Policy Document of the British Columbia Conservative Party

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Policies of the British Columbia Conservative Party

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PREAMBLE:

The British Columbia Conservative Party is firmly committed to the principle that government must be accountable to the taxpayers of the province. Income that is received by the government whether through taxation or other means, is held "in trust" for the citizens of the province. When we form government, we will accept that it is our responsibility to manage those funds in the most efficient and accountable manner possible.

The BC Conservative Party is based on the dual principles that the Party must be totally accountable to its members, and when forming the government, that our government will be accountable to all the people of the province.

The Party also believes that all individuals and organizations within government, including public servants at all levels, must be held accountable for the prudent management of monies and the efficient delivery of services. This applies across the spectrum of government operations, including education, health care, electrical power, and any other service provided by government.

To this end, a BC Conservative government will be dedicated to ensuring a clear definition of expectations and benchmarks, regular monitoring and testing of the performance of these delivery systems, and a structure of transparency and accountability involving those empowered to deliver these services.

ARTICLE 1. Guiding Principles

1.1. We believe in clearly defined public policies and programs that are affordable, effective and accountable to the people.

1.2. We believe in managing with the highest standards of integrity and transparency; British Columbians are entitled to full knowledge of services rendered.

1.3. We believe in the rights and responsibilities of all British Columbians and that governments at all levels are in place to serve and respect all individuals and their families, including freedom from unnecessary laws and regulations

1.4. We believe that Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) should be empowered to best represent the interests of their Constituents.

1.5. We believe in restructuring the taxation system to maximize benefits for the greatest number of BC citizens.

1.6. We believe in:

- a competitive free enterprise system as the basis for prosperity and growth.
- protection and management of our environment and natural resources to optimize benefits now and into the future.
- a rigorous system of law and order that focuses on the rights of victims.
- patient-centered health care.
- student-focused education.
- Protection of the rights and freedoms of individual British Columbians.
- inter-Provincial "Free Trade" across Canada.

1.7. We believe in the principle of equality for all British Columbians, with special privileges for none. This principle includes the protection of private property, the freedom of the individual, and freedom of speech, worship and lawful assembly.

ARTICLE 2 Democratic Reform and Accountable Government

2.1 Provincial Government

2.1.1. Review the purposes, budgets and structures of all existing government entities to both assess their need and requirement for the good governance of the citizens of British Columbia; to eliminate duplication, waste and red tape, and to determine whether such services would be best delivered by the public or private sectors.

2.1.2. Introduce a zero-based budgeting program on a case-by-case basis including all government departments, Crown corporations and any other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia.

2.1.3. Introduce, where appropriate, multi-year budgeting and funding to enable government to effectively plan and transform services to achieve greater efficiencies, effectiveness, and streamlining of services to citizens, and refining of internal services to improve information sharing, decision-making support and transparency.

2.1.4. Establish an independent review to determine the compensation, pension, and severance packages of elected and appointed governmental officials, including officers and senior personnel of Crown corporations and any other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia.

2.1.5. Limit the size of the provincial Cabinet to provide maximum efficiency in governance.

2.1.6. Establish an Independent Provincial Ethics Commissioner's office and institute strict conflict of interest guidelines for MLAs, and all other government employees including those of Crown corporations and other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia.

2.1.7. Establish target dates for Throne Speeches, Budget Announcements, and Legislative Sessions.

2.1.8. Establish a truly open and comprehensive Freedom of Information Act which would be reflective of costs of delivery of such services.

2.1.9. Ensure that salaries and expenses of MLAs, Cabinet ministers and all senior officials of the government are made public at least annually and are easily accessible to all British Columbians.

2.1.10. Include among "senior officials" all those holding senior or managerial positions in Crown corporations and other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia.

2.1.11. Ensure that all Crown corporations and other organizations owned, controlled, or supported by the Government of British Columbia:

a) provide only services that are deemed essential for the sectors in which they operate.
b) provide these services at rates comparable to or less than what would be charged by the private sector.
c) provide service levels that are equal or superior to what could be provided by the private sector.
d) ultimately report to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

2.1.12. Enact legislation relating to political contributions to registered British Columbia political parties, limiting such donations to those received only from individuals and banning donations from corporations, unions and all other similar entities.

