



117 BC Liberal Falsehoods, Boondoggles and Scandals: The Complete List

The Tyee's updated tally of 15 years of public messes, sourced and explained.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This list, which combines the Gordon Campbell and Christy Clark eras, grew from an original 98 items published April 4, 2017 to 117 after we invited Tyee readers to suggest additions.

Some definitions:

- » By **falsehood** we mean promises broken or assertions that proved demonstrably untrue.
- » By **boondoggle** we mean significant public money lost to waste, overruns, or ill-conceived initiatives.
- » By **scandal** we mean moments when government was revealed to have seriously broken rules or caused harm either deliberately or through neglect or incompetence.

The Tyee chose these categories with the assumption that all voters, no matter their political leanings, would prefer their government tell the truth, spend money responsibly, and avoid embarrassing breaches of ethics or the law. We also present sidebar items that don't fit the categories, but also aren't anything a premier might put on her podium sign.

This report is part of The Tyee's reader-funded B.C. 2017 election coverage. To learn more about becoming a Tyee Builder, visit support.thetyee.ca



The Christy Clark Era 2011-2017

20 FALSEHOODS • 19 BOONDOGGLES • 25 SCANDALS

BOONDOGGLE // Air Christy

B.C.'s high-flying premier ran up more than half a million dollars in private jet flights during her first five years in office, at times managing to squeeze in Liberal party fundraisers among the government photo ops. On at least two occasions, Clark flew on jets chartered from companies owned by wealthy Liberal backers.

BOONDOGGLE // Faulty Schools Data System Scrapped after \$81-Million Overrun

In 2005 the BC Liberal government created a universal computer system to track K-12 student data across the province. Cost overruns zoomed from \$16 million to \$97 million as glitches, shutdowns, slow service and a critical independent assessment doomed it to obsolescence. The province gave up on the system in 2011 and ordered up a replacement. It took four years to find and install, and performed so badly it elicited new excoriations from educator users, and an apology from its maker.

BOONDOGGLE // Stanley Cup Riot Report Topped \$300K, No One to Blame

After the 2011 Stanley Cup riot, the government hired former Olympics boss John Furlong and Former Nova Scotia deputy attorney-general Doug Keefe to co-chair an inquiry. Their report was criticized for letting Canucks brass, senior bureaucrats, police and politicians off the hook. The inquiry did manage to go over its budget, though, running up a bill well over \$300,000. Documents showed that Furlong billed for four hours of work the same day he spoke to the International Olympic Committee in South Africa.

FALSEHOOD // Forest Job Figures Didn't Count Real Jobs

The government boasted the booming economy they'd created had resulted in 27 mill re-openings and 10,000 new forestry

jobs since 2009. Turns out those numbers were based on the "number of board feet [exported to] China divided by 250 million feet per mill" — numbers that the Opposition NDP said didn't match figures from Statistics Canada. The NDP's numbers came up with less than half that number of new jobs. And the government's own stats don't bear out the boast.

SCANDAL // Four Die, No Charges Laid Due to Botched WorkSafeBC Probe

Robert Luggi, a worker at a Burns Lake sawmill texted his wife from work. "Please pray for me," he wrote. "I'm going to check something out." Twenty-seven minutes later Luggi and co-worker Carl Charlie were dead, as the mill exploded into a fireball that injured 20 others. Three months later, in April 2012, two more men died when a sawmill near Prince George blew up. Both explosions were caused by a lethal buildup of dry sawdust. As The Tyee reported, the blasts took place "in a context of work speedup and imperfect regulatory inspections, long, exhausting shifts and work sites covered with fine, flammable dust that should have been cleared away."

The B.C. government would eventually bring in new rules to improve sawmill safety but declined to mount a public inquiry. No charges were laid against the mills' owners because the B.C. Criminal Justice Branch decided that WorkSafeBC's actions and inactions had made successful prosecutions unlikely. Not only had WorkSafeBC failed to warn the mills of the dust buildup, but its investigations into the tragedies were so flawed that the evidence gathered would not be admissible in court, the prosecutors concluded.

