually decreased by two percent in 2003, and Ontario experienced only a 0.2 percent increase.

Crimes such as counterfeiting, prostitution, gaming, disturbing the peace, vandalism and criminal harassment showed even greater increases. During the last four years the number of crimes in the category increased by 18 percent. These crime statistics recorded by the crime trends reports of the BC Police Services Division and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics represent only crimes reported to police. Studies conducted by the International Crime Victimization Survey also suggest that a large number of criminal events go unrecorded, and support the view that generally only 52 percent of crimes are actually reported to police. Seen this way the true increase in property crimes may be close to double that reported by the statistics.

In all the cities in all the provinces and states of North America, Vancouver is now second only to Miami for property crime. On average there is one bank robbery every day in the city (three times the rate of Toronto), and the cost of Vancouver auto theft and vandalism adds \$60 to the premiums of every ICBC policyholder. The average claim for residential and business break and enters is approximately \$4,400 according to Insurance Bureau of Canada statistics. Clearly BC has a problem, and it's time to get tough on crime, while adopting long-term strategies that will address its underlying causes.

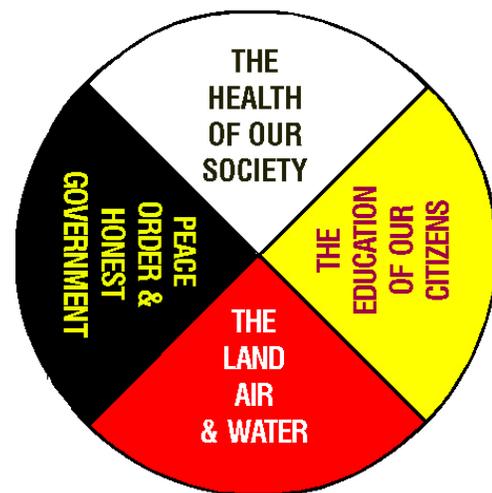
- i.) **More Judges and Crown Attorneys Needed—DEMOCRATIC REFORM** BC believes Court statistics suggest that the provincial government cutbacks to the court system may actually helping to create an environment in which crime flourishes, since much reported crime goes unpunished or unresolved by the justice system. We require a renewed investment in the court system that will require the appointment of a larger number of judges and crown attorneys. As crime rates have burgeoned, the Ministry of the Attorney General has taken a contrary approach of prosecuting fewer crimes, closing courthouses, and reducing staff. The number of hours for criminal sittings at all levels of courts declined from 113,515 hours in fiscal 2000-01 to 101,454 in fiscal 2003-4—a 10.6 percent reduction. Meanwhile evidence suggests the courts are backlogging. According to the 2003-04 Annual Service Plan Report the number of criminal cases concluded fell from 125,545 in 2002-03 to 109,295 in 2003-04—a 12.9 percent decrease.
- ii.) **Diversions from the Courts Based on Merits not Quotas**—Under strategies established by the current Ministry, targets have been established for Crown Counsel that suggest the percentage of those facing criminal allegations who should go forward to court proceedings. Targets were initially set to divert 13.5 percent of cases from proceeding to trial, these have subsequently been increased to 17 percent. While it is perfectly normal for Crown counsel to conduct a rigorous pre-charge screening of police investigative reports, generally accepted judicial standards provide that each case be assessed on its evidentiary merits, not a quota system driven by efficiency standards more applicable to industrial processes.
- iii.) **Service Model Governance, Rather the Business Model Budgeting**--The strategic planning of the Attorney General's office describes the Courts and Crown Prosecution as "core business areas". The language chosen, the goals articulated and the initiatives implemented by the Ministry reveal its orientation. As a part of its Statement of Principles, Democratic Reform BC asserts that government is a service organization, the purpose of which is to facilitate the betterment of its constituents. Business-model economics strives to balance revenues against expenditures and seeks an excess of the former over the latter. Applied to government it treats non-revenue-generating functions as an unnecessary expense to be minimized or eliminated. The current strategies as applied to justice seek to minimize expenditures by reducing services. For the perspective of Democratic Reform BC this is penny-wise but buck foolish. When courts are insufficiently staffed, no real cost savings accrue, they are merely displaced or deferred. In the narrow confines of the provincial budget, reduction in ministry costs resulting from cutbacks in services may be regarded a short-term saving. But future burdens can be anticipated when the resultant backlogs will inevitably have

