

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



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Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

Orders of the Day is published regularly throughout the year, and is circulated to Association members, all MLAs now serving in Legislature, other interested individuals and organizations.

Material for the newsletter is always welcome and should be sent in written form to:

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The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.

Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produced in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office. Hugh Curtis ably helmed this publication up through May 2014.

Thank You and Miscellany

Thank you to those of you who, when sending in your Member dues or subscription renewals, added a donation to help cover production costs for the newsletter.

Dues, Subscriptions and Donations

Murray Coell, Saanichton
Gordon Hogg, White Rock
Joan Sawicki, Hagensborg

From the Editor's Desk

We're bracing for what should be a festive holiday season with the COVID-19 Sword of Damocles cutting a swath through our hopes and dreams of normality. The "new normal" is offering precious little relief from the second devastating wave of this pandemic.

And yet, we move forward. On the upside, we head into 2021 with a renewed, stable, majority BC government that was the product of an October election like no other. The unprecedented popularity of mail-in ballots turned election night into a two-week waiting game for the final results even though the writing was on the wall soon after the polls closed.

In this issue of OOTD, we have focused in on that election with the help of some talented local analysts, including: Exit polling by Mario Canseco, the president of Research Co., that tells us what the voters were thinking after the polls closed; Tye Associate Editor Olamide Olaniyan's thorough examination of the strategies of the political party insiders who were coping with the confines of the pandemic and the demands for social distancing; and, Black Press political writer Tom Fletcher's detailed report of the winners and losers.

We want to thank Dr. Kim Speers, UVic Assistant Teaching Professor and Engagement and Communications Facilitator, for her take on the bizarre presidential theatre of the absurd in the U.S. and its impact on BC. To former MLA, PhD guy and class act Gordie Hogg, our thanks for his political reflections. And, as ever, our appreciation goes out to treasured "Old Islander" Jim Hume for reminding us that Yuletide face masks and social distancing can't hold a candle to England in the 1600s when Cromwell banned Christmas.

Finally, I want to acknowledge OOTD's production wizard Rob Lee. I throw the editorial spaghetti at his wall and he cooks up a palatable feast every time. As well, OOTD would not get to you with all the t's crossed and i's dotted if not for the eagle eyes of the Editorial Board – Penny Priddy, Joan Barton, Irwin Henderson and Bruce Strachan. Thank you one and all!

Happy Holidays everyone ... "in keeping with the situation."

The President's Report

I'm urging recently retired MLAs – some by choice, some not – to join our Association of Former MLAs of BC (AFMLABC). If I may strike a personal note, I know what it's like to lose an election (lost four) and frankly it hurts. I also know the thrill of winning and, more importantly, serving (won five). I am also pleased to report that I, and many others, have found we can continue to serve Canadian democracy in "retirement."

Look at the mandate of the AFMLABC as set out in an act of our Legislature:

- To put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in British Columbia and elsewhere;
- To serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in British Columbia;
- To foster a spirit of community among former MLAs;
- To foster good relations between current and former MLAs; and
- To protect and promote the interests of former MLAs.

Our current Board of Directors includes women and men from all parties, former backbenchers, ministers, even a former librarian, all of whom, like me, have found a way to continue to contribute. Through our association and the Hugh Curtis Foundation Fund, we sponsor young people to attend the annual Youth Parliament. Also, we have plans to secure more regular funding for our association so we can undertake programs like a video archive of member interviews about their time in politics. We hope to broadcast these on the parliamentary channel. We are looking at "Legislature to Campus" programs following the experience of the Former Canadian Parliamentarians Foundation. All this is designed to promote democracy for a new generation.

To conclude, again on a personal note, I missed the Legislature (and also the House of Commons) and have great memories, but found getting involved as a member of BC and federal associations really worthwhile. I think you might too. Please join us. You will find membership details on Page 16.

Best,
Ian Waddell



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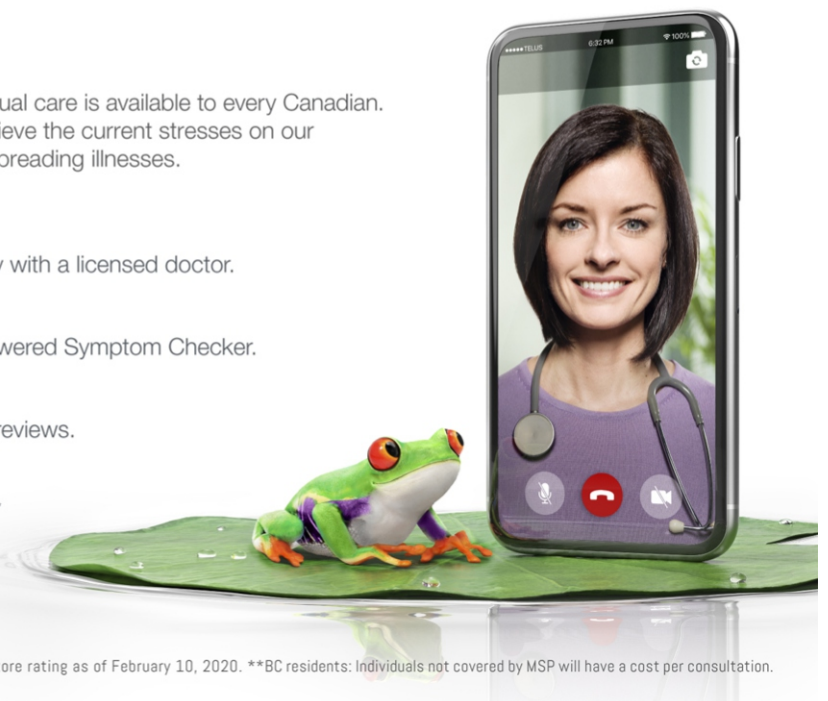
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BC voters satisfied with NDP and Green campaigns

By Mario Canseco

A majority of British Columbians who cast ballots in this year's provincial election commend the campaigns of two contending political parties, a new Research Co. "exit poll" has found.