BOONDOGGLE // Premier's Fired Press Aide Got \$67,000 Severance for 11 Months Work

When Christy Clark replaced Gordon Campbell as B.C.'s premier she cleaned house, racking up a big severance bill: \$2.4 million

for 13 members of Campbell's senior staff shown the door. One of Clark's hand-picked replacements was press secretary Chris Olsen. Less than year after his hire, he was fired and given \$67,000 in severance, all "by the rules" assured an otherwise mum Clark.

HEAL THYSELF // MLA's Policy Cure Favours Son

British Columbia should make it easier for B.C. students who study medicine abroad to get training positions in their home province, advocated a report prepared by BC Liberal MLA Moira Stilwell for the health minister. "Our population needs these gifted young physicians," she wrote. What she didn't tell the health minister is that her own son was studying medicine at a school in Ireland.

FALSEHOOD // BC Liberals Understated Deficit by \$520 Million: AG

The B.C. government used non-standard accounting to make the deficit seem \$520 million smaller than it really was, accused B.C.'s auditor general in 2012. It was too familiar, he said, citing "a long-standing trend of shortcomings in the transparency of government's finances" throughout the BC Liberal era.

SCANDAL // Over Sharing Minister Fired

Harry Bloy was the only MLA to support Christy Clark in her campaign for BC Liberal leader. When she won, the career backbencher found himself in cabinet, as minister of social development. As his ministry shut down programs for disabled adults, Bloy gave the impression of a man with only the faintest idea of what his job entailed. After being demoted to minister of state for multiculturalism, Bloy was forced to resign when he passed on a private email from a Province reporter to officials of a company the reporter was investigating.

FALSEHOOD // Reversal on Pesticide Ban

In May 2011, Premier Christy Clark said she was going to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides, telling reporters: "I've supported this for years now. We are going to do it." A year later, after a legislative committee split along party lines on whether to support a ban, Clark wasn't going to do it. Unlike most provinces, B.C. still has not banned cosmetic pesticides.

FALSEHOOD // Clark Reneged on Public Consult on Treaty

In June 2011 Premier Clark promised the public would get the chance to comment on the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union, then under negotiation. "There will be, I'm told, consultation on this agreement," she said. "There will be many avenues for the public's input." A year later, no consultation. "No, we don't intend to do that," Clark told the legislature.

SCANDAL // No Proof Chinese Temp Worker Shakedown Was Investigated

After The Tyee reported Chinese temporary workers were being illegally charged thousands by recruiters for B.C. mining

operations, and the CBC independently confirmed the practice, the BC Liberal government pledged to investigate, but claimed to find no evidence. Pressed, the government produced no evidence any real investigation had been done, and union reps cried foul.

FALSEHOOD // Premier 'Fudging' Job Creation

At the end of 2012, there was "no other way to say it: The B.C. government is fudging its job creation record," wrote National Post senior reporter David Akin. "While Clark campaigns to be number one on job creation, B.C. is actually the worst in the West and fourth worst in Canada" and the "B.C. government is making false claims about the performance of the BC Jobs Plan."

FALSEHOOD // Minister Wrongly Claimed RCMP Investigating Fired Health Workers

When Minister Margaret MacDiarmid announced the firing of seven health ministry workers in 2012, she claimed the RCMP were investigating their alleged misbehaviour. Later, after one worker committed suicide, others sued, none were charged, some got cash settlements and their jobs back, and the premier apologized, it came to light that the RCMP, for lack of evidence, had never launched any investigation.

SCANDAL // Researcher, Wrongly Fired, Committed Suicide

Ph.D student Roderick MacIsaac killed himself three months after he was fired with six other government health researchers as part of a 2012 investigation into alleged ethics breaches. MacIsaac had been assessing the risks of anti-smoking drugs the province was paying for after Christy Clark promised it would when running for leader. The drugs included Champix, previously the subject of U.S. and Canada safety warnings. Premier Clark eventually apologized for the "heavy handed" firings of MacIsaac and others. Some were offered their jobs back and awarded cash settlements after the government admitted it overreacted.

