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Topping that list, says Ms. Bond, is reducing the level of red tape that small businesses face in British Columbia. "Regulation is strangling them," she says.

Amongst the other parties, getting the economy moving was a top priority — though there was no unanimity on how to do that.

"Everyone says we have to jump-start the economy, but we also think you have to look long-term," says Lelanni Arris, who is running for the Green Party. "How do we do it in such a way that we're not jeopardizing the future is the question. Increasing the annual allowable cut or sucking all the gas out of the Peace River is not necessarily going to be beneficial for our kids. One of our platforms is tax shifting, where you have higher taxes on things that are unhealthy for the environment and lower taxes for things that are very beneficial for health and welfare."

Andrej DeWolf is carrying the colours of the B.C. Marijuana Party into the campaign and says it is time for the provincial government to look at new revenue sources. "The B.C. Marijuana Party, obviously, advocates the legalization of marijuana which could be a large source of revenue. And, while the forest industry is big in British Columbia, we should not dwell on one industry and should look at expanding into other areas, like hemp," says Mr. DeWolf.

Unity BC hopeful Bob Zayonc bemoans the fact that over the past 10 years British Columbia has gone from number one in economic growth to number 60 in North America. He says the solution is simple: get business back into B.C. He advocates logging in Tweedsmuir Park to eliminate the mountain pine beetle problem, opening up oil and gas exploration and sending a positive message to investors.

But while the talk turns to B.C. Hydro, the right of teachers to strike or medical training, the dialogue always seems to return to the kind of government the Liberals would provide and whether tax cuts would work.

"What we're faced with is the fact that we've been taxed and regulated to death," says Mrs. Bond. "In the last two years, the government has seen fit to make minuscule cuts to personal income tax and lo and behold what happened? The economy and revenue started to grow."

She says the current premier mentioned tax cuts in his throne speech of 2000 and Mrs. Bond says "tax cuts can work. Why does it work? Because people choose to make investments, but with the tax and regulatory burden we have right now people have decided they don't want to invest here. I know I'm going to hear the tax cuts don't work, but it's worked in every province in the country."

Mrs. Bond says the tax cuts will serve a dual purpose: putting money back into

PRINCE GEORGE-MOUNT ROBSON



"We're going to recognize that a strong, thriving private sector economy is a good way to fund public education and health care."

Shirley Bond, Liberal

the pockets of British Columbians and at the same time sending a sign to the investment community that B.C. is open for business.

And suggestions that a Liberal government will sacrifice health and education on the altar of tax cuts raise her ire. "We're going to recognize that a strong, thriving private sector economy is a good way to fund public education and health care."

Mr. Whitcombe, though, remains adamant that you can't provide tax cuts and maintain spending. "She's trying to say that tax cuts will somehow miraculously produce economic growth. Well, we've had economic growth in this province every year for the past 10 years and only two of those years did we have a tax cut."

"The causal relationship is backwards here. You know that if you go outside in the summertime you see a lot of people eating ice cream, but that doesn't mean that's what makes it hot. But if you do a correlation, you'll find that every time you see people on the street eating ice cream it's hot and when you don't see people eating ice cream it's cold. The weather

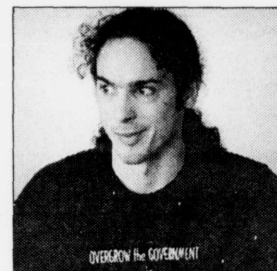
changes up and down regardless of who's eating ice cream," he says.

Pointing to Ontario, Mr. Whitcombe says the Harris government cut spending on education, froze health care spending and cut social programs to offer tax breaks. "Tax cuts amounted to \$740 for the average family but new fees amounted to \$768, so the tax cut actually cost them \$28."

The question every British Columbian wants to know is whether a Liberal government will do what it says. Mrs. Bond, the clear front-runner in Prince George-Mount Robson, says she wants voters to hold her accountable. "People will say to me 'You say that now, but you'll just go to Victoria and turn into one of them.' And that's how it's described and I find that extremely sad. We've laid out an ambitious platform and we hope you will keep that document and use it as a checklist. Our task as a government and a politician is to simply do what you said you were going to do. Holding us accountable is a daily task. The ultimate accountability is four years from now and if we don't do what we said we were going to do, we should be a one-term government."



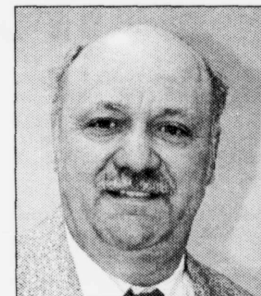
**Lelanni Arris
Green**



**Andrej DeWolf
B.C. Marijuana**

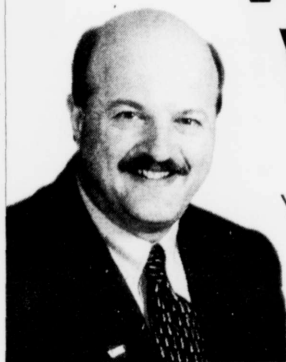


**Bob Zayonc
Unity**



**Erle Martz
Reform B.C.**

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