

LETTERS

Reform absent in Throne Speech



**VIEW FROM THE
LEGISLATURE**

**MLA Doug
Donaldson**

The Christy Clark government's Throne Speech began the sitting of the legislature last week.

A Throne Speech is the government's opportunity to lay out their vision for the coming year and to give an indication of what they believe is important.

And so the glaring omission of any mention of reform to increase confidence in our political system speaks loudly about a BC Liberal government that isn't concerned about growing public cynicism that results in outcomes like ever-decreasing voter turnout, especially among younger voters.

In response to this omission, we presented a number of Private Member Bills last week to signal some of the methods we would employ through the legislature to improve public confidence if we form government after the May 9

provincial election.

Bill 307, the Banning of Publicly Funded Campaign Advertisements Act, addresses the situation where the BC Liberals have almost doubled the government advertising budget in this election year, resulting in \$15 million being spent on ads telling you how great the government is doing. Under our Bill, all government advertising must be reviewed and approved by the Auditor General based on clearly defined criteria preventing advertising that promotes the partisan interests of the governing party or creates a negative impression of government critics.

The Bill requires government advertising to present information factually and objectively and also bans all government advertising four months before the fixed election date.

Bill M201, the Get Big Money Out of Politics Act, addresses fundraising rules that allow

Premier Clark's taxpayer supported salary to be topped up by \$50,000 a year in political contributions, either direct donations or raised at BC Liberal events.

It's a situation in BC that is illegal elsewhere and was featured in a New York Times exposé with a 'wild west' quote.

Our Bill prohibits corporate and union donations to political parties, restricts campaign donations to individuals who reside in British Columbia and specifically bans members of the executive council, including the Premier, from accepting salaries and stipends or other outside sources of income.

We also introduced legislation on election campaign spending, democratic reforms, transparency and accountability.

Many of these Bills have been introduced by us before, some multiple times.

We have not received support from BC Liberal MLAs on any of them. You have to conclude political reform is not important to them.

Province not listening to GMO concern

In case anybody wonders what happened to the petition asking the BC Ministry of Agriculture to not support or initiate the cultivation of GMO in the Bulkley Valley in accordance with the 2013 Regional District resolution against such cultivation, do not hold your breath.

It took four months for Minister Norm Letnick to thank us for "sharing" the petition!

He clearly avoids the word GMO for the corn used by the three farmers, which he calls hybrid silage corn, and omits the Roundup-resistant part of it which makes it GMO.

He also misrepresents the "frequent contacts" I supposedly had with the representative of the Ministry who squarely refused to inform me if the corn was GMO or not and

sent me to FOI for everything else.

He denies the role of the Ministry of Agriculture in the trials with a very enthusiastic local agrologist going all the way to offer to write a proposal for funding, — as FOI documents showed.

He simply ignores the main issue of his Ministry acting against the Regional District resolution. Indeed, in spite of what the Minister says, his ministry was engaged.

What it boils down for the 511 people who signed the petition and expressed their concerns, the B.C. Minister of Agriculture told them to be lost.

One can only guess that the Liberal government is taking its lessons from south of the border: be right at all cost and do not listen to the people.

It is up to us to let this happen or not.

At my end, I'll try all I can to prevent it but it needs many more of us.

Josette Weir
Smithers

Minister Letnick's response to GMO petition

Feb. 14, 2017

Dear Ms. Wier:

Thank you for your letter of October 11, 2016 and for sharing the petition regarding "respect the intentions of the Regional District of the Bulkley Nechako by not initiating or supporting the development and cultivation of GMO crops within the boundaries of the Regional District."

My understanding is that the corn trials you refer to are the result of local producers collaborating to conduct independent crop trials of a commercially available hybrid silage corn on their private land and at their own cost.

The Ministry of Agriculture is not engaged in conducting these crop trials.

I understand that the Ministry's Regional Agrologist has been in frequent contact with you and has been available to answer your questions regarding glyphosate resistant corn or has directed you to the appropriate resources.

If you have further questions, I would encourage you to work with Brent Barclay, Regional Manager who can be contacted at Brent.Barclay@gov.bc.ca .

Thank you for writing and sharing your concerns with me.

Sincerely,
Norm Letnick
Minister

pc: Bill Miller, Chair
Bulkley Nechako Regional District
Mark Fisher, Director Area A
Bulkley Nechako Regional District

**TO:
THE EDITOR**

Letters to the editor policy

Letters are welcomed up to a maximum of 250 words. Letters are subject to editing for clarity, brevity and legality. All letters must include the writer's name, daytime telephone number and hometown for verification purposes. Anonymous, or pen names will not be permitted. Not all submissions will be published. Letters may be e-mailed to: editor@interior-news.com

RCMP recommendations won't fix systematic racism

This investigation [by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP] has revealed serious failures on the part of RCMP members and supervisors, across northern BC, including huge problems in the way that the RCMP deal with investigations of missing persons including women and girls.

We are deeply disappointed that this report completely avoids any examination of allegations of systemic racism against Indigenous people by the police in northern British Columbia.

This is a tragic fact of life that First Nations people have to live with every day, many of whom have their rights violated by police repeatedly.

The Human Rights Watch report that prompted this investigation made scathing allegations of racism, neglect and mistreatment by police towards Indigenous women and girls in particular, and this investigation has failed to deal with these issues that are gripping our communities and that create a lack of trust between our communities and the police.

If the complaints commission, and the RCMP itself, genuinely want to improve relationships with First Nations people, there is a great deal more work to do.

The recommendations in this report, while they may help to improve some police practices, will not fix the massive problem of systemic racism that our people experience daily and have had to endure ever since the RCMP started policing our lands and peoples.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

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