The NDP and MacIsaac's sister called for a public inquiry, but the Clark government said no, choosing the less transparent route of putting the Ombudsperson in charge of fact-finding and even changing the law to make it possible, despite serious concerns raised by the fired, the opposition and the Ombudsman himself.

BOONDOGGLE // Big Price Tag for Health Ministry Firing Mess

The BC Liberals' false persecution of seven drug researchers in 2012 left taxpayers on the hook for cash settlements with the fired workers, legal costs, and multiple reviews of the snafu. One such probe was contracted to Deloitte & Touche LLP without allowing other firms to compete because "an unforeseeable emergency exists," the 2012 paperwork showed. The firm billed \$684,309.67 in less than five months and in May 2013 stood to receive another non-compete contract for \$650,000 to keep at it. Meanwhile, taxpayers incurred the untold expense of paying for drugs that might otherwise have been recommended against. For example, the government kept paying for

Alzheimer's drugs in a pilot study longer than planned while the research work on its effectiveness halted after the firings. Graham Whitmarsh, who was deputy minister during the firings, was himself fired after the next election and given a \$250,000 golden parachute.

STINKER // Opposition Plugs Nose at Sheep Hide Grant

B.C. government officials smelled a problem and warned superiors when the Tanned, Wild and Woolly project sought a grant to teach five people in Powell River how to tan sheepskins. "There is a direct conflict of interest with the President of the Non-profit being hired as the Supervisor on the project," the assessment said. That president/supervisor-to-be was former BC Liberal MLA Judy Tyabji Wilson, whose non-profit eventually got \$181,635 from a joint program of the B.C. and Canadian governments, \$67,000 to Tyabji Wilson.

The conflict was "resolved," said Tyabji Wilson, who went on to write a friendly biography of Premier Clark and who is married to Gordon Wilson, contracted by Clark's government to help promote LNG jobs. But NDP house leader Mike Farnworth wondered, "How is it that the premier's biographer is able to get a grant that ministry staff say is in a conflict of interest, it gets awarded, the government's been told it's a conflict of interest, and then the grant gets increased and it doesn't meet its objectives?" He added: "Part of this project was to stop sheep hides going into a landfill. This whole thing stinks like sheep hides in a landfill."

FALSEHOOD // Broken Promise to Revise Municipal Election Rules

In July 2010 the BC Liberal government promised to change the legislation covering municipal election spending in time for the 2011 elections. Nine months later, however, the government admitted the changes wouldn't happen until 2014 "due to tight timelines for spring legislation and the complexity of the planned changes." Then, in February 2013, the minister in charge admitted the changes weren't coming anytime soon. The changes finally went through in 2014, in time for the 2018 elections — seven years late.

SCANDAL // Chief of Staff Did Something So 'Inappropriate' in a Pub He Resigned

Premier Clark's chief of staff Ken Boessenkool suddenly resigned after he acted, he said, "inappropriately." Whatever he did involved a female government staffer in a bar, according to news reports. The premier refused to give details, citing privacy. Her deputy chief of staff may have destroyed related records, the Information Commissioner later found.

FALSEHOOD // Clark Canards Riddled Radio Interview

In the thick of 2013's election, Premier Clark took to the airwaves to make a series of false claims about her government's record on debt, deficits, and the province's credit rating.

FALSEHOOD // Clark Kept Exaggerating NDP Spending Plans by 50%

On the campaign trail last election, Christy Clark repeatedly claimed the NDP would up spending by \$3 billion, even creating billboards saying so. The real figure was \$2 billion and how it would be covered was accounted for in the party's platform, countered her NDP opponent Adrian Dix. The CBC calculated BC Liberal math "just doesn't add up. We find their \$3 billion claim wrong."