In the online survey of a representative sample of British Columbian voters, 59 per cent describe the campaign of the governing New Democratic Party (NDP) as "positive," while 28 per cent brand it as "negative."

Just over half of voters (53 per cent) believe the campaign of the BC Green Party was "positive," while 25 per cent deem it "negative."

The results are different for the BC Liberals. While two-in-five voters (41 per cent) think the BC Liberal campaign was "positive," 46 per cent describe it as "negative."

More than half of British Columbian voters (55 per cent) say they would have been "very upset" if the BC Liberals had formed the government. Majorities of voters in Vancouver Island (65 per cent), the Fraser Valley (59 per cent) and Metro Vancouver (55 per cent) feel this way, along with 45 per cent of voters in Southern BC and 38 per cent of those in Northern BC.

About two-in-five British Columbian voters (39 per cent) say they would have supported the BC Liberals in the most recent election if Dianne Watts had been their leader – a proportion that rises to 42 per cent among women, 44 per cent among voters aged 18-to-34 and 43 per cent in both Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.

Across British Columbia, 38 per cent of voters think the BC NDP and the BC Green Party should consider a formal merger into a single provincial political party. This idea is more popular among those aged 18-to-34 (48 per cent) and those who voted for the BC NDP this year (46 per cent) but is only supported by 30 per cent of BC Green voters and 19 per cent of those who reside in Vancouver Island.



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The notion of a merger between the BC Liberals and the BC Conservative Party is supported by 34 per cent of voters – but climbs to 62 per cent among those who cast a ballot for BC Liberal candidates this month.

A comparison of voting behaviour shows that 42 per cent of BC NDP voters in 2020 cast a ballot for the federal NDP in the 2019 federal contest.

Liberal Party voters at the federal level were almost evenly split between the BC Liberals (31 per cent) and the BC NDP (25 per cent) at the provincial level. Conversely, three-in-five Conservative Party voters in the last federal election (60 per cent) were BC Liberal voters in 2020.

Methodology: Results are based on an online study conducted from October 22 to October 25, 2020, among 832 adult British Columbians who voted in the 2020 provincial election. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in British Columbia. The margin of error – which measures sample variability – is +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

(Mario Canseco is the president of Research Co.)

BC's political insiders on campaigning in a pandemic

By Olamide Olaniyan, Associate Editor at *The Tyee*

It was an election like no other, in more ways than one: A snap vote called a year ahead of schedule in the middle of a global pandemic.

The gamble paid off for the New Democrats, with British Columbians electing a majority government with the first ever two-term NDP premier in John Horgan.

But the unique circumstances meant BC's parties had to run radically different campaigns in this election.

Bustling party headquarters, packed rallies, leaders' tours and smiling canvassers on doorsteps all became impossible, or at least very difficult, under provincial pandemic health guidelines.

The parties struggled to connect with older voters, who are usually easier to reach, given their vulnerability to the coronavirus. And it was even harder to reach younger voters, many of them renters in high-rises or condos.

For Richard Johnston, most striking was how much the regular rhythm of campaigning changed. Johnston recently retired as Canada Research chair in public opinion, elections and representation at the Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia.

Campaigns traditionally build toward an election day crescendo, he said. Leaders tour in swing ridings and parties spend more on advertising in those areas. Volunteers increase their door-knocking all the way until election day.

"As you get towards the end of the campaign, you will increasingly focus your energy, your time and, to the extent that this is possible, your money on the parts of the province where the closely fought seats are located," Johnston said.

But with COVID-19 constraints, that regular rhythm was gone, he said. Mail-in ballots were at an all-time high and about 1.2 million votes were cast before election day.

"That's a big change, which I'm not sure how the parties have adapted to," said Johnston.

Campaigners from the NDP and the Greens say their campaigns had to become more decentralized, with local riding associations playing a much bigger role.

They had to find new ways to reach voters, pump up volunteers and maintain momentum. And, they had to rely on a whole range of tools to do so.

(The BC Liberal Party did not respond to requests for an interview.)



What happens when a pandemic meets a snap election? NDP candidate Aman Singh and Leader John Horgan campaign in Richmond. Photo by BC NDP Flickr

Heather Stoutenburg, acting provincial director for the BC NDP, was the deputy digital director in the 2017 campaign. "It's really interesting, because it was a campaign where everything was different, but simultaneously, there were so many fundamentals that were still the same."

Evan Pivnick, a senior campaign adviser for the BC Greens and one of three leading the party's campaign this year, noted the NDP's early election call probably affected the campaigns as much as COVID-19 did, especially when it came to preparation.

