

IntegrityBC Party Questionnaire

1. What is your party's position on electoral finance reform: specifically banning corporate, union and out-of-province donations and capping personal donations?



Adrian Dix and the BCNDP are concerned that the ongoing decline in voter turnout has been driven in large part by the perception of citizens that their vote does not matter. The BCNDP will introduce reforms that encourage individuals to return to the voting booth and increase participation in our democracy as a whole.

A BCNDP government will ban union and corporate donations and strike a legislative committee to examine and make recommendations on other issues around the financing of politics in BC. We will pass legislation in a fall sitting of the legislature and the ban will take effect January 1, 2014. The legislative committee will be struck in the fall of 2013, with a mandate to provide its report to the legislature by October 1, 2014. The committee will have representation from each party and a representative from elected independents. In addition, any party that garnered five percent or more of the popular vote in the 2013 election but failed to elect an MLA will have a formal role in the committee.



The Green Party is a strong advocate of reforming election finance laws. Specifically, we would limit contributions from any individual or organization to \$2,000.00/year. We would ban corporate, union, and out-of-province contributions and institute a limited public subsidy for campaigns.



CHP-BC would eliminate corporate, union and out-of-province donations and would limit the donations from individual BC citizens to \$5,000 per year or per election campaign.



BC First principle #10 states "Limit election funding to individuals and to no more than \$1000.00 per donation." A good example of why this is necessary is my campaign in the Penticton Riding this election. It is impossible for an independent candidate to compete against the Liberal machine that has filled their coffers with corporate funds or even the NDP who get large donations from union sources. I have put in \$5000.00 of personal funds because I think it is important to speak up and an election is the best format to do that. Elections BC states that a candidate can spend up to \$150,000.00 in the 3 months prior to an election. I think the next obvious step is to lower that threshold to a

realistic maximum to allow all citizens to take part in our government.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

In 2011 I introduced a bill to ban corporate and union donations and to limit individual donations to \$1,000 from registered BC voters only. This spring I joined my fellow Independents John van Dongen and Vicki Huntington in calling for a ban on corporate and union donations and limiting contributions to BC residents. I have also introduced legislation that would have required party financial agents to file daily reports with Elections BC during election campaigns so that voters would know who was backing each candidate and party before going to the polls.

2. Does your party envision greater oversight of leadership races and nomination contests by Elections BC and, if so, what are your party's proposals in this regard?



We support the current role of Elections BC in overseeing rules that require leadership candidates and candidates in a nomination contest to report political donations. The BC NDP proposal to ban corporate and union donations will also cover party nomination and leadership contests.

Yes. Our platform is constantly being elaborated and buttressed with evidence from other jurisdictions. We have no specific proposals about how to achieve more effective oversight, but expect that this will be part of our platform development in the near future.



No. Political parties should be able to manage their own leadership races and nomination contests; campaign finance should remain an area of EBC oversight. Complaints of illegal activity could be investigated by Elections BC but this should not be standard practice.



Greater oversight is definitely needed by Elections BC. Our principle #4 states "Elect the First Minister (premier) at large provincially to manage the executive branch of government." In a system of no party politics, as we propose, and the donation rules in our principle #10 a leadership race would be a much smaller affair and limits would be needed to control the spending. There would be no nomination contests in our system of no party politics as every citizen of BC would have the right to put his/her

name forward by following the existing candidate rules of election bc.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

Elections BC oversight for party leadership contests was part of the Independents' democratic reform agenda. We met with the Chief Electoral Officer to discuss what oversight might look like, and we will research possible options following the election to put together a proposal. Political parties may be private organizations, but they exist only to gain public office and must therefore be subject to scrutiny. There were irregularities in the 2011 NDP and Liberal leadership races, ranging from registered cats to ballot stuffing; Elections BC oversight could eliminate these scenarios.

3. Does your party support the principle that all incumbent MLAs should have to put their candidacy forward at each election through an open nomination meeting?



We believe in a democratic nomination process and that's why BCNDP rules provide for all candidates, including incumbents, to be nominated at general meetings of the party membership in each electoral district.



Yes.



Yes. Incumbency should not be assumed to equal the continued support and confidence of party members.

Yes, we support this, but once again in a non-partisan system this would be already addressed as any citizen of BC could put their name forward by going through the Elections BC format of getting 75 signatures on a nomination application. The incumbent could run against all by applying for candidacy to elections BC.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

I think that the general election is the ultimate accountability process for incumbents. I'm not sure an open nomination process is necessary, although I understand the intent and it is an interesting concept.

