

From: Kimball Cariou

Subject: Response to candidate questions, BC election - Kimball Cariou, Vancouver Hastings

Hello - I'm Kimball Cariou, candidate in Vancouver Hastings, for the Communist Party of BC. Here are my answers to your five questions for parties and candidates.

1 - The candidates of the Communist Party of BC, including myself, are all from working class and low-income backgrounds. In my case, I am also the father of a Special Olympics athlete in Vancouver, a young man who lives with his parents at home. But like others, our health will not allow this fortunate situation to continue forever. I am acutely aware of the health risks and challenges faced by disadvantaged sections of the population in British Columbia - including our many friends with intellectual disabilities. For me, improving the lives of people who are in the most serious need is a top social and economic priority. British Columbia is a wealthy province with vast resources. We have the means, what is required is the political will to improve the health conditions of people with intellectual and other disabilities. This should include immediate substantial increases in social assistance and disability rates, an emergency program to build or upgrade 100,000 units of low-income housing, expanded funding for organizations which provide a wide range of valuable services to people with disabilities, including access to employment training, recreation, culture, housing, and personal care.

2 - People with intellectual disabilities, and their supporters - organizations, family members, care-givers - all have much to contribute to developing new policies on the serious issues they face in everyday life. My party commits to ensuring that they are consulted closely at every stage of this process, and that their valuable insights are reflected in the results.

3 - It is unacceptable that British Columbians with intellectual disabilities face severe health challenges, including the extra difficulty of communicating with health professionals, and even the basic problem of inability to afford necessary medications. We support proposals to improve the training of health care workers, to help them communicate more effectively with people who have intellectual disabilities, and measures to ensure that these valued members of our community have full access to medications and treatments.

4 - The idea of a special government task force to examine ways to improve the health conditions of people with intellectual disabilities is very important. This would help politicians, the media and the public at large to gain a full understanding of these issues, and to collaborate in making policy decisions which can change this situation. Such a task force should have full participation by people with intellectual disabilities and their supporters, and it should be conducted quickly enough to take action sooner rather than later, rather than kicked down the road until after a future election or another government.

5 - Previous governments in British Columbia have done much to improve the economic security and well-being of those who have the least need. Tax changes some 20 years ago gave enormous breaks to the corporate sector and upper-income earners, costing the provincial treasury an estimated \$2.5-3 billion annually. The Communist Party of BC calls to eliminate those tax breaks for the wealthy and powerful, and to use the resulting revenues to improve the lives of all British Columbians who need housing, improved social programs, better health care and public education. This fundamental change of policy must include allocating the necessary funds and resources to make big improvements in the health and well-being of people with intellectual disabilities.