The Greens' leadership campaign ended just seven days before the election was called, with Sonia Furstenuau emerging as the winner. The party had to secure candidates, submit paperwork to Elections BC and set up communications for the campaign – usually a months-long process – within days, he said.

"If there was a COVID election a year from now, it might be a little bit different than one where all parties are scrambling to pull together a whole bunch of different things," he said.

BC NDP headquarters created its own pandemic bubble, said Stoutenburg, with everyone only going from home to work. No volunteers were allowed in the office, which hurt cross-team collaboration, she said.

And the isolation meant staff didn't get much informal daily feedback on how the campaign was going, she said. That made it harder to keep a finger on what voters in a community were saying and feeling.

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Stoutenburg recalls a round of focus groups where some party ads they were testing fell completely flat. It made her team realize how insulated they were from what British Columbians were thinking about.

“It’s really important that we are able to have those conversations and those interaction points, because otherwise we’re a bunch of politicians squirrelled away in a building,” she said. “That’s not the best.”

The party maintained an active phone bank to call voters and conducted focus groups to stay fresh.

“[We tried] to get our message in front of real humans, because we definitely live in a bubble, and more so this time, when we’re in an actual bubble,” she said with a laugh.

Only a few people worked out of the BC Greens’ office through the campaign, said Pivnick. The leader’s tour team had fewer than six people, with around three regularly travelling.

Many volunteers never met over the course of the campaign, he said, given how much of it was based from home.

The first televised leaders’ debate was one of few chances that parties had to introduce their leader to most voters, so a lot of energy was spent preparing for it.

Stoutenburg wasn’t in the NDP leader’s tour bubble but witnessed the debate prep from afar.

“They kind of did the same things they normally do, which is they had plenty of mock debates. And the leader had a chance to practice a ton,” she said.

For the Greens, the debate offered an opportunity to introduce Furstenau to voters.

The party set up cameras and practised the debate over Zoom, trying to get Furstenau comfortable with the format, talking about their approach and making the setting as authentic as possible. “Definitely the first time I’d ever done a debate prep with someone where more than half the people involved are not in the room,” said Pivnick.

You can’t replace good old human connection in an election. Conventional wisdom shows that well-trained canvassers are still the most effective way to engage voters.

“There’s some notion that if you can get to a doorstep, you should try,” said Johnston. “Because it’s pretty clear that in terms of having an impact on the margin, especially the impact of getting someone to go to the polls, there is no substitute for face to face.”



Sonia Furstenau of the BC Greens had a small campaign tour team of fewer than six people. Photo by the BC Greens.

The Greens wanted to get on doorsteps as safely as possible and put together a COVID-19 canvassing guide for the campaign, Pivnick said.

Canvassers wore PPE like masks and stepped back from doors after knocking, keeping a physical distance of at least six feet. If they needed to hand something to a potential voter, they put it in their mailbox or wore gloves. Canvassers had to continuously assess whether voters were comfortable speaking to them or taking materials.

There were other opportunities to make face-to-face contact with voters, like canvassing on busy streets and at outdoor events like farmers markets and fairs.

Pivnick said the Greens didn’t get complaints from voters at the doorstep, but it was tricky finding volunteers who were comfortable about door-knocking.

The New Democrats decided not to canvas this year, a self-imposed restriction.

“Dr. Bonnie Henry said it was still safe to canvass, but we actually had made the decision from day one that we weren’t going to do that,” Stoutenburg said. “We just decided that the risk was absolutely not worth it.”

Without regular face-to-face interaction, the party relied on text messaging. “Texting definitely played a big part in our strategy. And it did in the last campaign as well, but this time, even more so.”

And direct mail – “a plain old letter in an envelope” – had “a bit of a retro moment” this election, Stoutenburg said.

Ultimately, parties reached voters through a mix of channels like TV, radio, Facebook, YouTube, Google advertising and banner ads on local websites. They spent a

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lot on digital advertising – from July 23 to Oct. 20 the Liberals spent \$532,000 on Facebook ads alone, while the NDP spent \$332,000 and the Greens \$45,000, according to the *Capital Daily*.

This was the first election held under 2017's Election Amendment Act, which banned political donations from corporations and unions and aimed to curb the power of big money in politics.

So, the parties had to find ways to entice larger numbers of people to give small amounts of money. Overall, there was a lot less money in this election, Johnston said.

Without in-person fundraising at places like town halls, office openings, visits to local ridings and rallies – all opportunities for a leader to make a pitch – parties were even more constrained.

“We sort of joke that whenever you have more than five New Democrats, you know, in a space... it's an opportunity to do a pitch and ask for money,” said Stoutenburg, who said her regular job is about 50-per-cent fundraising.

“And so, when we don't have more than five New Democrats in any space ever ... it very much changed our fundraising strategy, for sure.”

Pivnick agreed that not being able to gather crowds posed a challenge and fundraising was mainly conducted through digital, email, phone calls and direct mail.

Johnston believes that with the simplicity of mail voting and the trust voters have in Elections BC, “the order of magnitude of mail voting has gone up irreversibly.”

“Some people may back off, or some people may decide to go to advanced polls or to election day polls in the future, because there's no longer the fear of the virus. But the convenience is huge,” said Johnston. “And I think a lot of people are going to opt for that convenience.”