4. What other reforms to the Election Act will your party consider making?



Adrian Dix and the BCNDP will reform the Election Act to allow young voters to register to vote at age 16 so they are ready to vote once they are legally able to at age 18. We share the concerns of many British Columbians that voter turnout has been declining and will seek ways to encourage greater voting participation by youth and other groups such as aboriginal peoples that are underrepresented in our voting system.

This is in addition to our proposal to ban corporate and union donations to political parties, effective January 1, 2014. In advance of elections we have also proposed an Auditor General Advertising Act that would prohibit government advertising 4 months prior to an election and subject all government advertising to a review by the Auditor General to ensure they are not being used to support partisan efforts.



- Statutory provisions ensuring that party nomination processes are democratic;

- Enact Voters' Rights legislation.



Deposits should be returned to all candidates who follow the regulations and complete their paperwork; not only those who achieve 15% of the vote. The current stipulation favours the established parties and discourages new parties.

We propose a system of preferential balloting for MLAs to eliminate the fear of vote-splitting, etc.

We propose direct election of the Premier by a province-wide vote, also by preferential balloting. This way, the citizens, not party bosses, can choose the person they feel is best qualified to occupy the role of Premier. Theoretically, the Premier could be of no party or a different party from the majority of MLAs. Voters could choose their Premier independently of their choice for MLA, reducing the partisan shenanigans of power-seekers.

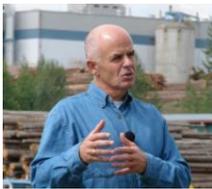


In our vision all MLAs would be independants who run and answer to the constituents of their riding only.

- Premier and Cabinet are accountable to the MLAs and all legislation must be voted on in a free and open vote process.
- Executive branch (cabinet) would be hired by the premier from

qualified citizens outside the elected MLA pool. This would put an end to underqualified people running a department and an end to the typical "cabinet shuffle" that is used to deflect blame when things go sideways on the department.

- A maximum of 60 elected MLAs and riding size that takes into consideration population, size, geography and trade areas. Ie: Kaleden is 8 km from Penticton and all their jobs and shopping are in Penticton yet they were moved to the Boundary Riding.
- Introduce a system of FREE votes for the legislature and its committees
- Make government accountable to the people through workable "Initiative, referenda and recall"



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

These changes, we think, would return BC to a true Democracy. I believe electoral reform is an unfinished conversation, and that there is still an appetite for change. We need to consider voting systems that will ensure all British Columbians are represented in the Legislature. A new voting system must adequately address BC's geography and dispersed population.

I also think we need to make changes to the Election Act that would allow Independent candidates who are "standing nominees" to be authorized to start issuing tax receipts for political donations 30 days prior to the fixed election date.

5. What changes will your party introduce to the Local Government Act, specifically but not limited to the sections of the Act that govern local elections?



We will follow through on implementing the recommendations of the Local Government Elections Task Force in time for the local government elections in 2014. The City of Vancouver has indicated its desire to ban corporate and union donations for its elections so we are open to having a conversation with them and other interested local governments about how to move this forward.



Enact recall legislation applicable to local government representatives.



Uniform election dates to streamline the process and reduce costs.



BC First has no comment on the Local Government Act changes at this time.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

A similar ban on corporate and union donations as proposed for provincial politicians, and a change to four year terms.

6. B.C.'s auditor general has reported on his concerns over the financial management practices at the BC legislature. What further changes will your party introduce to ensure greater transparency and accountability at the legislature?



We will continue to support the implementation of recommendations made by the Auditor General so the public has full confidence that their tax dollars are being spent in the public interest and according to established rules. We have supported meetings of the Legislative Management Committee being held in public and support the on-going scrutiny of the Assembly's practices by the Auditor General and by the public. We also support expanding public reporting to include constituency office operations.



Freedom of information and privacy legislation is much more about hiding government-held information than it is about transparency. This is particularly true with respect to the committees of the Legislative Assembly. The premise of Green legislation is that information should be public as a matter of course, unless there is a compelling public interest (not government interest) that requires confidentiality. The financial

management practices of the Legislative Assembly are obscure and intended to protect ‘insiders’, whether they are government or opposition M.L.A.s.