2.2 Municipal Government

2.2.1. Ensure that any downloading of services from the province to municipalities will only be undertaken with openness and accompanied by appropriate resources and funding.

2.2.2. Ensure that Crown corporations and other entities owned or controlled by the Government of BC are subject to local zoning and land-use by-laws provided same are fair and reasonable.

2.2.3. Amend current legislation so that municipalities are required to hold referenda for borrowing for capital projects and to ensure the "alternative approval process", also known as the "counter-petition" process, is prohibited.

ARTICLE 3. Economic Prosperity and Incentives

3.1. The BC Conservative Party believes that a government should:

3.1.1. Enact all legislation in accordance with the concept of economic growth and job creation being most effectively driven through private enterprise as the engine of the economy.

3.1.2. Recognize that the role of the Provincial Government is to ensure delivery of essential services.

3.1.3. Introduce competitive provincial, personal and corporate tax rates to encourage investment, growth and job creation in all regions of British Columbia.

3.1.4. Cut red tape and regulatory burdens by a systematic review, simplification and reform of all Governmental regulations and similar requirements.

3.1.5. Work to eliminate the duplication and overlap of government authorities and services including the integration and reduction of provincial ministries.

3.2. Having regard to the fact that British Columbia is positioned as Canada's gateway to Pacific Rim Countries, the BC Conservative Party believes that:

3.2.1. It is vital that Canadian exporters have access to the ever increasing markets of Pacific Rim countries. To this end, development of the infrastructure required to build the "gateway" should be facilitated in consultation with local communities to ensure resultant trade opportunities, jobs and other benefits are readily available to all British Columbians.

ARTICLE 4. Financial Management

4.1 Accountability

4.1.1. Every tax dollar collected from British Columbians is received in trust. This trust must be managed and accounted for according to the highest standards of integrity and transparency. The people's scrutiny of all spending decisions should be encouraged and welcomed.

4.1.2. All new spending initiatives will be supported by recommendations of reductions in current programs and will be weighted against the need for a balanced budget.

4.1.3. All existing programs will be evaluated each year during a budget exercise that will include a mandatory test of necessity.

4.1.4. The existing framework of public sector accountability and financial reporting legislation will be reviewed and amended to strengthen accountability, transparency, and citizen engagement and consultation. This review shall in all ways apply to all Crown corporations, commissions, and any and all other entities owned or controlled by the Government of British Columbia.

4.2 Spending

4.2.1. Except in a provincial emergency, budget surpluses should be mandated. All surpluses should be used to:

a) pay debts owed, both directly and indirectly by the Government of British Columbia and any Crown corporations, institutes and other similar entities in which the government has an interest and responsibility; or
b) reduce taxes.

4.2.2. Advertising programs for government departments, Crown corporations, and all other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia, should be limited to nationally-competitive areas such as tourism promotion, and to those instances where there is a clear requirement to inform the public.

4.2.3. Ensure that open tendering on all government contracts allows fair competition for businesses and provides better value to taxpayers if cost effective.

4.2.4. Our elected officials will implement an environment of empowerment for public servants from the bottom up. An employee or anyone who exposes unethical or wasteful government behavior will be protected under legislation.

4.2.5. All existing activities of the government, Crown corporations and other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia must be reviewed to determine if they can be better operated by the competitive market.

4.2.6. The Auditor General must be given adequate funding to audit all government departments, Crown corporations and other organizations owned, controlled or supported by the Government of British Columbia with the goal of restoring public confidence in the financial affairs of the Government of British Columbia.

4.3 Taxation

4.3.1. Eliminate the Carbon Tax and its associated regulatory structure.

4.3.2. Undertake a complete review of taxes, licenses, fees and permits within 18 months of becoming government to determine a prioritized list of removals, reductions and amendments.