He wonders how more early voting could affect the future rhythm of campaigns. “If people are going to start casting ballots, in quite large numbers, virtually from the start of the campaign, then what?”

One online campaign event has a promising future — the online town hall.

Stoutenburg said it was beneficial for candidates and voters from across the province to be able to drop into an event and hear from the NDP leader and ask him questions.

More than 1,000 people watched one such event live, and thousands more saw it in their social media feeds afterwards, she said.



The stakes were higher than usual for the first televised leaders' debate. Photo by Jonathan Hayward, the Canadian Press.

“I think in terms of the leader being able to drop into a campaign, somewhere he might not normally be able to visit, we're probably going to continue with that,” she said.

But, despite all the talk of the access and convenience, it's hard to shake off the fact that turnout was 86,000 lower than 2017.

That concerns Pivnick. “It can be dangerous to take too much away when we're missing 10 to 15 per cent of people who voted last time, based on current numbers,” he said.

Pivnick said future campaigns will look similar to 2020's, with the exception of this year's online rallies. “I don't think Zoom rallies will be a thing as soon as people can be back in groups,” he said.

He said the bar to entry when it comes to voting will be lowered in future, noting recent changes to BC's Election Act that allow pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds before they turn 18.

“I think what's going to stick around is we're going to have our voting systems have an even greater degree of resiliency built into them for all sorts of different types of events, to ensure that people can vote and vote in different ways and vote at different times.”

Pivnick said evidence is mounting about the importance of connection. Even with modern campaign tools, human campaigning – one person talking to friends on social media – is becoming more and more effective.

“The one thing that is going to sort of rebound on the other side, more than anything else, is a desire to actually need to discuss, engage, you know, as authentically human to human as we can,” Pivnick said.

The Legislature is back with many new MLAs

The new – partly virtual – legislature session was scheduled to begin Dec. 7 with the main business being spending authorization for Premier John Horgan's promised round of pandemic relief payments.

MLAs were sworn in Nov. 24 and Horgan's new gender-balanced, 24-member cabinet was sworn in Nov. 26 in virtual ceremonies. The key pandemic portfolio of Health stayed with Adrian Dix while Finance got a new minister, Selina Robinson. Former Health Minister Carol James will receive \$1 a year to serve as an advisor to the premier.

The premier said the session would start with "a brief throne speech, talking about the fundamental issues of how do we as a community, how do we as a province, how we address the challenges of COVID-19."

A small number of MLAs will be available in person to vote on borrowing another \$1.4 billion to pay most households \$1,000 and individuals \$500, a promise made by Horgan in the recent election campaign.

Horgan stopped short of promising payments in time for Christmas, saying only that it is possible if the measure passes quickly. The plan is to use the records of BC's COVID-19 relief payments sent out this spring and the province's income tax records to see who is eligible for full or partial payment, without an application process.

Newly elected NDP MLAs include: Pam Alexis in Abbotsford-Mission, who edged out incumbent Liberal Simon Gibson. Roly Russell replaces retired Liberal Linda Larson in Boundary-Similkameen, and Harwinder Sandhu took Vernon-Monashee from Liberal Eric Foster.

The NDP's unexpected Chilliwack sweep includes Kelli Paddon, who defeated independent Laurie Throness in Chilliwack-Kent after he resigned from the Liberal Party over his remarks about birth control. Dan Coulter takes over for incumbent Liberal John Martin in Chilliwack.

Another upset was Langley, where Andrew Mercier defeated Liberal veteran Mary Polak, and the NDP's Megan Dykeman took the seat long held by retired Liberal Rich Coleman. Liberal incumbent Marvin Hunt lost to NDP newcomer Mike Starchuk in Surrey-Cloverdale.

Former NDP MP Fin Donnelly defeated Liberal Joan Isaacs in Coquitlam-Burke Mountain, and former Tofino mayor Josie Osborne held Mid Island-Pacific Rim for the NDP after the retirement of Scott Fraser.



Lieutenant Governor Janet Austin and Premier John Horgan swear in new members of cabinet in a virtual ceremony.

Brittney Anderson held Nelson-Creston for the NDP after the retirement of Michelle Mungall, and Jennifer Whiteside replaced the retired Judy Darcy in the NDP stronghold of New Westminster. Michele Babchuk is the new MLA for North Island after the retirement of Claire Trevena, and Susie Chant took North Vancouver-Seymour for the NDP from Liberal Jane Thornthwaite.

Former NDP MP Murray Rankin replaces Andrew Weaver in Oak Bay-Gordon Head, reducing the Green Party to two MLAs, pending a judicial recount in West Vancouver-Sea to Sky where Green Jeremy Valeriote lost to Liberal incumbent Jordan Sturdy by 41 votes.

Former MP Nathan Cullen held Stikine for the NDP after the retirement of Doug Donaldson, and the NDP's Adam Walker defeated Michelle Stilwell in Parksville-Qualicum, leaving no Liberals on Vancouver Island.

In close wins for the NDP in Lower Mainland seats, Aman Singh took Richmond-Queensborough from one-term Liberal Jas Johal, and Henry Yao defeated Liberal Alexa Loo in Richmond South Centre. Sam Sullivan was defeated by NDPer Brenda Bailey in Vancouver-False Creek, and Niki Sharma held Vancouver-Hastings for the NDP after the retirement of Shane Simpson.

