

# TEN STEPS TO RESTORE FREEDOM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

— John Carpay — (Special to *Our Isle & Times*)

Freedom depends on more than political promises. It depends on laws that protect ordinary people when they disagree with government, need medical treatment, or challenge public decisions. The Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms has identified 10 practical reforms that British Columbia's newly elected legislators can pursue now.

**First, repeal section 7 of the *Human Rights Code***, which allows complaints over publications alleged to stir hatred or contempt. Former Chilliwack school trustee Barry Neufeld was ordered to pay \$750,000 after expressing controversial views about school policies. Political disagreement should be met with debate, not crushing financial penalties.

**Second, repeal the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) and section 8.1 of the *Interpretation Act*.** These provisions require BC laws to be read in line with a United Nations declaration. The Cowichan Tribes ruling raises concerns for private property owners.

**Third, rein in civil forfeiture.** Under the *Civil Forfeiture Act*, government can seize assets without criminal charges or a conviction, while “unexplained wealth orders” compel owners to reveal private financial information. Repeal Division 3 and require government, not citizens, to establish the case for taking property.

**Fourth, give unionised workers the right to hire their own lawyer** when their union refuses to pursue a grievance. The *Labour Relations Code* should not leave employees defenceless because union leaders disagree with them. Workers should be free to advance legitimate grievances at their own expense.

**Fifth, keep professional regulators politically neutral.** Doctors, nurses, and lawyers should answer for their competence and conduct, not their opinions outside work. A law like *Alberta's Regulated Professions Neutrality Act* would protect off-duty expression and curb mandatory ideological training unrelated to professional practice.

**Sixth, remove sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) ideology from school curricula.**

Schools should oppose all bullying without exception, while parents retain responsibility for sensitive conversations about sexuality and gender. Protecting children does not require public schools to override the convictions of their families.

**Seventh, let patients seek treatment beyond government waiting lists.** In 2024, BC patients faced a median wait of 29.5 weeks across 12 medical specialties. Allow private payment and insurance for medically necessary care, with doctors free to work in both public and private systems.

**Eighth, repeal the *Health Professions and Occupations Act*.** Its government-appointed oversight structure gives politicians too much influence over medical regulators. Doctors and nurses should be accountable for professional standards, but free to exercise independent medical judgement and debate treatments without political interference or censorship.

**Ninth, strengthen access to public records.** Recent changes to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* allow information requests to be rejected for being too broad or burdensome, with the commissioner's approval. Repeal those restrictions so taxpayers and journalists can investigate government decisions.

**Tenth, require open public debate before authorities remove historical monuments or rename public places.** In 2018, Victoria removed its John A. Macdonald statue with little notice or public input. Residents deserve notice, a meaningful chance to speak, and independent review before their communities' history is changed.

These proposals share one principle: government exists to serve citizens, not silence them or make their choices for them. British Columbians should demand laws that protect freedom of expression, private property, parental responsibility, medical independence, and accountable government. The *Charter* promises a free and democratic society, and BC laws should honour that promise.

*John Carpay, B.A., LL.B., is president of the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (jccf.ca)*