to be addressed. The short term internal government savings are insignificant, when compared to the broader costs of an ineffective justice system and the resultant physical, emotional and economic impacts expressed by medical bills, missed work, lost property and increased insurance and security costs. Service-model governance takes all these factors into account and seeks not only to address the social costs of crime, but also its root causes and the potential for curative measures.

- iv.) **Review of Policing Services**—A Democratic Reform BC government will work in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, and the RCMP to develop and implement a strategic plan for a province wide approach to providing adequate police resources to address increasing crime. The review will include a complete assessment of the role of the RCMP and will consider whether BC would be better served by a regional delivered, provincial police force.
- v.) **Treatment for Substance Abuse**—Democratic Reform BC is committed to funding drug and alcohol treatment programs, giving those addicted the resources needed to overcome addiction in safe, residential addiction programs of sufficient duration and capacity to prevent relapse and rid our streets of this problem.
- vi.) **Restoration of Legal Aid Services**—Democratic Reform BC supports fully funded legal aid services financed by taxes on legal services that would be applied to a dedicated fund account rather than general revenue and would be independently administered through an agency of the legal profession.
- vii.) **BC Correctional Services**—Correctional services have been significantly reduced during the current administration. Humane treatment of inmates. is essential. Opportunities of rehabilitation, training and education within the environment of correctional facilities must be maintained Double bunking of two prisoners in a cell designed for one is should not be permitted. Combining violent and repeat offenders with the general population is also incompatible with the restorative role of the correctional system.
- viii.) **Director of Public Prosecution** – Democratic Reform BC supports the creation of a director of public prosecutions (DPP), thereby depoliticizing the criminal justice system.

## 14. DR BC’S PRESCRIPTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

A.) **PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC TRUST--**DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC within its Mission Statement acknowledges four primary roles for government the first is “to develop laws to protect the public trust, which is the environment.” The second is “to provide law and order, which allows for social harmony.” The third is “education” and the fourth, “health”. These same values are expressed in a modern adaptation of the First Nations medicine wheel developed by our partners from the All Nations Party. In practice the four roles are interrelated. Without a healthy environment and protection for the land, air and water, we cannot have a healthy society, nor can we have social harmony. And without appropriate education, we cannot hope to resolve environmental challenges. We therefore propose following principles should guide our protection of the public trust.



**Economic Sustainability**—As stewards of the land air and water we are responsible for ensuring that

development is environmentally sustainable. The people's immediate economic and social needs are important, but of equal importance is the heritage that we leave our children and their children. We acknowledge that the health of British Columbians ultimately rests upon the health of our environment.

**Ecosystem-based Management**—Responsible management implies no part of the common resources of the land, air and water should be used in isolation, without first considering the ramifications to the ecosystem within which it resides. Consideration of the ramifications should also include accommodation for species and ecosystems at risk from human development.

**B.) LONG TERM ATMOSPHERIC GOALS**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges that the sustainability of our forest industry, our coastal fisheries and British Columbia's ecological bio-diversity are dependent upon achieving international reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. This will mean reducing overall emissions of three common greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide) and achieving a similar goal for persistent hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride in accordance with international conventions on climate change. It will also require reducing national dependence on fossil fuels, seeking alternative sources of energy, and zero tolerance for persistent non-naturally occurring greenhouse gases. The Party however believes governments should invest locally to achieve global goals, rather buying pollution credits from foreign states, with money that would be better left in the pockets of low-income Canadians.

