

## **BC Liberal Party Leadership Race Design: A Potential for Chaos**

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, November 16, 2010

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Watching the BC Liberal Party make up new rules for replacing their hated leader is an exercise in spin. Now that they've decided to try to move from a one-member-one-vote system to a representative system, they'll have a leadership race that requires the leader to have more province-wide support than if they kept their old system that favoured candidates who could appeal to the bulk of the membership in urban areas.

But the party has created chaos in their timing. They decided a few days ago to schedule a general meeting to ratify their new leadership voting system for February 12, 2011. Then yesterday they decided to have their leadership vote just 14 days later:

"We felt it was important give our members an opportunity to adopt a more representative voting process prior to the Leadership Vote," said Patryluk. "The setting of these dates provides for a thoughtful, organized, and reasonable process allowing our party to move forward."

via [Party Sets Leadership Vote for February 26, 2011](#).

The general meeting needs to approve the new voting system with a 2/3 majority. If that passes, then leadership contenders who will have been campaigning since well before February 12 will be able to continue in their strategy based on needing broad provincial appeal.

But what if that voting system doesn't get the 2/3 majority? What if candidates with urban appeal decide to quietly undermine that vote to ensure they have an advantage? What if the expected change in the leadership vote system ends up not happening, then any contender who is working the whole province for support will suddenly be irrelevant if that 2/3 vote fails. Then they will have only two weeks to reconfigure their campaign to pander to urban voters, a distinct disadvantage.

The 14 day gap between key dates could easily be up to 6 months to allow contenders to know for sure which voting system they will be working in. Instead the party choose a two week gap likely in an effort to actually get rid of Gordon Campbell sooner rather than later.

A much smarter, though practically impossible, process would be to insist [somehow] that Campbell leave now, install a caretaker premier who pledges not to run for party leadership, then have their constitutional meeting on February 12 and a less rushed leadership campaign without the overarching need of getting Campbell out of the picture.

Instead we have the potential for significant manipulation in the leadership race and a missed opportunity to avoid threats to transparency.

But then when we think about a decade of the lies and broken promises and anti-social neoliberal policy

choices and the BC Rail scandal and such, it is no surprise that the party has created a process that is vulnerable to dirty tricks.

And if it weren't for the needless turmoil that the province will suffer under waiting for the next premier and that person's management and policy preferences, reading the party's press release above would be just funny. Claiming that the 14 day gap will lead to anything thoughtful, organized or reasonable is just potential insanity.

Arrogant, out of touch and deluded are common descriptions of this party's rule this decade. They seem to be maintaining that tradition with what appears to be a presumption that the February 12 vote will pass as hoped. Maybe it will, but it is an enormous risk to assume there won't be a movement to scuttle that change.

Meanwhile, we all wait to see through all this potential chaos which person will become an unelected leader of the party and the province for up to 27 months.