

What Do BC's Non-Voting Majority Do?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, November 27, 2010

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Many have written about the discouraging reality of BC politics that for the first time our voter turnout dropped below 50% in the last provincial election. While there is clearly a massive and currently incomplete flux in how the public views politicians and political parties, there is the constant view out there that people will come back to parties because it is the elected politicians who can actually change things.

People seem to be caring less for that conclusion since most didn't vote at all 18 months ago.

But what are people actually doing? Not only do 25% of British Columbians consider themselves to be activists, some are taking the position that regardless of party ideology or practice, activists are committing to an issue and pursuing any and all politicians to embrace their issue. That will lead to activist support.

Woe betide a politician who promises support for an issue then doesn't deliver: responsive democracy.

And if you are looking for a bold example of this theory of what many of the non-voting majority are doing, look at the Common Sense Canadian for an expression of that very thing.

The Common Sense Canadian will support candidates or parties based not on their political philosophy, but on their commitment to saving our environment - not just because it's beautiful but because to do otherwise is fiscal madness.

via [Where We Stand on BC Politics & The Environment](#).

Saving our environment, to them, means these four demands:

1. A re-commitment to protecting farmland, a "commitment that commits them to keep to their commitment".
2. A closure of all fish farms in our oceans especially near routes of migrating Pacific salmon while encouraging dry land operations.
3. A commitment to keep our precious coast free of Tar Sands oil supertankers from the proposed Enbridge pipeline and Kinder-Morgan expansion.
4. A commitment to end all licensing of private power construction, PLUS – and this is critical – making public all private power contracts in existence, coupled with a flat refusal to honour any which are unconscionable.

So if you happen to be one of the [one million self-identifying activists in British Columbia](#), chances are you are thinking far more strategically about pursuing your issues than just joining a political party in hopes of pushing your issues. After all, even a generous estimate of 50,000 members of BC political parties is only 5% of the number of self-identifying activists in BC.

The playing field and rules of engagement are changing in BC. They've shifted a dozen times in the last 5 weeks. They will shift again a few times next week with more people declaring that they think they can lead the Liberal party. And they will shift more until February 26, 2011 when we'll have a new premier, recall campaigns underway, new hints or promises about the HST and its referendum, changes to the minimum wage and a handful of other politically inflammatory policy issues.

Then when our new premier takes over, watch for an election call before 2013, a new throne speech and a new budget.

And that's just with the Liberal party. The NDP, BC Conservatives, BC First, and various recently dormant political figures will be in play as well.

So if you have an issue, handcuff yourself to it and hop on your political surfboard because the waves will be undulating sometimes wildly in the next three months.

And keep your wits about you, while truly engaging with your instincts. You'll need them both.