BOONDOGGLE // Public Paid \$11 Million to Host Bollywood Extravaganza

The BC Liberal government spent \$11 million of British Columbians' money hosting a Times of India Film Awards show a month before the 2013 provincial election. The Bollywood bash, exuded Premier Clark, "is just part of what's going to inject millions into our economy as a result of our relationship with the Times of India Media Group," later crediting the show with boosting visits by Indian tourists to B.C. Visits to Greater Vancouver did rise the next year, at about the same rate for all of Canada. But instead of crediting the awards show, the Canadian Tourism Commission cited the easing of visa restrictions for Indians. Two years after the show aired, B.C. continued to lag behind Ontario and Alberta in number of tourists from India.

SCANDAL // Tax Evasion Charges Forced BC Liberal Candidate to Quit

BC Liberal candidate Sukh Dhaliwal pulled out of the 2013 election race after tax evasion charges were laid against him. He and his wife later pled guilty and paid fines for failing to file returns for their company. Dhaliwal had previously attracted controversy when a Liberal MP by writing a letter of recommendation on House of Commons stationery to a U.S. judge considering the fate of convicted heroin trafficker Ranjit Cheema, held in a California jail. Later, Dhaliwal said going to bat for Cheema had been a "mistake." After serving his time in the U.S. and released, Cheema was gunned down.

SCANDAL // Lax Safeguards for Thousands Stripped of Power over Own Finances

B.C.'s ombudsman looked at who gets to declare whom medically unfit to handle their own legal and financial affairs and found procedures so lax that rights were regularly violated. Thousands were made to surrender control to the Public Guardian and Trustee because they had been ruled "incapable," even though people labeling them lacked formal training or even a clear understanding of what the term meant.

SCANDAL // Cynical 'Quick Wins' Strategy Broke Rules

The BC Liberals plotted to woo voters while using public funds to collect data for the election, which is forbidden. The strategy memo, written by Premier Clark's close friend and deputy chief of staff Kim Haakstad and shared by private email to avoid public scrutiny, cynically suggested the party gain "quick wins" by offering apologies for "historical wrongs" to various

ethnic groups. After the memo leaked, the multiculturalism minister stepped down, his aide resigned, and so did Haakstad and communications director Brian Bonney, who was charged with breach of trust. Clark called it all “a serious mistake” but rebuffed calls for an independent investigation.

SCANDAL // Few Private River Generators Met Environmental Standards

In summer of 2012 only four of 22 BC Liberal government sanctioned, privately owned run-of-river electricity projects on South Coast rivers were being operated in a satisfactory environmental manner, according to documents pried from the province’s Environmental Assessment Office. A year and half later only six of 24 projects were compliant, according to a Province news story headlined “Horror Shows’ on B.C. Rivers.”

SCANDAL // Clark Failed to Disclose Ties to Firm She Later Touted as Premier

As premier, Christy Clark promoted RCI Capital Inc. on overseas trade trips without publicly disclosing her past ties to the company. The CEO of RCI said he hired Clark, after her first stint in government, to be director of his new subsidiary aiming to recruit foreign students to B.C. But the enterprise stalled, he said and Clark did no work and wasn’t paid the two years she was listed director. Clark shrugged off conflict of interest accusations leveled by the opposition, watchdog IntegrityBC and others.

SCANDAL // As Mount Polley Disaster Hit, AG Was Ready-ing Scathing Report on BC Mine Oversight

To avoid more catastrophes like the 2014 failure of the tailings pond dam at Mount Polley mine, responsibility for regulating mining in B.C. should be taken away from the ministry that also promotes the industry, concluded a report from the province’s auditor general.



*The aftermath of a tailings pond failure at Mount Polley mine, 2014.
Photo: Cariboo Regional District.*

The Ministry of Energy and Mines’ “role to promote mining development is diametrically opposed to compliance and enforcement,” said the report, which found “major gaps in resources, planning and tools” and “too few resources, infrequent inspections, and lack of enforcement” threatened the safety of mines across B.C. Work on the audit was already underway when the Mount Polley disaster happened. BC Liberals deeply cut mine safety inspections when they took government in 2001.