New Liberal MLAs include: Bruce Banman, Abbotsford South, replacing retired Speaker Darryl Plecas; Lorne Doerkson replacing retired veteran Donna Barnett in Cariboo-Chilcotin; and Renee Merrifield, Kelowna Mission, replacing Steve Thomson. Trevor Halford held Surrey-White Rock for the Liberals after the retirement of Tracy Redies, and Karin Kirkpatrick replaced six-term Liberal Ralph Sultan in West Vancouver-Capilano.

(Source: Tom Fletcher, senior political writer for Black Press.)

The fools are so certain; the wise are full of doubt

By Gordon Hogg

As MLAs we make many decisions. Some decisions we vote on and those decisions become part of the legislative record. Some decisions become part of our persona – decisions like when to speak, what to speak on, what to say, who to meet with and the list goes on and on. We tend to search for uplifting and compelling narratives without understanding the basis for our thinking or beliefs.

Party platforms and personal values and beliefs affect all our decisions. We often disagree on facts. How do we know what we know? Daniel Moynihan said: “Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts.” Yet we often disagree on the “facts.” It seems we can always find information to support any point of view – information that turns our opinions into our “facts.”

Stephen Colbert coined the word “truthiness.” It denotes how smart, sophisticated people like us can go awry on questions of fact – ideas that seem to be correct without reference to logical or intellectual rigour.

Moynihan's words do not have the same resonance today that they once had. Many people now believe that they are entitled not just to their own opinions but also to their own facts. How else can we explain the disagreements that occur amongst thoughtful, intelligent people like us? How can it be that we think we are reasonable and that those who disagree with us are not reasonable?

We believe that good information and good debate leads to good conclusions, good policy, and good legislation. It is ironic that the best way to defend democracy may well be to argue about it. But Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman has found that we tend to believe arguments because we believe in their conclusions. Experientially, there is no difference between true and false beliefs and, subjectively, no difference between the experience of knowing something due to faith or knowing it due to science. Therefore, we think we know many things that are not true.

It seems that most things that we believe have been told to us by someone that we know and trust. The confidence that we have in what we know does not ensure that we are right. No wonder Bertrand Russell said that the whole problem with the world today is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves and wiser people are so full of doubt. Of that, I have absolutely no doubt!

(Editor's Note: Gordie is the former MLA for South Surrey/White Rock (1997-2017). A version of this thought-provoking political fireside chat was first delivered in the Legislature Nov. 20, 2014 and the following year it formed part of the introduction to Gordie's SFU PhD thesis. That thesis – *Creating Public Policy in a Complex Society: The Context, the Processes, the Decisions* – explored the extent to which our traditional approach to policy development has eroded confidence in policy makers and contributed to our society's feelings of isolation and disconnection from each other and from our power structures. Gordie has been involved as a participant-observer in decision making and in policy and program development for more than three decades and has watched this complexity grow exponentially from a number of vantage points: As a board member of non-profit service providers, a director of British Columbia's largest youth custody centre, a mayor, a cabinet minister, and a presenter at international conferences.)



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Coping with the elephant's twitches, grunts and tweets



By Dr. Kim Speers
Uvic Assistant Teaching Professor

In perhaps one of the most popular quotes to describe US-Canada relations, the late Pierre Trudeau noted: "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt." I think in today's world, we can comfortably edit this memorable statement to say "every twitch, grunt, and tweet."

In the past four years, and especially in the last year, our nation has experienced an elephant that has been a bit frostier, tumultuous, and unpredictable than usual.

Pierre Trudeau would no doubt have many things to say about the recent U.S. election but the "living next to the elephant" analogy still bears true. While here in British Columbia we have felt the effects of a testy elephant in the form of trade policy, there will likely remain trade issues with the Joe Biden presidency.

Biden's protectionist (i.e., buy American) stance may have some negative effect on Canada, but Biden has also mentioned strengthening trade ties with traditional allies. The good news for BC is that the working relationship platform may not be as unpredictable as in the past and opportunities may be ripe for picking, especially when the new U.S. government decides it wants to have some "quick wins" to demonstrate how different it is from the previous administration.

Related to this is the prospect that working in the U.S. may become easier for British Columbians given that Biden stated during the election campaign that his government would undo some of Trump's stringent migration policies and job-based visa rules. Corporate tax reforms implemented under Trump that made BC less competitive than the U.S. may also be changed under Biden. If so, the proposed personal and corporate income tax rate changes will likely improve BC's tax competitiveness with the U.S. related to new investments and talent.

The U.S. election culture and conversations also likely had an impact on British Columbians and on the BC election. The divided nation to the south reminded us that we have divisions in our own society that need to be discussed and addressed. Hearing and listening to those often-marginalized voices became increasingly important and essential if we wanted to move toward a just recovery – a term that resonated with every political party in BC in the last election.

British Columbia will have to continue to navigate tumultuous waters in its relationship with not only the United States but with other orders of government in Canada given this change in U.S. leadership. Issues such as pipelines, ocean policy, border policy, refugee and immigration policy, climate change and global warming issues, trade policy, and economic policy will all be significant issues of debate in the coming years.