ARTICLE 5. Health Care

5.1. Review all aspects of health care policy, service and delivery. Such a review should examine opportunities for increased efficiency and to develop mechanisms to ensure health care decisions are made in the best interests of patients and taxpayers, based on population and demographics, cost effectiveness and patient outcomes.

5.2. Support the basic principles of the Canada Health Act of Universality, including accessibility, comprehensiveness and portability; with the full understanding the delivery of health care is a provincial responsibility in accordance with the Constitution of Canada.

5.3. Support the principles of public accountability and transparency in the delivery of health care services and ensure health care boards reflect regional population distribution and take into account the local and regional health care needs.

5.4. Optimize the delivery of health care.

5.4.1. Ensure health care funding is focused on the best interests of patients and patient care, above all other interests.

5.4.2. Support the concept of a strong publicly-funded health system as the primary facilitator of health care services in British Columbia.

5.4.3. Ensure that all British Columbians have access to quality care, regardless of their ability to pay.

5.4.4. Support the principle that the citizens of British Columbia need to have input into the type of health care system they want.

5.4.5. Study other health care systems worldwide to look for ways to improve our own, including ways to reduce increasing wait times.

5.4.6. Develop objectives and quality indicators to assess how effectively health care is being delivered.

5.4.7. Support and recognize the benefits of formal and informal care givers and long-term care for patients at home.

5.4.8. Recognize the increasing burden of chronic illness and supporting initiatives for better care of these patients resulting in fewer complications, lower cost and better quality of life.

5.4.9. Support and recognize the benefits of community care facilities as well as including the Community Health Representative program, particularly for services in rural areas.

5.4.10. Support the development of an efficient and affordable mental health and addiction initiative for British Columbians.

5.4.11. Support strategies that allow medications to be purchased at the lowest costs possible.

5.4.12. Support the digitization of all patient data and implementation of a province- wide medical electronic health record system and making such records accessible to the individual, while ensuring the utmost confidentiality.

5.4.13. Support a primary care delivery system that involves a multi-disciplinary team approach.

5.5. Funding and costs.

5.5.1. Support the principle of stable transparent funding of health care and that the provincial and federal governments should cooperate in the management of health care.

5.5.2. Recognize the rising demand for health care in British Columbia will require additional funding or a reduction of services if sufficient savings cannot be found through more effective utilization of existing resources.

5.5.3. Provide flexibility in the delivery of health services, including consideration of a balance of public and private options, in consultation with British Columbians.

5.5.4. Ensure full transparency by requiring regional health care authorities to publish, annually, a breakdown of all costs, including administrative costs and salaries and that this be made readily available to the public.

5.5.5. Ensure that new funding, ear-marked for patient care, is not diverted for other purposes and provide a complete accounting for all such additional funds.

5.5.6. Reduce costs through the increased utilization of a variety of health care professionals, where their use is appropriate and cost effective.

5.5.7. Reduce costs through the development of the electronic health record and the provision of telemedicine capabilities to assist health professionals practicing in rural and remote areas.

5.6. Training

5.6.1. Expand training and post secondary programs to graduate more health care professionals.

5.6.2. Develop and implement a training, retention and recruitment program in consultation with health care providers and local stakeholders that would offer significant economic benefits to medical personnel to work in remote areas.

5.7. Wellness

5.7.1. Promote a preventative health care and wellness program.

ARTICLE 6. Education

The BC Conservative Party supports:

6.1. The principle that parents are the child's first and most important teachers. Therefore, we are committed to:

6.1.1. Increasing meaningful parental choice by ensuring that the taxpayer's dollars follow the student to provincially approved educational options, thus giving British Columbia parents an increased opportunity to access affordable educational programs for their children which are in accordance with student needs and parental values.

6.2. Provincial Testing

6.2.1. Develop more clearly defined learning outcomes and ensuring alignment of revamped provincial tests to these outcomes.

6.2.2. Implement a new continuous improvement accountability framework. This framework will include achieving provincially and locally identified outcomes, publicly reported results and using results for informed decision-making for the purpose of improving programs and student results in subsequent years.