SCANDAL // Higher Ed Minister’s Past Rule Breaking Exposed

A government probe slammed BC Liberal Advanced Education Minister Amrik Virk for transparency failures when he was on the board of Kwantlen Polytech. After months of pressure, Premier Clark demoted Virk to a less important ministry while keeping him in cabinet.

SCANDAL // BC’s Gambling Guardian Caught in Conflict of Interest

The man in charge of keeping B.C. gambling clean did not disclose a conflict of “private economic” interest before suddenly quitting to lead a private casino venture. Michael Graydon was forced to apologize after investigators revealed that, while CEO of the BC Lottery crown corporation, he was in discussions with a consortium that months later hired him with hopes of moving into a \$535-million complex on provincial land. Once gone from government, Graydon kept getting BC Lottery emails, including a strategic memo.

FALSEHOOD // 100,000 LNG Jobs Claim Doesn’t Add up

The BC Liberal government has repeatedly said LNG projects would create 100,000 jobs in B.C., citing a 2014 consultants’ report it paid for, but the math is sketchy. KPMG assumed at least five plants built by 2023 but the government itself only predicts three, with none yet underway. Based on five plants, by 2022 KPMG projected 58,700 “direct and indirect” construction jobs, 23,800 operations jobs and thousands of “induced” jobs created by households with more income. Most of those jobs wouldn’t be permanent. And taken together, even in the peak construction year of 2018, all jobs fall 30 per cent short of 100,000. So how many long-term jobs could five LNG plants create? Once “in full production by 2027, the steady state direct workforce demand for operations is expected to be 8,000 to 9,000 jobs,” said KPMG.

BOONDOGGLE // New Auditor Couldn’t Run Own Shop

Premier Clark created a bureaucracy to make sure cities spent their money responsibly. But the Auditor General for Local Government blew through \$5.2 million in two years while getting little done, a leaked government report found. The 10-person office was itself badly run by Basia Ruta, most of her staff alleged to investigators. The BC Liberal government, which had paid a private headhunter \$57,000 to hire Ruta, fired her.

WHAT HAPPENS IN EDMONTON STAYS IN EDMONTON //

In the 2011/12 fiscal year, members of the B.C. Ministry of Forests journeyed to Alberta's capital city. There they charged taxpayers \$375 for three visits to a Hooters restaurant.

FALSEHOOD // Minister Painted Opposite Picture of Total Fail

Two years after Premier Clark created the Auditor General for Local Government, The Tyee asked the minister in charge if there were management and human resource problems at that office. None, Minister Coralee Oakes assured. But she was directly contradicted by a damning report finished the month before by Oakes' own director of strategic human resources. Later, the auditor general was canned.

BOONDOGGLE // Taxpayers Lost \$43 Million on Fast Land Sale

An independent appraiser told the BC Liberal government if it hung onto 14 parcels of Coquitlam land for some months to let the market work they would fetch \$128 million. But all the land was sold quickly instead to one buyer, a big Liberal donor, for \$43 million less. The sale went down just in time to pad a BC Liberal budget shy of balancing.

SCANDAL // Emails Regularly ‘Triple Deleted’ to Avoid Scrutiny

A widely used method of scrubbing sensitive emails from B.C. government archives was unmasked by a whistleblower in the transport ministry. Former staffer Tim Duncan said co-worker George Gretes grabbed his keyboard away from him and “triple deleted” emails about the Highway of Tears in northern B.C. where women, many Indigenous, have gone missing. Gretes lied about triple deleting to the privacy commissioner and pled guilty. The commissioner found three more staffers breached the freedom of info law. Under fire, Premier Clark banned triple deleting, which Duncan said was commonplace, ascribing this mindset to BC Liberal appointee culture: “Do whatever it takes to win... at any cost.”