The shift in U.S. political leadership coupled with the potential short- and long-term effects of the pandemic in the midst of a climate and economic crisis has left the newly-elected BC government with an unenviable agenda of trying to figure out what should be the priorities now and for future generations.

We have a new elephant in town and British Columbia should reintroduce itself to strengthen and build new relationships that this province can benefit from in the generations to come. If there was ever a time for the political parties, the civil service, the private sector, academe, other orders of government, and civil society to collaborate and work together to find solutions, the time is now.



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HELPING WHEN LIFE CHANGES



Trudeau should hold a national televised virtual conference

The Canadian public needs to actually see our politicians struggling with the COVID-19 crisis. One forum would be an open, televised, federal/provincial conference. The prime minister should immediately call one.

By Ian Waddell
Writing in the *Hill Times*

The headlines are alarming: “Daily cases may top 10,000 next month: Tam;” “Hospitals stretched to the limits;” “Health-care workers exhausted;” and “Canada’s unity cracking.”

Pressure is mounting to declare a national emergency, with Ottawa taking control. Provincial premiers are getting whipsawed, forced to choose between lockdowns and opening up to keep the economy going. The previous unified federal-provincial approach appears to be cracking. And Canadians are worried, very afraid.

What’s the way forward? Permit a senior with 50 years of experience in the Canadian political system to make a suggestion while reminding us how our Indigenous cultures actually value the thoughts of elders.

First, even though Canadians often see provincial politicians taking shots at the feds and vice versa, Canada has one of the best-working federal systems in the world. Look at how provinces pioneered new programs – Saskatchewan, Medicare; British Columbia, the carbon tax; Quebec, affordable child care.

Remember how, in the 1940s, the federal government ran an amazing war effort. More recently, (dare I say it), our Canada Revenue Agency quickly rolled out support programs for Canadians out of work because of COVID-19. The reality under the Constitution Act of 1867 is that health and education are provincial jurisdictions. At the same time, the federal government has vast emergency powers that are rarely used. It has one other important thing – money.

Former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson talked of “cooperative federalism.” It’s defined as a flexible relationship between the federal and provincial governments in which both work together on a variety of issues and programs. It works. Let’s apply it.

Here’s how. The Canadian public needs to actually see the politicians struggling with these issues. One forum would be an open, televised, federal-provincial conference. The prime minister should immediately call one.



Former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson – pictured in 1963 with Cardinal Paul Émile Léger in Montreal – often talked of “cooperative federalism.” Let’s take a page from his book.

The federal delegation should consist of the prime minister, his health minister, and the leaders of the Conservative Party, the Bloc, the NDP, and the Greens, as well as the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. The premiers and territorial leaders would bring their health ministers and the chairs of their provincial or territorial associations or municipalities. All will pledge to work together.

It’s a big ask, yes, but this would be real leadership, and it would reflect what was done in wartime. Then they should get to work. The goal is to lay out all the issues involved in successfully tackling the virus. There will be differences – this is inherent in our vast country – but there is a need to show Canadians a united front and to reconnect to the public.

Canadians are not well-served by the patchwork of policies that we have now. The conference would come up with an agreed plan that would deal with lockdowns, aid to small businesses, and the timing and rollout of a vaccine, amongst others.

Canadians are a northern people, and to survive we have come to value community, compromise and working together. I’ve seen our politicians come together in a crisis. They need to do that in full view of the public. The public too has a role. Avoid taking cheap internet shots at the politicians. Then follow the plan.

(Ian Waddell is President of the Association of Former Members of Parliament Foundation and President of the Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia. This article appeared in the *Hill Times*.)

HOLIDAY DIVERSIONS

Answers on
bottom of page

Holiday Movie Trivia

by Rob Lee

December TV schedules are teeming with classic holiday movies such as *A Christmas Carol*, *It's A Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street*.

For this year's quiz, we will focus on two more recent movies that have become part of the traditional movie viewing in the Lee household during the holidays.

A Christmas Story (1983) tells the tale of a young boy's attempts to convince his parents and Santa that a Red Ryder BB gun is the perfect gift.

1) Ralphie wanted a Red Ryder Carbine Action BB gun. How many shots in the rifle?

- a) 50 b) 100 c) 200

2) Old Man Parker, Ralphie's dad, drove what kind of automobile?

- a) Studebaker b) Oldsmobile c) Packard

3) What was the name of Ralphie's friend who stuck his tongue on a flagpole on a dare?

- a) Farkus b) Schwartz c) Flick

Love, Actually (2003) follows the lives of numerous couples in the frantic weeks before Christmas (this is a movie that either people love or hate; we love it.)

4) The Prime Minister (played by Hugh Grant) dances by himself to what song?

- a) Jump b) Bye Bye Baby
c) All I Want For Christmas Is You

5) How does Mark (played by Andrew Lincoln) finally profess his love to Juliet (Keira Knightly) at her door?

- a) sign language b) cue cards c) mime

6) During his wife's funeral, Daniel (played by Liam Neeson) tells the attendees that his late wife suggested that he bring a supermodel to the service – who then made an appearance at the end of the movie as a school parent. Who was the supermodel?