6.3. Administration

6.3.1. Make the public interest paramount in the evaluation of credentials, issuance, suspension, cancelation of certification of all licensed educators and in any investigations into the professional conduct of such educators.

6.3.2. Ensure that any downloading of services from the province to school districts will only be undertaken with openness and accompanied with appropriate resources and funding.

6.4. Strengthen Student Learning as the Prime Focus for Primary and Secondary Education in British Columbia.

6.5. Post-Secondary Education

6.5.1. Give qualified British Columbian students priority for admission to the province's post-secondary educational institutions.

6.5.2. Increase training and apprenticeships in the trades and technical sectors.

6.5.3. Strengthen the on-line learning capabilities provided by our colleges and technical institutes.

6.5.4. Increase scholarship opportunities for students.

ARTICLE 7. Environment

7.1 Preamble

We recognize that BC's diverse environmental assets are the envy of much of the world and should be preserved and protected, and that environmental and fiscal sustainability and optimization should be the hallmark of a government's policy. To ensure this, our government will work with the public, landowners, involved business interests and other stakeholder groups.

7.2. Conserve British Columbia's Environment

7.2.1. Balance economic development opportunities with environmental protection.

7.2.2. Encourage conservation of water taken from lakes or rivers for agricultural, industrial and domestic purposes.

7.2.3. Encourage local management of watersheds where feasible. Where a long-term, sustainable local Watershed Management Board is in place, with participation from appropriate stakeholders group and levels of government, Provincial funds which would ordinarily be expended for Watershed Management would be diverted to the local Watershed Management Board for local control of watershed issues.

7.2.4. Ensure that public health is always the first priority with respect to watershed management issues, particularly with respect to the disposal of industrial and other waste into riparian areas.

7.2.5. Review and assess all subsidies for alternate energy production to ascertain which systems are the most practical and create the minimum amount of negative environmental impact.

7.2.6. Recognize the value of parks to society and protect these areas from intrusive activities while improving access for all British Columbians.

7.2.7. Support the use of a single, joint federal and provincial environmental review process when appropriate.

7.2.8. Recognizing the importance of hunters and fishers to British Columbia's tourism and conservation, we will undertake to protect hunters and fishers rights, while at the same time ensuring British Columbia's fish and wildlife populations are managed in a sustainable manner.

7.2.9. In all ways carry out responsible, fact-based stewardship of the environment. The government will base its decisions on the best available scientific data.

ARTICLE 8. Public Safety and Justice

The BC Conservative Party supports:

8.1. Improvements in the Justice System and Victim's Rights

8.1.1. Strengthen legislation to streamline our justice system to promote timely access to justice for all individuals, families and businesses in British Columbia.

8.1.2. Ensure the rights of victims of crime take precedence over those of criminals.

8.1.3. Strengthen legislation requiring compensation from convicted persons to the victims of their crimes.

8.1.4. Reviewing and modifying the mandate of the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal to ensure the rights and privileges of all BC citizens are respected.

8.1.5. Review and expand the courts operation, particularly the provincial lower courts system, by making greater use of the Justices of the Peace and investigating the adoption of the Lay Magistrate system.

8.1.6. Review and improve the operations of the Courts with the purpose of reducing the costs of and delays in the justice system, thereby increasing efficiency.

8.1.7. Have legally-binding arbitration made available in civil disputes as an alternative to the adversarial court system.

8.1.8. Introduce initiatives for family maintenance enforcement to achieve improved compliance with maintenance and visitation orders in family related matters.

8.2 Policing

8.2.1. Ensure sufficient funding for municipal policing to allow for effective policing and protection of British Columbians.

ARTICLE 9. Private Property Rights

9.1. Clarification of Property Rights and Land Titles

9.1.1. Strengthen legislation for the protection of property rights for all British Columbians.

9.1.2. Strengthen laws relating to land title and land title registration to ensure that certificates of title issued to purchasers of property contain any and all reservations or charges as to any particular title. Once issued, such title shall be a complete defense against all unregistered claims of any nature and kind that may be put forward thereafter.

