

BC Premier's Office Spends as Much as Watchdogs

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, June 16, 2010

<https://politicsrespun.org/2010/06/bc-premiers-office-spends-as-much-as-watchdogs/>

I want a government that is transparent and accountable to citizens: taxation WITH representation. I want a culture of openness and commitment to public service, that the citizens are the politicians' employers. It's hard to see that happening when the public bodies that hold political mechanisms to account have just barely as much money to work with than, say, the premier's office.

Where is the balance of power, messaging, spin?

So it turns out the BC Liberal party's premier's office spends about as much as three core government watchdog groups.

Not only did this government first get elected in 2001 then immediately cut the budgets of the Auditor General and Elections BC, but 9 years later, the party leader's office will spend at least \$9.711m before 3.31.2011 while the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commissioner and Ombudsperson have collective budgets of \$9.855m, only \$144,000 more.

The 2001 optics still work here: there's a new government and it will brook little effective criticism. The spoils of winning all but 2 seats in 2001, I guess. And all of the Liberals' criticisms of the NDP's weak transparency regime in the 1990s have come home to roost. Who loses? British Columbians.

And the electorate just takes it, sucking it up while now less than half of us vote. Sounds like a perfect storm to me.

See for yourself, below. At least the AG's office has more funds to spend since they're "supposed" to audit the whole of government, but with less than double the premier's office budget, I think it's still an unfair fight.

2010/2011 Schedule of Voted Expenses

Sums granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011 and the purposes for which they are granted

Ministry of Attorney General — Crown Proceeding Act

Vote Number ... Ministry/Office or Minister/Program ... \$

1 ... Legislation ... 68 004 000

2 ... Auditor General ... 15 400 000

3 ... Conflict of Interest Commissioner ... 440 000

5 ... Information and Privacy Commissioner ... 4 470 000

7 ... Ombudsperson ... 4 945 000

10 ... Office of the Premier ... 9 711 000

via [Bill 22 — 2010: Supply Act, 2010-2011.](#)