- a) Christie Brinkley
b) Heidi Klum
c) Claudia Schiffer

Christmas Scramble

Unscramble these four clues,
one letter to each square,
to form four reindeer names

by Rob Lee

INVEX
□ ○ ○ □ □

RENCAD
□ ○ □ □ □ □

CARPERN
□ ○ □ □ □ □ □

ZINTBEL
□ ○ □ □ □ □ □



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Ans: □ ○ □ ○ ○ ○ □ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Holiday Humour

I'm dreaming of a White Christmas... but if it runs out, I'll drink the Red.

Fitting into my clothes after Christmas will be the real holiday miracle.

Dear New Years resolution:
It was fun while it lasted!
Sincerely, January 2nd

I CAN EXPLAIN
Vixen Dancer Frances Blitzen
Christmas Scramble answers
1) a 2) b 3) c 4) a 5) b 6) c
Holiday Movie Trivia answers

Cromwell was the Grinch who stole Christmas in 1640

By Jim Hume, *The Old Islander*

It wasn't the Grinch who tried to steal Christmas, it was the Christians. Good Christians, too, firm in their faith and determined to rid the world of the evils of mince pies and merry making.



Oliver Cromwell gets most of the historic blame for the 1640s official shut down of activities designed to bring Christmas joy to the masses, but the real villain was the English Parliament which solemnly enacted the law banning all Christmas celebrations.

Cromwell was certainly in favour. Having had what was called a “religious experience” as young man, he supported all measures to move mankind closer to Godliness as he and other Puritans perceived Godliness. When, shortly after the Christmas ban became law, he assumed the role of dictator (he preferred Lord Protector) and embraced and enforced the ban.

It was a no-joy-law and was, in perception, frighteningly similar to today's Muslim Taliban version of what is holy. Women were banned from wearing make-up or colourful clothes and squads from Cromwell's army roamed the streets searching for violators. They would give a woman an on-site face scrub if they judged her make-up overdone. The dress code for women was Taliban-Puritan strict – a long black dress covering neck to toes, a white apron with her hair bunched up behind a large white headscarf or black hat.

Men were expected to wear black, keep their hair short and go straight home from work to lead the family in prayer and bible reading. To make the route home easy, Cromwell ordered many taverns shut and closed all theatres.

The roving patrols stayed alert on Christmas Day seeking the smell of a goose being cooked or minced pies being baked. Fines could be imposed and the

goose and pies confiscated. The enforcers kept their eyes open for sprigs of holly and other ungodly decorations, and their ears open for anyone cussing the new laws. Swearing was punishable by immediate fines with repeated offences resulting in jail.

To make sure the populace understood that the banning of Christmas was only part of a grand plan to bring the nation closer to God, Sundays were proclaimed to be special days, and one day in every month was designated a fasting day. Women observed doing “unnecessary” work on a Sunday could be placed in the stocks, boys caught kicking a ball around or engaging in any other sporting activity could be whipped on the spot – and just going for a walk, unless it was to church, could result in a fine.

The clampdown on Christmas, while shocking when it came, was not unexpected. Over decades the festival had morphed from pagan bacchanal to Christian celebration and had grown wild. By the late 1500s, Christmas was being described as the time when “more mischief is committed than in all the year beside ... what dicing, carding, what eating and drinking, what banqueting and feasting is then used ... to the great dishonour of God and the impoverishing of the realm.”

Debauchery had become the way of Christmas and Lord Protector Cromwell – who wasn't above a little banquet style celebration himself in the privacy of his home – strongly supported any move to curb public festivities.

The Puritan's ban on Christmas lasted a quarter of a century. It wasn't until 1660 – with Charles II back on the throne – that Christmas was reinstated. To make sure people understood Cromwellian laws were now as dead as the enforcer, the King had Cromwell's body exhumed and the Lord Protector's head was hung on a spike in Westminster Hall.

Now, stop complaining about face masks and social distancing. Think about Christmas under Cromwell. But go easy on the eggnog.

“Papa” Harry finds family joy in the depths of a pandemic

By Harry Bloy

There are many articles and news stories of how challenging the pandemic is and I agree there are many days when I am either bored to tears or annoyed at the folks who don't wear masks. But, I am also attempting to really pay attention to the little things in my life that bring me joy. And I must say that it is my grandchildren who make me smile the most.

Our three grandsons and three granddaughters are between ages two and 12. Of course, my wife, Anita, and I are thrilled and until lately have been very involved in all of their lives. We have now learned over the past eight months to play games over “Messenger Kids,” to enjoy virtual piano recitals and to give hugs over Zoom. I have always known that Grandma is more naturally in sync with our grandkids and I continue to see this play out in how she stays connected. We all love each other, but I know my place in the pecking order of life.

I am also treasuring wonderful memories that would not have happened without the pandemic. Having conversations over Zoom is our “new normal.” Picture a Zoom conversation with an excited nine-year-old bouncing in the background.

A specific fond memory of mine involves our three-year-old granddaughter Vivian who lives in Victoria. As we hadn't seen them for many months, everyone was super excited when we planned to visit over the summer for a weekend. Apparently, she was quite concerned about the cleanliness of our bedroom and I am told that she pretended to drink coffee while she happily sang and swept our bed. I will never forget the sight of our daughter and granddaughters waiting at the end of their driveway for us to arrive. It was a real “Tailgate Welcome Party.”