BOONDOGGLE // BC’s Go It Alone \$182-Million Computer Glitch

The Integrated Case Management computer system chosen by the BC Liberal government in 2008 to manage sensitive social service files crashed and kept piling up costs, including over \$500,000 a year for a repair team roving the province. B.C. was alone in choosing the software rejected by other jurisdictions as wrong for the job, and met early with a bad security breach and slowdowns, internal documents showed. By 2015, the still glitchy ICM had “not fulfilled its key objectives” found the auditor general. Cost to taxpayers: at least \$182 million.

BOONDOGGLE // Om No! Clark’s Yoga Fest Collapse

Premier Clark announced a \$150,000 International Day of Yoga festivity that would block Vancouver’s Burrard Bridge and

compete with the first National Aboriginal Day, but cancelled it a week later after a public backlash and sponsors, BC Liberal donors AltaGas and Lululemon, pulled out.

BOONDOGGLE // Five Years Late, Health Ministry Computer 420% over Budget

“Impacted by defects from the start,” concluded B.C.’s auditor general when assessing a botched computer system supposed to manage infectious disease outbreaks. Five years behind schedule, the problem-plagued Panorama project’s costs had risen 420 per cent to \$113 million, sucking up \$14 million yearly in maintenance, said the AG.

SCANDAL // Teen’s Death after Foster Care Hell Exposed System Failures

After aging out of a brutal life in foster care since early childhood, Paige Gauchier, 19, was found dead of a drug overdose in a park bathroom in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. The RCMP investigated whether public employees failed in their responsibilities and recommended charges that were not pursued. The title of the independent Children and Youth Representative’s report, “Paige’s Story: Abuse, Indifference and a Young Life Discarded,” summed up its findings. In issuing its response, the BC Liberal government waited five months, timed for federal Election Day, where it was sure to get reduced coverage.

SCANDAL // Teen Who Killed Himself in Ministry Care ‘Should Not Have Been Left Alone’

Four months after B.C.’s independent youth advocate responded to Paige Gauchier’s death by issuing a shocking report of systemic failure to protect foster children, 18-year-old Alex Gervais committed suicide by leaping from a hotel room where he’d been on his own for months while in provincial care. The youth advocate launched another investigation, saying “He should not have been left alone,” and “the government, particularly the Ministry for Children and Family has a lot to answer for in this case.” It found that during his short life, Gervais was placed in 17 different living locations, some just hotels, with 23 different caregivers.

FALSEHOOD // Clark’s ‘Open’ Government an ‘Utter Sham’

After a damning official report about the Clark government’s culture of secrecy, Globe and Mail columnist Gary Mason threw up his hands: “Once upon a time, Ms. Clark campaigned on the promise to have the most open, transparent government in the country. We now know that was a complete and utter sham, said for the benefit of a gullible public to get votes. The government’s record on this front is a disgrace.” More on that record here.

BOONDOGGLE // Premier’s Surprise \$150,000 Helped Chief Backing Her Brother’s \$10 Million Project

Premier Clark was accused of spending taxpayers’ money to interfere in First Nation politics after she made a surprise visit to Haida Gwaii and gave the Old Masset Village Council \$150,000 for a school expansion feasibility study. Clark’s visit and the grant helped the band’s chief narrowly win re-election, charged

his opponent. The winner, unlike his opponent, supported a \$10-million wind farm project involving the premier's brother Bruce Clark. The premier's office denied any connection between the visit, the election, and her brother, as did Bruce Clark. The schoolhouse in question is on reserve land and therefore a federal responsibility. Federal dollars had already paid for two expansion studies.