**C.) HARNESSING THE MARKETPLACE TO CUT POLLUTION**

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will establish a long term business plan for reducing the environmental and social impacts of pollution by establishing environmental accounting procedures that harness the power of the marketplace to encourage provincial and municipal agencies, businesses and individual citizens to reduce waste and adopt environmentally-friendly technologies. This policy acknowledges that significant long term cost benefits can accrue when wastes are recycled and reused, more efficient use of materials and energy is adopted, less toxic materials are substituted for polluting products, and production processes reduce waste production, discharge and escape. We will marshal the potential of hundreds of thousands of marketplace decision-makers including manufacturers and producers, service providers, distributors, retailers and consumers to ensure that the British Columbia environment is clean, and healthy.

**D.) A 20-POINT ACTION PLAN FOR PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT**

**1.) Funding Environmental Protection**--Funding for environmental protection will be achieved through a combination of cost recovery programs for government services, the reduction of incentives to institutions, firms and individuals that engage in environmentally unfriendly activities, reduced tertiary waste management costs, more efficient use of materials and energy, and where appropriate, environmental levies. Where environmental levies are used for targeted purposes, rather than applying the proceeds to general revenue, fund accounting methods will be used to ensure public accountability and transparency.

**2.) Accounting and Planning**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges that under current British Columbia legislation, regulations and practices, neither polluters nor consumers pay the full cost of goods produced by polluting companies. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will adopt environmental accounting and long-term planning procedures that will take into account the local and global, social and economic cost of environmental degradation. The goal will be to maximize provincial economic efficiency, and optimize local socially responsible production, by ensuring that all costs, both social and individual, are addressed in the marketplace through measurable accounting methods.

**3.) Educational Initiatives**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will provide information, education, training and technical assistance to individuals, municipal governments, Crown agencies, institutions and business firms in implementing pollution, waste prevention and global warming response programs. As a part of these initiatives we will

fund pollution prevention and waste management demonstration projects to raise awareness in high-priority sectors.

- 4.) **Keeping Investment in BC.** DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes in conservation. One of the best ways to achieve this goal is to encourage appropriate investment in BC. Oil and gas is a valuable resource to be used efficiently in co-ordination with new technology in bio-fuels, ethanol, bio-mass and other approaches. This will create jobs and keep money in Canada.
- 5.) **Integrated Forest Resource Management**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes integrating forest management into emission reduction planning is an effective way to ensure the sustainability of our forest industries, meet atmospheric targets, and protect bio-diversity. The increase in unsatisfactorily reforested lands resulting from the wildfires and relaxed reforestation standards that has occurred under the BC Liberals poses a threat to long-term viability of our forest industry. Under a DEMOCRATIC REFORM government investments in silvaculture and appropriate fire prevention and control will help to ensure a sustainable forest industry, while protecting the planet with healthy young forests that act as a carbon sink.
- 6.) **Water, Air, Land, Environment and Forest Management Staffing**—The BC Liberals have gutted the ability of provincial staff to monitor and prosecute impacts on the environment. A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will give renewed emphasis to maintaining adequate levels of professional staff within the ministries responsible for water, air, land, the environment and forest management. Environmental protection officers will be given renewed and enhanced abilities to initiate environmental protection.
- 7.) **Environmental Assessment Review**—Under changes implemented by the BC Liberals the Environmental Assessment Office has been made subordinate to government policy, which emphasizes development values to the detriment of environmental protection. DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will seek to restore the EAO ability to appropriately consult with the communities and First Nations and to make recommendations that seek to accommodate community concerns and issues of First Nations' rights and title.
- 8.) **Assistance for Research and Development**—Programs of financial assistance will be provided to firms and publicly funded research facilities that are developing clean technology, and to economically disadvantaged firms and institutions that are cleaning up operations.
- 9.) **Disincentives for Polluters**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will review all government subsidies and incentives with a view to eliminating those that provide inappropriate support to firms responsible for perceived long-term environmental degradation. Incremental emissions charges may be used to discourage waste discharges, even where they may be allowed through permits under the Waste Management Act. Emission charges should be applied to polluters in proportion to the volume of their discharges. Thus as a company reduces or eliminates pollutants, it simultaneously removes a substantial cost of doing business. Significant generators of toxic and non-recycled waste and inefficient energy-intensive operations will be required to create enforceable comprehensive improvement plans.
- 10.) **Tradable Credits**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will explore the potential of regionally administered Tradable Recycling Credits. The provincial goal, if such an approach were adopted, would be to work in cooperation with regional districts to target reductions in materials entering the waste stream which should be recycled.. Regional administration of marketable permits would give local people control over locally identifiable environmental challenges. Under a system of tradable recycling credits, the Province could establish standards of recycling which must be met by manufacturers, processors, importers and resellers of identifiable products. Companies could meet mandated standards by internal recycling, buying recycled products, or purchasing recycling credits from British Columbia re-processors.