The summer months were great for outdoor socially-distanced visits either in parks or backyards. I sometimes wonder what the kids are thinking during these visits. On one particular surprise visit to my daughter in Pitt Meadows, it seemed that my two-year-old granddaughter was oblivious to my presence. But to my surprise, my daughter told me how at bedtime all of her dolls were tucked in with a story of how Papa had come to visit.

On another occasion, we met this same daughter and her family at Lafarge Lake and as we adults visited, the kids just did their thing – running ahead, climbing on



Harry's three-year-old granddaughter Vivian pitches in the clean up ahead of a visit by Grandma and Papa.

everything, getting feet wet in the lake, throwing sticks into the water and, again, seemingly oblivious to us adults and to the worries and challenges of living in a pandemic. But then I noticed my five-year-old grandson walking slowly hand-in-hand with Grandma sharing stories of kindergarten.

I know that most grandparents have many wonderful memories and stories to share, and I know that it is these snapshots of small moments that, now especially, are what help me move through my day. Anita and I create a family calendar each Christmas and I know this year's calendar will be a little different. There will be pictures of socially-distanced backyard birthday parties, pictures of Grandma attempting to play volleyball with a 12-year-old because there's no more school volleyball teams, pictures of grandsons and grandparents wearing masks at Capilano Suspension Bridge and a picture of a Thanksgiving visit outside in the rain under trees and hand held umbrellas.

Flowing through these pictures is the energy of love and heartfelt joy of family. I can't wait to give everyone a heart-to-heart hug. Zoom is great, but nothing beats connecting in person.

How Silent Night briefly stopped the First World War

The weather in December 1914 was cold and wet. Many of the trenches were continually flooded; soldiers were covered in mud and exposed to frostbite and trench foot that seemed impossible to get rid of. Troops on both sides were dreading having to spend Christmas away from their families.

Then something incredible happened. Soldiers from both sides put down their weapons, stepped out of their trenches and enemy really did meet enemy between the trenches. For a short time, there was peace.

Along many parts of the Front Line, the truce was brought about by the arrival of miniature Christmas trees in the German trenches. Jovial voices could be heard calling out from both friendly and enemy trenches, followed by requests not to fire, then shadows of soldiers could be seen gathering in No Man's Land, laughing, joking and exchanging gifts.

The Christmas song *Silent Night* has long been a cherished part of our shared culture. But the power of the carol was never so clear as on that Christmas Eve, when a lone soldier's exquisite voice made history.

"It was impromptu, no one planned it," says Stanley Weintraub, the author of *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*.

"It has to begin with something, and it did begin with elements of shared culture. If it hadn't been for shared culture, certainly there would have been no Christmas truce."

Weintraub said it started with German officer, Walter Kirchhoff, a tenor with the Berlin Opera. "He came forward and sang *Silent Night* in German, and then in English. In the clear, cold night of Christmas Eve, his voice carried very far.

"The shooting had stopped and in that silence he sang and the British knew the song and sang back."

Gradually the troops crawled forward into No Man's Land, said Weintraub.

The song had a deep impact on many of the soldiers.

"Soldiers ... wrote home the day after to their families, to their wives, and to their parents, saying, 'You won't believe this. It was like a waking dream.'"



An illustration from the *London News*, originally published Jan. 9, 1915, showing the temporary ceasefire in the First World War over the Christmas of 1914.

There were many truces along the Western Front that Christmas, but the truce was not total. Shelling and firing continued in some parts and there were deaths on Christmas Day. Some of the truces were also arranged on Christmas Day.

The Christmas Truce of 1914 was not a unique occasion in military history. It was a return of a long-established tradition. It is common in conflicts with close quarters and prolonged periods of fighting for informal truces and generous gestures to take place between enemies.

For many at the time, the story of the Christmas truce was not an example of chivalry in the depths of war, but rather a tale of subversion: When the men on the ground decided they were not fighting the same war as their superiors. With No Man's Land sometimes spanning just 30 metres, enemy troops were so close that they could hear each other and even smell their cooking.

British General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien believed this proximity posed "the greatest danger" to the morale of soldiers and told divisional commanders to explicitly prohibit any "friendly intercourse with the enemy." He warned that "troops in trenches in close proximity to the enemy slide very easily, if permitted to do so, into a 'live and let live' theory of life."

(Source: CBC Daybreak and Time)



Greetings retired MLAs, thank you for your service

*An invitation to join AFMLABC from: President Ian Waddell,
and Membership Chair Ken Jones*

Welcome to the Association of Former MLAs of BC. You have served long and well and richly deserve to kick up and let a new wave of politicians embrace the challenges and rewards of public service.

The thing is, once an MLA always an MLA. For years to come, folks will stop you on the street and ask your help. Most of you will still try to be there for them.

Our members tell us that in retirement, they come to better appreciate that good governance trumps partisan divides. Old foes become friends. Issues that seemed black and white become more nuanced.

You will also want to stay connected. That's where the AFMLABC comes in.

The Association's goals are compelling in these troubling times. Its mandate is to:

- Put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in British Columbia and elsewhere;
- Serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in British Columbia;
- Foster a spirit of community among former MLAs; and
- Build good relations between current and former MLAs.

Joining is simple. Go to: www.formerbcmla.com/payments, and follow the prompts. For more information, email us at ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com.

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