

## NDP 6, Liberals 1, Plus 2 Doses of Fear

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, April 25, 2009

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The week ended very, very badly for the Liberals, particularly Gordon Campbell, John Les, John van Dongen, Marc Dalton, Laura McDiarmid, Jesse McClinton. These 6 Liberals could provide very good news for the NDP, far more than Ray Lam's resignation provided for the Liberals.

They now have a scandal cloud over 6 of their candidates, and they're continuing their policy of unaccountability by not showing up at all-candidates meetings. Add to that a new expectation of a high voter turnout means a week of the NDP trying to manage competing environmental NGO messaging will end with the Liberals in acute damage control all weekend for a fresh face on Monday, but don't hold your breath on anything fresh from this tired, condescending party.

Let's review.

The NDP's Ray Lam resigned his candidacy on Monday because of Facebook pictures with risqué content. The hypocritical, no-contest, drunk driving premier disapproves. Eyeballs all over BC roll backwards and fall out of people's heads. Still, that's one public perception spin pseudo-"victory" for the Liberals.

Today, we have a total of 6 Liberal candidates with public perception spin crises.

1. Gordon's Campbell no-contest plea to drunk driving in Maui in 2003. He never stepped down and has set a standard that appears to be that as long as a Liberal isn't convicted of doing more than that, they can stay.
2. John Les, the most recent solicitor general under criminal investigation for wonky dealings while mayor of Chilliwack. He won't resign his candidacy while he's not in jail...and then, who knows.
3. John van Dongen, the current solicitor general gets his driver's license revoked for excessive speeding tickets and asks the no-contest, drunk driver premier to remove ICBC and Superintendent of Motor Vehicles from his portfolio. He hasn't resigned his candidacy yet.
4. Marc Dalton running for the Liberals in Mission turns out to be a homophobe. He hasn't resigned his candidacy yet.
5. Laura McDiarmid has 33 driving citations over the last 10 years as a limousine driver, but she won't resign her candidacy. She excused them by saying her job requires meeting schedules, so little things like laws and safety don't seem to matter much.
6. Jesse McClinton won't resign his candidacy though he pleaded out in a drunk driving incident at what he considers to have been a youthful indiscretion. When he was 26, right. 17 I can understand, but not 26. He's also the one with the [ostensibly non-partisan Facebook event page](#) promoting higher voter turnout on May 12th; "non-partisan" despite the fact that he's running for the neoLiberals and he's been having a hard time even pretending to be neutral lately.

So we're now looking to the Liberals to figure out if their vetting process sucks, or if a certain amount of

illegal activity, convictions, homophobia, pleas to lesser charges and criminal investigations are tolerable to the party. Film at 11.

But don't wait until 11, [try this one on from the premier](#): "I don't know about everyone's driver's record. I can tell you if we said to people, 'If you have any driving infractions, you are not eligible to run for office,' we'll have a pretty small legislature. It is important for people to be accountable for their actions, myself included, I might add .... As far as I know, the tickets have been paid off."

And we all know what Campbell thinks constitutes accountability.

And it may not be appropriate to ask for resignations from all 6 of these Liberals, or Ray Lam, or two other NDP candidates, Doug Brown and Harry Lali, who have 13 traffic infractions between them. The issue is who deserves to be an honourable member of the legislature. How many speeding tickets is too many? Is drunk driving a deal breaker?

What will play out next week will be some reckoning for the finger-waggers. The Liberals helped Ray Lam resign. Will they accept that standard for themselves? If not, that will hurt their chances in the election. But the scary thing is that it may not hurt their chances. How many criminal convictions will BC Liberal party voters tolerate? I'm afraid the number may be high since they already re-elected their premier.

So this scandal firestorm will take up a certain amount of space next week, but we need to remember two other issues haunting the Liberals: they still won't show up to all-candidates meetings and an increase in voter turnout will likely hurt them.

The Liberals have a history of not showing up to all-candidates meetings organized by groups hostile to them, so they say. And since there are thousands of those groups, they've had a pretty low profile. It's a clever strategy. Don't go somewhere if people will attack you when the hit from not showing up is less damaging.

So what happens when a government funded group holds an all-candidates meeting? The BC Campus Climate Network tried to hold a meeting but couldn't get confirmation from Liberal or Green candidates, so they had to cancel their meeting. Whoops. Now it looks like the Liberals aren't at all interested in public participation in democracy during an actual election campaign.

And if this shocks you, try this one on.

BC's chief electoral officer is predicting an increase in voter turnout on May 12. This is absolutely disastrous for the Liberals since mobilized voters are more likely to vote for change. Apathetic voters expect or are content with the status quo and don't vote, especially since the Canucks will still likely be in the playoffs.

It has already been clear in recent weeks the increased buzz around this election. Volunteers showing up from all over the place, young and stereotypically apathetic folks are engaged, the STV referendum is polling very high and with public funding is engaging many more with a legitimate alternative to not voting, and there's the Obama bump.

You remember Obama. He's the fellow, a community organizer [like Mel Lehan, taking on Gordon Campbell in Point Grey] who mobilized millions with a vision of hope and reversal of carnage from a neoliberal, unaccountable, right wing government. Does that sound familiar?

His success at mobilizing forced Stephen Harper to call an election before the US presidential election out of fear that a president-elect Obama would negate his chances at a majority government. That happened anyway.

The Obama bump arrived as a rising tide spilling over the 49th parallel, buoying the federal NDP to drastically higher levels of engagement as Canada's populist party raised more money from more people than the federal Liberals.

Are you seeing the parallels?

So, to sum up. We have a provincial neoLiberal party that wagged its finger at Ray Lam 4 days ago. Now they have 6 candidates under their own morality clouds, their penchant for skipping democracy-enhancing events like all-candidates meetings, and a fear of the expectation of higher voter turnout by the province's chief electoral officer.

Six scandals to attempt to defuse, fear of all-candidates meetings and a rising voter turnout are the makings of a perfect storm for the Liberals. Next week will be awful for them. Make your popcorn and hunker down for some karmic carnage visiting them. But skip the CanWest/Global media [Global TV, The Vancouver Sun, The Province, The National Post and the Victoria Times-Colonist] since they're the communication wing of the neoLiberal party. Instead watch CTV, the CBC and read The Tyee, Public Eye Online, Politics Re-Spun, The Globe and Mail, and The Lead Up at the BC CCPA.

Oh wait, the BC Rail corruption trial will start up again about a week before the election. That's the one that was delayed past the 2005 election! As it is, it will be nowhere near completion before this next election. But you can be sure that every hour that ticks through that trial, there will be evidence or hints at the extend of corruption in the Liberal party around the \$1 billion, 999-year lease/privatization of BC Rail.

So while the NDP has endured the brunt of the schism in BC's environmental movement for the last 2 weeks, it is now the neoLiberals' turn to turn up their spin and damage control machines. They'll need a lot of luck, none of which they deserve.