- 11.) Regulations**—Wherever possible a DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will use regulations rather than waste management permits to reduce the cumulative effects of waste generation from sources that are too widely dispersed or numerous to be effectively or viably dealt with in other ways. The regulations should be clear and unequivocal and take into the consideration not only the environmental impact of business and industrial operations, but also the choices made by governments, institutions, consumers and end-users.
- 12.) Differential Taxation**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will establish a system of differential taxation on potentially environmentally harmful products. We will focus on items for which safer alternatives are available, and where tax differentiation can make the critical difference in fostering consumption of more suitable products. Where no commercially available alternatives exist funding from environmental levies would be directed to research and development of alternatives. Tax differentiation has the advantage of being a simple low cost administrative solution that can be easily implemented within current tax regimes. Differential taxation will be complimented by tax rebate schemes for higher-priced consumer products such as automobiles.
- 13.) Enforcement and Inspection**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will make every possible effort to encourage positive environmental initiatives through consultation, moral suasion and education, but we also acknowledge that without inspection and appropriate enforcement, the objective of protecting the environment cannot be adequately achieved. A Democratic Reform government will provide inspection services on a full cost recovery basis, so those who potentially endanger the environment are not subsidized through general revenues. As an incentive for compliance, enhanced civil liability legislation will provide for the full recovery of clean-up costs associated with spills and other escapes of toxic substances while expanded civil liability remedies will aim to compensate the public for harm done to the environment.
- 14.) Compensation for the Victims of Environmental Damage**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will implement procedures to facilitate payment of compensation to those damaged by pollution offenders. All companies and institutions that use toxic materials, create, or have the potential to create, environmentally hazardous wastes or toxic discharges will be required to carry sufficient insurance or post financial security to cover potential clean-up costs and damages. This is simple example of how environmental costs can be integrated into business accounting providing incentives for cost-effective innovation. Insurance providers would also create market pressures for responsible environmental management. In addition we will seek to establish a Pollution Victims Compensation Fund financed by an environmental levy on source-point industries and end-users. Once sufficiently established the fund would be used to compensate victims of the catastrophic health and economic impacts that may result from air, land, water or noise pollution.
- 15.) Sunset Legislation for High-Priority Pollutants**—It is the view of DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC that products which use high-priority pollutants and persistent non-naturally occurring greenhouse gases should be phased out, and replaced by more earth-friendly alternatives. In the interim training and appropriate regulations should be established to prevent the release of such contaminants.
- 16.) Deposit and Refund Enhancements**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the development of legislation, which will enhance requirements for retailers, distributors and manufacturers to take responsibility for the disposal of waste from environmentally problematic products. The system would reward consumers as well as suppliers for making positive choices. Under enabling legislation products and product containers would be identified and prioritized for safe disposal and, where appropriate, deposit/refund programs would be established to ameliorate disposal. Deposits and refunds would be sufficiently high to deter unsuitable disposal and to reward suppliers for their recycling services.