9.1.3 Review and modify the Wills Variation Act to provide greater freedom and protection of property rights to all citizens in BC.

9.1.4 Control the administration, application and interpretation of the Firearms Act with the goal of reducing paperwork and legal hurdles for firearms owners in BC.

9.2. Strata Property Legislation

9.2.1. The BC Conservative Party supports public consultation with strata owners before updating and strengthening the Strata Property Act to protect the rights of strata property owners by, amongst others:

9.2.1.1. Legislate penalties and other remedies in cases of fraudulent misrepresentation by strata property developers, owners and vendors.

9.2.1.2. Define and require full and proper disclosure of strata corporation business matters.

9.2.1.3. Define offenses, penalties and the means of enforcing them where the rights of a strata owner are being violated by non-compliance with legislation.

9.2.1.4. Strengthen accountability of strata management companies and providing for standard, fair and effective provisions in strata management contracts.

9.2.1.5. Require full and complete disclosure of strata rules, regulations and conditions of common property to a strata buyer at time of purchase.

9.2.1.6. Establish and provide ready access to an efficient, effective and binding dispute resolution process.

ARTICLE 10. Natural Resources

In recognition of the government's responsibility to facilitate proper stewardship of both renewable resources (forestry, fisheries, wildlife, etc) and non-renewable resources such as hydro-carbons and minerals, the BC Conservative Party supports the actions listed below.

10.1. Overall Principles

10.1.1. Acknowledge the prosperity of many BC communities and the provincial economy as a whole is dependent upon the responsible utilization of our abundant natural resources.

10.1.2. Balance responsible environmental and taxation policies to encourage those activities best able to thrive and prosper in the diverse regions of our province.

10.2. Renewable Resources – Forestry

10.2.1. Protect the forest land base in perpetuity by retaining all Crown forest land in public ownership, to ensure the generation of wealth and benefits for all British Columbians.

10.2.2. Maintain and protect the integrity and productivity of the Crown forest land base to generate wealth through forest products including wood for industrial uses, wildlife,

water, fisheries range and recreation.

10.2.3. Restore the integrity and capability of the British Columbia Forest Service to accurately inventory the forest resource, including accurate measurement of wood harvested, plan for and manage the resource thus ensuring a long-term stable flow of wood for industry, and in cooperation with other agencies provide for wildlife habitat needs, water quality and yield, fisheries values, livestock range and unimpeded access for recreation.

10.2.4. Conduct a public review of Crown forest land tenures and, where appropriate, modify or change forms of tenure to ensure wealth and employment generation throughout provincial communities and to ensure that the maximum proportion industrial forest resources are processed within the province.

10.2.5. Invest in forest research and restoring established forest management procedures including prompt reforestation, tree quality improvement via breeding programs and silviculture practices such as thinning of young stands. This will improve yields from forest land and preemptively improve forest health against pest and disease outbreaks, providing a strong healthy forest land base for future generations.

10.2.6. Encourage further value-added uses of British Columbia's forest resources through product research, innovation and development, and if appropriate, new tenure forms.

10.2.7. Actively seek out, encourage and develop diversified markets for British Columbia's forest products.

10.2.8. Promote venues and frameworks for comprehensive open consultations between government, industry and public users of forest land to develop long-term objectives for forest land management and its yield of differing resources.

10.3. Renewable Resources – Fisheries

10.3.1. The commercial and sports fisheries are a crucial component of the British Columbian economy and the government must be an advocate for BC Fisheries.

10.3.2. The regulation of the fish farming industry is a federal responsibility, but the provincial government should take every means necessary to ensure that the federal government fulfills its mandate in this area, and must be conducted in a manner compatible with preservation of wild fisheries stocks.

10.3.3. Because of the value to British Columbians that the sports fishery brings through both resident and tourist activities, the government must closely monitor our lakes and rivers to ensure that our aquatic resources are enhanced and preserved for future generations.