The BC Legislature must operate under the same or higher standards of transparency than the private sector. We support balanced budget legislation and “zero-based” budgeting for all departments.



The legislature finances are ripe for abuse and it needs to be immediately taken out of the hands of the speaker and turned over to a non partisan committee that has full autonomy.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

I’ve been posting my own detailed travel expense reports online for years, and there’s no reason why my fellow MLAs couldn’t do the same. I also started posting my monthly constituency and legislative office expenses last year after discussions with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. If all parties embraced this type of transparency, we could move past looking for non-existent scandals.

I would also like to see an Independent MLA on the Legislative Assembly Management Committee to allow non-party voices to contribute to our operational decisions. Currently the *LAMC Act* only allows party members to sit on the committee, and it would need to be amended.

7. Does your party envision a system that would allow for more free votes in the Legislature (where MLAs could vote their conscience or according to the wishes of their constituents) and, if so, in what situations would these votes be allowed?



Each Member of the Legislative Assembly has an equal voice and vote. Members of the Assembly elected under the BCNDP have deliberately chosen to work together within a party and a caucus structure to advance our shared values and goals. We are very concerned that British Columbia had the fewest number of sitting days in Canada in 2012 and this will change under a BCNDP government so legislators have greater opportunity to consider and debate important legislation. We are also concerned about the inactivity of legislative committees in recent years and will take steps to ensure there are more opportunities for meaningful engagement at the committee level.



The position of the Green Party is that all votes would be free votes unless they are explicitly declared to be a vote of confidence in the government.



We believe that every vote should be a free vote. We would eliminate the “non-confidence” practice currently attached to budget bills and other bills to eliminate partisan power-games and to allow each MLA to vote his or her conscience without bringing down the government. The legislature could vote to resign but could not take down the government. However, the citizens of BC could themselves recall their Premier or their individual MLAs by using effective recall legislation.



BC First policy # 9 states "Introduce a system of FREE votes for the legislature and its committees."



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

Yes. As an Independent, all of my votes are free votes, and my party colleagues should have the luxury of casting free votes on non-confidence matters without fear of repercussions. The Liberal party allegedly uses free votes, but in reality there would be consequences for anybody who stepped out of line. All NDP votes are whipped votes.

8. How would your party amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to end some of the abuses that have been reported recently regarding the Quick Wins strategy, specifically in the areas of the law that apply to political staff and what has become known as “oral government?”



We believe that the process of developing public policy must be transparent so the public can have confidence that decisions were made in the public interest. We want to restore this confidence in British Columbia’s freedom of information laws and will strengthen laws guided by the work undertaken by the Special Committee to Review the Freedom of Information and Protection

of Privacy Act.



- Require that all-party parliamentary committees hold public hearings on draft legislation...
- Reduce the power of the Premier's office
- Strengthen and support the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- Introduce effective whistle-blower legislation



Transparency and Freedom of Information are essential for an open democracy. Currently, this government does not allow access to important health statistics based on "political correctness". This must change.



Our policy #8 states " Make government accountable to the people through workable 'Initiative, Referenda and Recall'" addresses this question well.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

We need to re-establish, either by legislation or policy, the requirement to record minutes of meetings and make them available publicly within an appropriate timeframe. Matters that require some short-term secrecy (like cabinet discussions regarding pre-budget deliberations, tax policy changes, or personnel matters) should still be recorded and made publicly available when the reason for their secrecy is no longer valid.

9. Will your party introduce other laws – sometimes called Sunshine laws – including but not limited to whistleblower protection, as called for by BC's auditor general?



We will closely examine the Auditor General's recommendation in this regard and the investigations that gave rise to it. The Office of the Auditor General provides anonymity in the audit process for people working in government but provisions with respect to protection from potential reprisals need to be considered.



Yes.



We do not yet have a policy in this regard but of course any person who comes forward with information in the public interest in regards to safety, the environment, information being kept from the public or misinformation being disseminated to the public must be protected from malicious reprisals by those who are concealing this information...both in businesses and government.



We would implement procedural reviews: 1-Review systematic control of records. 2-review record management. 3-Review employee responsibilities.



Cariboo North independent candidate Bob Simpson

BC should have a whistleblower protection law. We also need to strengthen the *Lobbyists Registration Act*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act*, the *Legislative Assembly Management Committee Act*, and other legislation that would make the operations and decisions of government more public and transparent on an ongoing basis.