RAISE TO THE TOP // Politicians Get Big Pay Hikes, Welfare Rates Don't Budge

In the past 10 years under the BC Liberals, the premier's pay has risen 61 per cent (or doubled if you include the \$50,000 top-up Christy Clark quietly received from her party) while MLAs have enjoyed raises of between 34 and 44 per cent. These politicians' incomes place them among the top 10 per cent in B.C. During the same decade their pensions grew much faster, thanks to recommendations by a 2007 panel Gordon Campbell stacked in favour of higher pay. The next year Campbell's TransLink board voted themselves a 500 per cent raise. Not long after, on the day ferry fares were hiked, BC Ferries directors got pay jumps of up to 60 per cent. One group who hasn't seen a raise in all that time is welfare recipients. Their rates, among the lowest in Canada, haven't gone up for 10 years.

BOONDOGGLE // The \$6-Billion 'Rat' in BC Hydro's Books

Under premier Gordon Campbell, BC Hydro started with a \$200-million "deferral account" of tucked away costs to be paid another day, and let more of them balloon to over \$7 billion. This "rat" in the BC Hydro snake, said the auditor general in 2011, would have to be digested someday by raising rates or taxes or both. Incoming Premier Clark vowed to use BC Hydro cost savings to help diminish those accounts over 10 years, but as of last August the figure was still stalled at around \$6 billion and forecast to stay there four more years. If it doesn't come down, B.C. residents will be stuck with the bill.

SCANDAL // BC Lib Executive Director Criminally Charged

Premier Clark's BC Liberal Party rehired its executive director, Laura Miller, even though she faces a criminal trial in September in Ontario. Miller resigned in December after being charged with breach of trust and mischief for an alleged role in the destruction of email records in Ontario's gas plant scandal when she was deputy chief to the premier there. In rehiring Miller, Premier Clark stressed she must be presumed innocent until proven otherwise. If convicted, Miller could face 10 years in prison.

FALSEHOOD // No LNG Funds Funding LNG Prosperity Fund

"B.C. LNG Prosperity Fund to Get \$100M Contribution, but Not from LNG" read a 2016 CBC headline. Premier Clark had promised a liquefied natural gas windfall, including a "prosperity fund" Clark's finance minister said would be "tied directly to the establishment of an LNG industry." But the fund's first \$100 million came from taxpayers instead, an amount the BC Liberal

government had raised by upping MSP premiums. "I found it unbelievable that the premier would start a prosperity fund," said NDP MLA Carole James, "with revenue that hasn't come in, from an industry that hasn't started yet in British Columbia." The following September the BC Liberals added \$400 million more to the fund, still without any LNG money.

FALSEHOOD // Not Gonna Do Foreign Buyers Tax, Said Premier

The BC Liberal government denied for over two years it could do anything to slow skyrocketing housing prices, even after the price of single detached homes in Greater Vancouver leapt 40 per cent in just 12 months ending in February 2016. A number of experts and 29,000 petition signers urged an obvious place to start was a foreign buyers tax. Nothing doing, said both Premier Clark and her chief fundraiser, condo king Bob Rennie.

Until July 2016, that is, when Clark's government, under extreme pressure to act, did impose a 15 per cent foreign home-buyers' tax, applied only to Metro Vancouver. Rennie said he "knew" one was coming weeks before, prompting the NDP to demand he be investigated for insider info. But Rennie clarified he'd just had a hunch. Six months later he quit as BC Liberal fundraiser.

FALSEHOOD // Site C Facts Don't Support Minister's 'Due Diligence' Claim

Frustrated at opposition to the \$9-billion Site C dam project, Energy Minister Bill Bennett said the BC Liberal government "took seven years to do our due diligence to determine this was the best way to acquire new electricity at the lowest price, clean electricity." In fact, the BC Utilities Commission exists to provide due diligence on such a project, but the government prevented its own agency from reviewing Site C and holding public hearings. The only time the BCUC vetted the Site C project was back in 1983, and it rejected it. A 2014 joint federal and provincial environmental assessment panel could find no urgent need for the project. B.C. power needs projections are flat. The costly dam can only result in "a massive increase in electricity rates" says a former BC Hydro CEO.



Site C under construction, March 2017. Photo by Zoë Ducklow.