10.3.4. To achieve this end, the government must promote cooperation between our universities, scientific communities, the public and all other stakeholders engaged in fisheries harvesting, production and research to achieve an environmentally responsible balance of this valuable resource.

10.4. Renewable Resources – Wildlife

10.4.1. Review all existing wildlife and fisheries policies and programs and modify or adjust as needed.

10.4.2. Review organizational structures, staffing levels and funding and ensure adequacy as required for effective, efficient and competent research, inventory and management of B.C.'s fish and wildlife resources. Given the geographic vastness and complexity of B.C., we will increase enforcement staff and resources to match the task of overseeing compliance with wildlife, hunting, trapping and fisheries regulations.

10.4.3. Recognize the importance of hunters, trappers and fishermen for B.C.'s conservation, economy and tourism and will undertake to protect hunters, trappers and fishermen's rights, in accord with principles outlined in Articles 1 and 15 to ensure that, in co-operation with the B.C. Forest Service, there is open access through a variety of methods for hunting, fishing and trapping on all provincial Crown lands.

10.4.4. Recognize the important health values derived from participating in hunting and fishing activities and will explore ways to increase such participation, especially by seniors and youth, including simplification of Regulations.

10.4.5. Recognize that the Fish and Wildlife Branch has suffered chronic funding shortages, explore the directing of all revenues from the sale of fishing and hunting licenses and tags to the Branch budget.

10.4.6. Encourage an increase of habitat improvement projects aimed at increasing wildlife population levels in relation to habitat carrying capacity.

10.5. Renewable Resources – Electrical Energy

10.5.1. The goals of BC Hydro should be to provide electrical power to the residents and businesses as inexpensively as possible and for BC to become self-sufficient in electricity. BC Hydro should not rule out any forms of generation to meet those goals.

10.5.2. The BC Hydro Corporation has a mandate to operate under the review of a truly independent Public Utilities Commission, without political interference in its operations.

10.5.3. Over the medium term, BC should move to being able to export surplus electricity, generating an additional revenue stream for the benefit of all British Columbians.

10.5.4. Acknowledge that profits from the operations of BC Hydro Corporation should first be utilized to maintain the solvency of the Corporation and, secondly, to plan and implement future project to meet the electricity needs of British Columbians.

10.6. Non-Renewable Resources – Oil and Gas

10.6.1. The Oil and Gas industries are important to BC's economy, and these sectors should be developed for the benefit of all British Columbians through a fair, stable and predictable royalty regime.

10.6.2. Support the construction or upgrading of pipelines or other movement corridors to primarily facilitate domestic use for natural gas and secondarily the export of oil and natural gas through BC ports.

10.6.3. Consult with industry prior to introducing policies and regulations affecting the oil and gas producing sector.

10.6.4. Offshore oil and gas exploration, which should be considered using the multitude of studies already completed, and after a reasonable offshore agreement is reached with the Government of Canada along the lines of the Atlantic Accord.

10.7 Non-Renewable Resources – Mining

10.7.1. Ensure an internationally competitive fiscal regime that attracts and retains investment.

10.7.2. Streamline the regulatory application and approval processes to expedite investment without excessive expense or delay while still protecting the public and the environment.

10.7.3. Consult with industry prior to introducing regulations and policies affecting the mining sector.

10.7.4. Encourage and cooperate with our adjoining provinces to assist in the establishment and maintenance of modern transportation methods and infrastructure capable of bringing our natural resource products to multiple competitive markets.

10.8 Renewable and Non-Renewable Resources – Alternative Energy

10.8.1. Objectively determine the viability of alternative energy generating systems (wind, solar, geothermal, tidal, run of river) for the provision of electrical power to British Columbians at a reasonable cost.

10.8.2. Encourage research and development of alternative energy methods by BC scientists and companies.

10.8.3. Conduct a thorough review of options for alternate fuel sources for road and rail transportation to include hydrogen, ethanol, natural gas and electricity with the goal of determining the end cost of such options.

ARTICLE 11: Agriculture

A competitive and sustainable agricultural sector is integral to the future of our province. Not only does agriculture and agri-business provide our families and communities with food and other farm products from local farms and ranches, but it is also a major employer and economic generator across the province.