- 17.) Environmental Upgrading**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC will provide incentives for upgrading residential and industrial facilities. This may include point of sale energy upgrades to existing housing resources, and retrofitting of natural gas pipeline installations to prevent waste and reduce leakage of methane into the environment.
- 18.) A British Columbia Species-at-Risk Act**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC acknowledges that important changes in protection of species at risk have occurred in the past two decades through the establishment of protected areas, and amendments to federal and provincial legislation. We support these changes, but recognize that the provisions of the BC legislation still remain inadequate to provide long-term habitat security for many indigenous endangered and threatened species and sub-species. A Democratic Reform government will create a BC Species-at-Risk Act, which provide for comprehensive inventories of rare and threatened species and indigenous sub-species, ecosystem based planning and protection based on sound science. A Professional Scientific Council will be established to designate habitat areas for species at risk. The result should be to end the current piecemeal approach to habitat protection, to provide greater security for species-at-risk and generate clarity for resource developers.
- 19.) Public Sector Purchasing**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the enhanced application of environmental protection criteria to the purchase of all purchases within the public sector. Preference should be given to products that are produced with clean technology and contribute to environmental amelioration. Government procurement standards should set the example for how we must all meet challenges such a global warming. Standards will be publicized to encourage innovation among suppliers and private purchasers. Preferential procurement as an element of environmental accounting also provides a way of quantifying the social cost differential between safer products and those that may cause environmental damage. The purchasing power of the public sector should also tend ultimately to create a downward trend in alternative product prices by assisting producers in achieving economies of scale, thus ensuring them a broader private market share.
- 20.) Green Energy**—In accordance with our statement of principles, which includes a commitment to Crown utilities, DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the development of green energy through public investment in Crown-owned alternative energy production that will make sure BC benefits from stable, secure services and that public resources are protected. In addition we will seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by converting public energy use to environmentally friendly sources wherever possible. This may include, but not necessarily be limited to fuel supplies for publicly operated vehicles, buildings and public transit. Public investment may take the operational form of an independent Crown Corporation or a subsidiary of BC Hydro fully empowered to meet public policy objectives for wind, geothermal and tidal production. We will take advantage of the economies of scale and public tenure to ensure long term cost-effective solutions for all British Columbians. Where emerging private sector energy providers have sufficiently progressed to be an integral part of meeting BC’s energy needs, they will not be unnecessarily impeded. Where private development occurs on public lands, title to the land should not be ceded to the developer. Crown-built production facilities will give priority to procurement of services and supplies from British Columbia companies.

## 15. TRANSPORTATION

- i.) ICBC**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is committed to public auto-insurance, which gives British Columbians the best value for coverage. ICBC should be maintained as a self-contained public insurance company, for which no parts are contracted out. We further express support for ICBC programs such as those related to auto-theft and highway safety as public initiatives aimed at protecting the public interest in lower insurance rates.

- ii.) **Highway Development**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC recognizes that a properly maintained road and highway network is essential to commerce and public mobility. We are committed to incorporating long-term planning into the development of highway infrastructure, so that public investment will meet the long terms needs of British Columbia., and that piecemeal development will not create future traffic bottlenecks, and expensive repeated thoroughfare-re-locations.
- iii.) **Competitive Bidding**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports open competitive bidding and public tendering for the construction of public transportation enhancements.
- iv.) **Dedicated Funding**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the utilization of motor vehicle fuel taxes for payment of road, highway and bridge maintenance through a system of dedicated fund accounting.
- v.) **Expansion of Public Transit**—Democratic Reform BC supports public transit, and will fund the expansion of both the bus system across BC and rapid transit in our urban centres. Rapid transit in high-density urban areas with dedicated rights of way is required to keep British Columbia moving. We will however research all alternatives before committing funding, recognizing that “Skytrain” technology might not be the best value for British Columbia taxpayers.
- vi.) **BC Ferries**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is dedicated to ensuring BC continues to have an effective and efficient ferry system that serves the public interest. We will amend the Coastal Ferries Act to ensure that the public interest in maintaining the British Columbia working waterfront and the provincial shipyard industry is protected when vessels and services are purchased. The primary goal of the corporation should be to serve the good of its shareholders—the public.
- vii.) **BC Rail**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will immediately launch a full public inquiry into the sale of BC Rail.
- viii.) **Commercial Transport**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will review policies regulating the transportation industry. Independent business people who provide the majority of the province’s transport services must be allowed to operate under regulations which will assure public safety and which will provide a network of competitive services developed in response to the laws of supply and demand. Regulations must be straightforward and be applied equally and fairly to all operators.

