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A Flood of Lies And The BC Election

I was reading about the BC election the other day, which at the time was still too close to call, then opened my Facebook feed, and as I scrolled down was stunned by images of West and North Vancouver flooding. Huge rivers of gushing water thick with debris streaming down hillsides and streets, flooding homes, shutting down businesses and causing residents to flee and take refuge.

In my mind those two events took shape as a tragic irony. That a climate change driven flood should occur at exactly the same moment a climate denying conservative leader was waiting to hear if he would become the 37th premier of BC.

And make no mistake about it. John Rustad is not a climate “skeptic” as some in the media would have us believe. This is a man whose arrogance is so vast that he has chosen to blow off a consensus reached by 99% of the world’s scientists that our global climate is changing as a result of human activity – specifically the burning of fossil fuels.

So how do we explain this? How do we explain the election of a climate denier in a province that’s been repeatedly wracked by floods and forest fires. One of the few provinces that has, under NDP premier, David Eby, enacted some of the most aggressive emission reduction and climate resiliency strategies in the country?

Strategies Rustad will undo in favour of a dangerously outmoded “exploit it now, pay for it later” model of economic growth.

Well, if you listen to the journalistic pundits on the CBC news channel, it’s all about incumbency fatigue. In other words, it’s all about that old cliché trotted out by the intellectually lazy claiming that the electorate will vote for a climate denier just because they’re tired of the same old, same old, and want change.



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The BC Leadership debate: John Rustad, David Eby and Sonia Furstenau

And yes, cliches are cliches precisely because they contain a modicum of truth. Canadians are tired and they do want change. The problem is the pundits usually fail to point out that the changes being promised by conservative leaders like John Rustad and Pierre Poilievre are based, for the most part, on lies.

In fact Rustad kicked off his first TV debate with a lie, claiming that on his way to the studio he’d seen someone on the street die of an overdose. Then, instead of describing how he rushed to the person’s aid – which he apparently did not do - he blamed the death on the incumbent NDP premier saying, “This is the British Columbia that David Eby has created.”

Thanks to an industrious journalist who fact checked the conservative leader, it was subsequently revealed that *no one* had died from an overdose that day - or that evening.

A small lie, perhaps, but symptomatic of a pattern of lies dished out by guys like Rustad on a daily basis. Take his campaign promise to abolish the tax on tip income. Income tax, as most of us know, falls under Federal jurisdiction. Which means that either Rustad doesn’t understand the Canadian tax system, or he purposely lied to garner votes.

Or consider his much more disturbing claim that it was “impossible that carbon could possibly be a problem for carbon based beings,” like us humans, and that taxing carbon “in some vain attempt to change the weather is absolute lunacy.”

I don't know about you, but given that statement, I'm pretty sure who the real lunatic is and it's not the premier who enacted BC's version of the carbon tax.



A 2024 BC Conservative Party Ad

Rustad promises the return of plastic straws and grocery bags

So why did so many British Columbians vote for Rustad? – an anti-vaxxer who promises to bring back single use plastics and privatize BC's healthcare system. A leader who refuses to accept that human activity is the main driver of the climate crisis, which, in his opinion, isn't a crisis at all.

Well, it's a bit of a puzzle given BC's record-setting extreme weather this year, including 18,500 climate-driven wildfires, a whopping 2000 above than the provincial average. Fires that prompted evacuation alerts, claimed 1.05 million hectares of forest as of August and cost the province \$387 million and counting.

Add to that an atmospheric river, supercharged by a warming climate, that caused record setting rainfall and massive, life threatening floods across Vancouver and towns along the southern coast.

God only knows what the price tag for that will be.

The outlook is no better nationally. In fact summer 2024 smashed the record for extreme weather damage and resulted in Canadian insurance claims skyrocketing to \$7.6 billion.

Something we'll all likely pay for in the future via escalating insurance costs.

Bottom line? – whether it's BC or Canada, we can't afford to elect leaders who are climate deniers or climate evaders, politicians like Rustad and Poilievre who have openly stated that they'll axe programs aimed at reducing emissions and improving our ability to cope with extreme weather.

Canadians, like British Columbians, will soon make a choice at the polls. I very much hope we make the right one.