The BC Conservative Party will focus on specific initiatives that will make a real difference for this and future generations of farmers. Agriculture must be viewed as a foundational component of the BC economy, with needs varying from sector to sector and region to region.

11.1. The BC Conservative Party's policy for farming and ranching is based on three fundamental elements:

> 11.1.1. A strong commitment to effective retention of farmland in the Agricultural Land Reserve consistent with its legislative mandate.
>
> 11.1.2. Competitive crop insurance and safety net programs for the livestock and crop sectors that are trade neutral and comparable to other provinces.
>
> 11.1.3. Competitive and sustainable supply management programs for dairy and poultry in cooperation with other provinces and the federal government.

11.2. Agricultural Land Reserve

> 11.2.1. High farmland prices due to speculation for alternative uses are detrimental to agriculture. Agriculture needs a stable land base for long term viability. A BC Conservative government will review the Agricultural Land Commission and ensure that it is free from improper political interference and inappropriate influence. It is essential that the ALC is independently and freely able to work with local governments and other agencies in a manner that fully respects the mandate and intent of the Agricultural Land Reserve legislation.

11.3. Open Market Sectors such as orchards, vineyards, vegetables and livestock

Farmers and ranchers have a right to expect the provincial government to "walk the talk" of a level playing field. A BC Conservative government will work with agricultural producers to develop the sustainability, growth and profitability of farming, ranching and the agri-food industry.

> 11.3.1. Eliminate the carbon tax to give farmers and ranchers a level playing field with producers in the rest of North America.
>
> 11.3.2. Ongoing and full participation with the federal government in all federal-provincial programs including the 5 year Growing Forward 2 Program to keep BC farmers and ranchers on an equal footing with those in other provinces.
>
> 11.3.3. Ensure that the province fully participates in all federal-provincial programs to keep BC farmers and ranchers on an equal footing with other provinces.
>
> 11.3.4. Initiate an internal review of the triggering policies for access to federal-

provincial disaster assistance programs to ensure that BC's programs remain competitive with those of other provinces.

11.4. Effective supply management programs improve the ability of farmers in the dairy and poultry sectors to counterbalance the market power of the large food processors and retailers. Supply management programs support a strong economic base for BC farm communities and the farm service sector.

A BC Conservative government will support and defend Supply Management Programs based on the following principles:

11.4.1. Maintain realistic competitive pricing at the farm gate level to maintain a fair balance of consumer and producer interests.

11.4.2. Foster growth opportunities including new products in the organic and other specialty sectors.

11.4.3. Provide start up opportunities for new producers.

11.5. A BC Conservative government will work closely with the federal government in all trade negotiations, including the Trans Pacific Partnership, to:

11.5.1. Identify and eliminate subsidies in other countries that hurt BC's agriculture industry by supporting effective trade negotiations.

11.5.2. Support the federal government to achieve competitive access to international markets for open market BC farm products.

11.5.3. Maintain Canada's right to operate its own supply management systems to serve its own domestic needs in regulated sectors including dairy, chicken and eggs.

11.6. A BC Conservative government will work cooperatively with farmers and ranchers to:

11.6.1. Support research and education to enhance productivity.

11.6.2. Reduce red tape, regulations and bureaucracy faced by farmers and ranchers.

11.6.3. Ensure regulations are based on appropriate management of real risks and an accurate analysis of their costs and benefits.

11.6.4. Expand farming extension services to provide frontline industry specialists to support day-to-day knowledge transfer, monitor diseases and pests and encourage best practices.

11.6.5. Establish a permanent predator control program to protect livestock.

11.7. A BC Conservative government will ensure that farm property tax rates apply to all land in the Agricultural Land Reserve or zoned as agriculture that meets the requirements of being actively farmed by bona fide producers.

11.8. A BC Conservative government will address agricultural land and water use issues by providing provincial leadership and fostering cooperation with farmers, ranchers and other land users especially fisheries, through:

11.8.1. Regionally based Agriculture Water Management Plans to ensure continuing water access and efficient water utilization by farmers and ranchers.