## 16. HEALTH CARE

- i.) **Inclusive Health Care**—In the delivery of medical services, Democratic Reform BC will encourage the inclusion of dentistry, eye-care, and certified alternative medical practitioners (such as naturopaths, chiropractors, and homeopaths) into the publicly funded health care system as one of the solutions to our current health care crisis.
- ii.) **Wage Restoration for Healthcare Workers**—Democratic Reform BC recognizes the importance of all medical personnel in providing quality healthcare. We also believe that honouring contracts and bargaining in good faith is a fundamental responsibility of business, labour and government. For these reasons we will reverse the draconian wage rollbacks imposed by the current government, and we will seek to halt to the process of contracting out the specialized work of those who deal with biomedical waste and hazardous biological materials.
- iii.) **Preventative Health Care**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will place particular emphasis on preventative health care. Working in co-ordination with public health

officers, the medical profession and university based research facilities, we will seek to develop British Columbia as a centre of excellence in preventive care. As a simple example of the benefits, the elimination of fetal alcohol syndrome through appropriate pre-natal intervention would ensure vulnerable infants a healthy productive life, while relieving the health and education system of a life-long burden.

- iv.) **Community Health Clinics**—Democratic Reform BC will explore the potential for community health clinics where general practitioners, nurses, and other specialists including pharmacists are on salary rather than pay-for-service. Locating doctors, specialists and diagnostic equipment in integrated facilities may be an effective way of delivering healthcare to smaller communities which have difficulty recruiting medical professionals, while helping to establish a system geared toward preventative medicine rather than the current assembly line method.
- v.) **Medical Services Plan Privatization**—Democratic Reform BC supports the provisions of the Canada Health Act that require provincial public health care insurance plans to be administered and operated on a non-profit basis by a public authority. We oppose recent initiatives, which have placed MSP administrative services in private hands, and have left confidential medical information open to the potential for abuse under the US Patriot Act.
- vi.) **Elimination of Health Care Premiums**—Democratic Reform BC believes that administrative cost reductions for business and government may potentially be achieved through the universal elimination of Health Care Premiums.

## 17. SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC believes a fundamental restructuring of social welfare services is required. While recent increases in social assistance for persons with disabilities are a progressive step, social assistance programs need to be reordered on a social service model, which focuses on appropriate communication rather than punitive investigative measures. The measures applied to seeking to root out welfare fraud are often not cost effective, and place traumatic and unnecessary burdens on those seeking legitimate benefits. The resources involved would be better applied to aiding those in need.

For employable applicants benefits have been inconsistent with reasonable living standards for more than a decade. The focus for employable applicants should be on creating greater flexibility and opportunities for independent personal development. Rather than subsidizing private employment agencies and training colleges, and giving employment grants which favour selected businesses, alternatives should be sought that ensure those in need have adequate shelter, food and transportation while they seek employment, and that appropriate public counseling services are available on a not-for-profit basis.

## 18. UNIVERSAL FAMILY CARE

DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the development of program of universal family care. This would involve a fundamental redefinition of the nature of work. It would place value not only on providing daycare for working parents, but also elder care. Through appropriate tax concessions it would acknowledge the work that home caregivers provide in nurturing children, supporting the elderly, and providing assistance for traumatic illness and accident recovery.

## 19. SOCIAL ISSUES

- i.) **Gambling**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC is opposed to the expansion of current gaming policies, without the prior consent of British Columbians through a referendum. We believe that the social and economic costs associated with Las Vegas-style gambling anywhere in British Columbia far outweigh the short-term economic benefits. If gambling is to continue it must be under the full control of the BC Lotteries Corporation. The corporation should not have its mandate expanded to authorize new forms of gaming activities that would force

greater reliance by government on gambling revenues. In our view, a major expansion of casinos, electronic bingo operations and the introduction of video lottery terminals are not in the public interest.

