

Nanaimo by-election candidate wants to see Vancouver Island separate from B.C.

Robin Richardson, founder and leader of the Vancouver Island Party, is vying to become Nanaimo's next MLA.

His party's aim is to separate Vancouver Island from British Columbia.
(NICHOLAS PESCOD/NEWS BULLETIN)



Robin Richardson, leader of the Vancouver Island Party, announces intention to run for MLA

NICHOLAS PESCOD November 8, 2018 LOCAL NEWSNEWS

A politician hoping to separate Vancouver Island from British Columbia wants to be Nanaimo's MLA.

Robin Richardson, the founder and leader of the [Vancouver Island Party](#), announced that he will be a candidate in the upcoming byelection in Nanaimo.

Nanaimo's riding will be vacated by MLA Leonard Krog, who is now the mayor of Nanaimo. The B.C. Liberals [have announced Tony Harris as their intended candidate](#) in the byelection, while Sheila Malcolmson, Nanaimo-Ladysmith's current MP, [is seeking the NDP's nomination](#).

Speaking to the News Bulletin on Wednesday, Richardson said his party's platform is to see Vancouver Island become its own province. He said with a population of 800,000-plus and years of being neglected, Vancouver Island is better off on its own.

"We would be at least 10 times better off. We have been neglected by both federal and provincial governments over the years, not just recently, but since confederation," said Richardson, who lives in both Nanaimo and Victoria.

The Harvard University-educated economist and former provincial politician in Ontario said people on the Island are tired of being ignored from all levels of government.

"We have almost 17 per cent of the population of British Columbia, but we might only get about two or three per cent of the money that comes from Ottawa," he said.

Vancouver Island Party's platform includes ensuring balanced budgets for the province of Vancouver Island, upgrading the E&N railway into a commuter rail system from Victoria to Courtenay, free tuition for all Island students attending Vancouver Island University provided their family income is less than \$90,000 a year, building light-rail transit systems across the Island and building a floating bridge

between Mill Bay and Brentwood Bay. The party would also eliminate fares on B.C. Ferries for all passengers and reduce vehicle fares, according to Richardson. He said the party would also eliminate the speculation tax imposed on Nanaimo and have lower taxes than British Columbia and Washington state in order to attract businesses.

"Taxes are too high and what we would do ... is make sure that our corporate and personal taxes are competitive," he said. "One thing we would look at is flat income taxes instead of a progressive income tax. That has been tried in other places and it works."

Should his party get elected, Richardson said he would request a referendum on the question of separation. If successful, his party would then begin negotiations with Ottawa to join confederation, adding that the separation process wouldn't cost much money.

Richardson envisions 28 ridings on Vancouver Island and said he'd prefer to see mixed-member proportional representation, which would give each riding two members. He said the capital of Vancouver Island would be in Nanaimo for the first two years, before moving to Victoria.

"We would give [the B.C. government] two years to move out of Victoria and then we would move into the legislature," he said. "Nanaimo would be the capital for the first two years until we get our ducks in a row."

Richardson said he wants the upcoming referendum to be all about separating Vancouver Island from the province and believes he can attract "soft" Liberals, New Democrats, Greens and Conservative voters. He said he doesn't think he needs a lot of votes to win in the byelection because there will be plenty of vote splitting.

"I figure if I get 9,000 votes I can win," Richardson said.