11.8.2. Clear and concise regulations regarding access for "Rights of Way" on Crown land with a balanced approach relating to the costs of maintaining such access.

11.8.3. Common sense approaches to the authority of federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions over streams and water sources so that unreasonable and costly regulations can be avoided for land owners.

11.8.4. Promoting the widespread application of advanced water utilization and conservation technologies.

ARTICLE 12. Transportation

The BC Conservative Party recognizes that the future growth and prosperity of British Columbia relies on a safe, efficient and cost effective transportation system. The party supports the concept of a multi-faceted transportation system that will continue to meet the increased demand for capacity as the provinces economy and population grows.

12.1. The following principals will be the foundation of the BC Conservative policies.

12.1.1. Continual investment in transportation systems to enhance the mobility of people, goods and services throughout British Columbia.

12.1.2. The development and maintenance of British Columbia's transportation systems must be affordable, while keeping pace with the provinces expanding connectivity requirements.

12.1.3. A commitment to seek strong partnerships in transportation investment by leveraging funding from federal sources while creating opportunities for the private sector and other levels of government to invest in transportation enhancements.

12.1.4. The party is committed to providing safe, reliable transportation corridors throughout the province for the economic benefit of the people of British Columbia and the rest of Canada.

12.1.5. BC Conservatives recognize that the BC Ferry service is an integral link in the provinces transportation system and must be affordable, reliable, safe and efficient.

12.1.6. The BC Conservative Party recognizes that investing in the transportation sector is a critical component of the province's economy.

12.2. The BC Conservative Party supports the development of a strategic plan that focuses on the need for transportation requirements moving into the future. The plan would address the rehabilitation and construction of new and existing transportation systems. The plan would prioritize needs and clearly identify costs associated with maintaining and developing future transportation systems.

ARTICLE 13. Tourism

13.1. Recognize tourism to be essential to the economy of British Columbia and encourage tourism as a major growth area.

13.2. Develop appropriate measures and incentives to encourage expansion of tourism.

13.3. Assist in the stimulation of tourism through international marketing in cooperation with tourism operators.

ARTICLE 14. Seniors

14.1. Commit to work with the federal government and provincial organizations to improve the lives of seniors.

14.2. Establish programs to assist our seniors with access to lifestyle activities and services thus enabling them to remain in their homes for as long as possible.

14.3. Support accommodation and housing assistance to seniors in need.

14.4. Coordinate, enhance and improve accessibility to existing services currently set up to assist seniors and providing assistance to seniors in accessing such services.

ARTICLE 15. Aboriginal Affairs

The BC Conservative Party believes in:

15.1. Working in collaboration with all stake-holder to address Aboriginal issues within the Province of BC.

ARTICLE 16. Equalization Payments

16.1. The present structure of the Federal Equalization Program, which sees money transferred from British Columbia to other provinces to fund social programs which are not available in British Columbia, is unfair.

16.2. The BC Conservative Party will advocate for a comprehensive review of the equalization formula to ensure that fairness is restored to this federal/provincial program.

ARTICLE 17. Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

17.1. Recognize all British Columbians have equal rights, responsibilities and privileges under the law.

17.2. Respect personal, individual choices made within the law and the Constitution of Canada, (including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms), and as interpreted by the courts.

17.3. Recognize families are the most important building blocks of our communities and our society and must be supported.

17.4. Support a strong social safety net which protects those who truly need support, while encouraging individuals to be self-sufficient.

17.5. Implement a timely and effective program tying social assistance to the performance of work.

17.6. Encourage and implement, wherever feasible, the delivery of social services by community-based organizations rather than directly by government.

17.7. Recognize British Columbians are stronger when we care one for another. A BC Conservative Government will support and in all ways assist and cooperate with initiatives which will facilitate this approach.

17.8. Support social responsibility within the framework of a free enterprise economic system and promoting compassionate service, volunteerism, individual responsibility and care for those unable to care for themselves.