- ii.) **Liquor Distribution Branch**—Democratic Reform BC is committed to public liquor distribution and opposes the further expansion of private liquor outlets. Liquor is a substance that has and will continue to cause great hardships for some British Columbians, as such distribution must be controlled. The BCDC will work with the Liquor Distribution Branch and the BCGEU to enhance public liquor stores and expand hours of operation to give the public better access to liquor while ensuring high standards of control are maintained.

## 20. TOURISM

- i.) **Tourism Development**—Democratic Reform BC will support the tourism industry by dedicating provincial sales tax surcharges on hotel room revenues to marketing initiatives and skills training programs aimed at promoting BC tourism.
- ii.) **Tourism Bureaus**—Democratic Reform BC would re-establish staffed tourism bureaus at all entrances and throughout British Columbia, helping to facilitate tourists with maps, RV camping locations, and reservation services.

## 21. PUBLIC ASSETS & CROWN CORPORATIONS

It is the position of DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC that public assets should not be sold to “pay the bills.” The proceeds from the sale of any Crown assets should be applied to pay down the public debt, and any sale should take into account future public needs. A Democratic Reform government, by way of Crown Corporations, would continue to protect the resources and core assets of the province for the people in the province. For example: BC Hydro would continue to provide businesses and individuals with the lowest rates possible, while encouraging private development of targeted sources of new energy for industrial use with excess energy sold back to the province at fair market value. The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia would control the underwriting of motor vehicle insurance while allowing for the direct sale of insurance by independent private agencies.

## 22. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

- i.) **Deregulation**—To remain competitive with other jurisdictions, it is imperative that the agricultural industry be freed as much as possible from control and government “red tape.” To compete in a free trade environment, the agricultural industry—like all industries—requires a level playing field that is conducive to growth. Agriculture represents a significant portion of BC’s gross domestic product. It must be maintained as a healthy contributor to the economy as well as provide a secure food supply.
- ii.) **New Agriculture Markets**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government will work with agricultural producers to promote BC products domestically and abroad. Such initiatives would not only include traditional British Columbia products, but also encourage new products.
- iii.) **Aquaculture Reform**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC government would place an immediate moratorium on open net fish farm expansion as suitable alternatives are sought. There is nothing inherently wrong with domestically raising salmon, humans have been domesticating animals for thousands of years. However we are committed to doing so in an environmentally sensitive manner, through methods such as moving pens onto land and improving water filtration systems. Through cooperative efforts by industry and environmental partners, BC can achieve a sustainable aquaculture industry.

## 23. HOUSING

- i.) **Home Ownership**—Democratic Reform BC supports increasing the opportunities for home ownership, by making mortgages and rents tax deductible.
- ii.) **Social Housing**—A Democratic Reform government will introduce Legislation which will apply a portion of property transfer taxes to the development of social housing. The dedicated funds would be administered and local social housing needs delivered by the regional districts.

## 24. FISCAL MANAGEMENT

- i.) **Legislative Approval of Expenditures and Revenues**—MLAs debate and vote on the government's spending estimates following the introduction of the budget. Democratic Reform BC believes that revenue measures should also be debated and voted upon in the same manner. This would result in much greater consideration of the government's revenue plans, projections and assumptions by all MLAs. If the government finds it has not budgeted enough money to cover its expenses at any point in the fiscal year, approval for more money should be allowed only through debate in the Legislature.
- ii.) **Financial Statements**—A DEMOCRATIC REFORM government will undertake to regulate proper accounting methods for both the government and public business sector. Corporate executives and directors must and will be held accountable for their actions. We believe, in accordance with recommendation of the Auditor General, that the Summary Statements reporting method should be used, because by including Crown corporations and public sector agencies they reflect a more honest accounting of the total government financial picture.
- iii.) **Honest Accounting of Unfunded Debt**—DEMOCRATIC REFORM BC supports the Auditor General's recommendations with respect to a more honest accounting of unfunded public sector pension liabilities and debt.

## 25. FURTHER POLICY INITIATIVES

Further policy initiatives are contemplated, as the Party's Policy Chair and Policy Development Committees, in consultation with the general membership, continue their work in anticipation of the forthcoming provincial election. These initiatives will be brought forward to the Executive of the Party for approval prior to release to the public.