



## Carole James pledges to keep Cowichan Lodge open

It was an emotional moment for everyone who gathered in front of Cowichan Lodge on the morning of April 29 to greet BC NDP leader Carole James on her cross-Island campaign tour.

For the better part of a year seniors, family members, health care workers and concerned citizens have used every means at their disposal to try and stop the Lodge's closure. So when James stepped off the bus to announce the NDP's commitment to keep Cowichan Lodge open, the cheers went up, and for some, the tears started to flow.

"We knew Carole James was committed to opening up more public long-term care beds. That wasn't the surprise," says HEU member Nora Murphy. "But until that moment she had not said, unequivocally, that the NDP would keep Cowichan Lodge open."

Murphy says only eight residents remain in a facility that was once home to more than 90 seniors.

"The commitment was very solid," says Murphy. "Carole made it clear that Cowichan Lodge was valued by her party and that the NDP had budgeted for any needed improvements to keep it open and accessible for seniors care."

The NDP has made better care for seniors a key plank in the party's election platform, which includes expanding the number of public long-term care beds; establishing and funding a minimum standard of 3.2 hours of direct care per resident per day; and providing more funding for home support.

As part of its commitment to increase the number of residential care beds in B.C., the NDP has pledged to re-open 300 beds in the first six months of taking office, and to partner with the non-profit sector to build 3,000 more new long-term care beds in their first term.

By contrast, the Campbell Liberals had closed more than 2,500 long-term care beds in their first term, most of them in the not-for-profit sector. And despite repeated claims that they had built more than 5,000 new residential care beds, a recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows there are actually 804 fewer residential care beds than when the Campbell government first took office in 2001.

At the same time there has been a 20 per cent increase in the number of for-profit residential care facilities, and a drop of more than 11 per cent in non-profit facilities. The result is that most new residential care facilities are now private and for-profit.

*April 29, 2009*