

BC's Pathetic Budget: Corporate Over Human Welfare

by **Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, February 23, 2009**

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After cowardly delaying their throne speech for 6 days to avoid criticism before their equally cowardly Bill 42 gag law took effect, the BC government released a budget last week that continues to show how Gordon Campbell is syphoning taxpayer resources to pad the profits of global corporations.

In a time of economic collapse caused by deregulation, privatization, free trade and other neoliberal, anti-social policies, Campbell's neoLiberal government has perpetuated the destruction instead of introducing a budget that will actually help people.

His economic intervention last fall that forced him to actually hold an insanely short fall legislative session perpetuated the destructive economic policies that caused our recession in the first place as he took advantage of the crisis to continue to de-fund government with more tax cuts.

And in this new budget, the province will, no surprise, reduce taxes as well as actually impede local governments' attempts to increase taxes, ostensibly to safeguard provincial tax cuts. This amounts to a constraint on municipalities to properly fund themselves.

While BC's budget does go into deficit to raise the province's portion of infrastructure spending to receive federal funding, itself a sly Harper ploy, Campbell has not stopped his corporate welfare program of public-private partnerships where citizens are on the hook for decades of guaranteed payments to corporations to provide services that can be done publicly without the profit layer sucking our tax dollars to overseas corporations.

His lust for privatizing our province's assets has even driven the government to avoid the embarrassment of a failed privatization effort twinning the Port Mann Bridge. That venture has imploded so the government released an expensive new science-fiction, car-worshiping toll bridge rebuild project. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!

The government even has the gall to call privatized infrastructure projects "public infrastructure for the benefit of British Columbians."

Forestry also suffers from the illusion of improvement.

A new Wood Innovation and Design Centre will start up at UNBC. Innovation and design are critical elements to developing a sustainable, high-quality value-added forestry sector. Except for the fact that BC still exports raw logs so global corporations can process them overseas for a fraction of the cost, developing our value-added capacity is a great idea.

While it is within the power of the premier to arbitrarily declare that BC Hydro cannot develop any new power, leaving that up to untrustworthy private bilkers, he can equally stop raw log exports. But he won't.

I hope the innovation centre can figure out how to be meaningful to the province with logs leaving as dozens of mills have closed.

In the end, the tone of the budget is all about expanding business opportunities during this economic crisis, with the help of deficit borrowing. And while there is spending on social welfare services, it doesn't take a financial genius to recognize that this decade of de-funded social services have undermined BC's resilience when faced with this existential crisis in capitalism.

This budget shows how Campbell is truly a friend of the corporation while the citizens who elected him are just the means to global corporate profit. Hopefully he will lose his job on May 12 since he isn't working for us anyway.