

Fixing the BC NDP

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, October 21, 2009

<https://politicsrespun.org/2009/10/fixing-the-bc-ndp/>

I have been away from updating my editorials for several weeks now as I've been working hard on [Think Forward BC NDP](#).

What is Think Forward BC NDP?

Well, the party is in a transition moment. It lost the election on May 12, 2009. A few thousand votes in key ridings would have meant a win. It was our election to lose and we lost it.

We, as a party, have not embraced 21st century populist grassroots democracy. Our structure is 20th century, from an era where electoral politics was the only game in town and only massive NGOs existed. Today, people are cynical and reject electoral politics, form their own nimble, resilient, grassroots NGOs and actually change the world.

The BC NDP needs to become the electoral wing of a progressive social movement in BC.

It needs to open up its operations and deliberations not only to members, but to the progressive population of BC. The BC neoLiberals effectively represent the richest 5% of British Columbians. The values of the NDP actually do reflect the values of the poorest 95% of us all. It's just that we're having trouble translating that into an effective party.

Our members feel like donors. There is rampant alienation of people in every element of the party...alienated from everyone else in the party. Communication isn't open or inclusive.

Donations were down, volunteers were down and voters showing up to vote were down.

Starting at about 835pm on May 12, 2009 I've talked with dozens of people in all aspects of the party and caucus. Dozens of people have joined in to carry on similar conversations about what to do about fixing the party.

Here's what is in the core consensus document right now:

1. *We must build a social movement within the party.*
2. *We must enhance democracy inside the party.*
3. *We must follow and implement party values.*
4. *We must empower members and non-members.*
5. *We must improve our relationship with the environment.*
6. *We must improve our relationship with labour and other progressive groups.*
7. *We must build a constructive relationship with progressive businesses.*

Here's how to fix the BC NDP. It's quite simple, actually.

Ask people how to fix the party.

That's it. Open a wide dialogue. Ask for everyone who belongs to the party to help transform the party into something is full of integrity, vibrancy and effectiveness for the 21st century.

No one actually has the key to fixing everything in the party. But all of us together do.

That's it.

But we actually have to do it. Now!

So I've passed up on writing dozens of infuriated editorials since the BC legislature had its stealth opening in August with a budget drop before Labour Day when people were still vacationing.

I've been working the Think Forward thing.

So with about 5 weeks to the BC NDP convention, it's time for everyone to look at the Think Forward consensus documents, in the draft version they are in today. We all need to look at them, say what we like and dislike, add ideas, trim out the garbage, figure out effective ways of implementing the principles and use the documents themselves as a springboard to living the kind of democratic participation that vibrant, robust political parties of the 21st century need to have.

No one "in charge" is responsible for doing this. WE ALL ARE! Every member, non-member supporter, member activist, volunteer, staff person, MLA...anyone who cares about progressive change in BC...we all need to start talking our way to a party we know has the integrity we need it to have.

In the meantime, the BC Liberals can continue to function by stealth as the autocratic cynicism machine it's built itself into over the last couple decades. The BC NDP, however, has a tremendous opportunity to catalyze society into something we can be proud of by being open and inclusive.

And every party member knows at least one person who is so disaffected that they have quit or are pulling back, whether it's because the party can't actually admit that the fast ferries were a mistake or that supporting the Gateway Project and a new Port Mann Bridge, or opposing a Carbon Tax violate our actual democratically formed policies.

It's time for us all to tell the truths about ourselves that need to be aired. We need to vent, to process our disillusionment and to step out and build a party that will build an economy that serves human beings and addresses the massive paradigm shift we need to make to avert climate breakdown...and all the other progressive goals we yearn to achieve.

So, swing by the [Think Forward BC NDP](#) website. Look at the current drafts of the philosophy and implementation documents. Join the dozens who've already submitted ideas and constructive criticism. Share the ideas with your friends and colleagues. Host coffee or dessert parties and talk about what kind of NDP you want to belong to, then add your ideas.

Because, honestly, if the members of the party don't redefine the party, the party is already over.