FALSEHOOD // The Benefits Increase that Wasn't

After nine years of no disability benefit increases, the BC Liberal government last year announced a rise of \$77 per month. But the same budget clawed back transit pass fees for people with disabilities, making the real gain for 35,000 of B.C.'s most vulnerable just 2.3 per cent over nearly a decade.

BOONDOGGLE // \$1 Million to Film Photo-ops

British Columbians pay \$500 a day, every day, for pros to snap and video BC Liberal government photo-ops, a bill now scrapping \$1 million.

TRAILING OFF // Super Natural BC at Super Risk

B.C.'s world class parks system took a beating under the BC Liberals found the auditor general in 2011. As the Vancouver Sun summarized, "the report concluded the Ministry of Environment had failed to meet its mandate to preserve the ecological integrity of parks and protected areas... Program plans are incomplete and lack adequate performance measures, conservation policies are not being consistently upheld, and the parks and protected-area system is not designed to ensure ecological integrity."

FALSEHOOD // Debt Doubled as Ads Boasted of 'Controlling' Spending

A TV ad blitz last year showed Premier Clark boasting, "Controlling government spending is really the foundation, is the bedrock of what we're trying to do." But since the BC Liberals took power the total provincial debt has almost doubled and a critical Canadian Taxpayers Federation notes that debt rises \$3.4 million every day.

SCANDAL // Breach of 3.4 Million Private Student, Teacher Records

The Clark government was chastised by the province's privacy commissioner for losing a hard drive with three decades of personal info for 3.4 million B.C. and Yukon students and B.C. teachers. The education ministry failed to provide security to prevent unauthorized access, use or disclosure, found the commissioner, because employees were inadequately trained and poorly led.

SCANDAL // 'Shadow-flipping' Brokers Exploited Zero Oversight

In 2005 the BC Liberals removed government oversight from B.C.'s real estate agents, letting the industry self-regulate. Result: Brokers got rich and drove up prices by "shadow-flipping" — reselling a property multiple times before a deal closes and profiting from each transfer using a sales contract clause.

When the public caught wind, Premier Clark's response, to close the shadow flipping loophole and re-regulate realtors, failed to impress Martyn Brown, former chief of staff to premier Campbell.

Clark has refused to act "when confronted with the irrefutable evidence that B.C.'s housing and real estate industry was a scandal-ridden haven for shady realtors, money launderers, and dishonest brokers," Brown wrote. "It was only when the political heat got too intense that she did her infamous '180' by reregulating the industry that her government had for so long allowed to run amok."

FALSEHOOD // Government Pulled Misleading LNG Ad

A public funded ad claiming \$20 billion has already been invested in the LNG industry in the province was yanked early after a blogger shot holes in it and citizens complained to authorities. One was "appalled" the ad called LNG, a fossil fuel, "clean." Meanwhile, blogger Merv Adey questioned the huge figure given that nothing LNG related of any significance has been built in B.C. He found about half the figure, instead of new economic benefits, was energy firms buying and selling rights from each other and most of the rest was current gas production that would be happening without LNG terminals. The BC Liberal government denied it pulled the ad because of a complaint.

SCANDAL // Toxic Site Left to Pollute Despite Local Alarms

After locals long beseeched B.C.'s environment ministry to revoke the permit it granted a quarry to store up to 100,000 tonnes of contaminated soil each year, a court finally halted more deliveries, ruling the government's approval process was unfair. Pollution problems at the site were identified years ago. The Cowichan Valley Regional District and the Shawinigan Residents Association spent over \$2 million on the legal battle to stop contamination of drinking water sources. Not until after the district and residents won in court, amidst calls for her resignation, did the environment minister pull the site's permit.



Tarps, tires and water collection at the Shawinigan Lake contaminated waste dump. Photo by Laura Colpitts.

SCANDAL // Citing Premier's Extra Pay from Donors, NYT Named BC 'Wild West' of Fundraising

Under attack last year for attending exclusive, high-priced BC Liberal fundraisers and accepting a \$50,000 stipend from her

party on top of the money she's paid by the public, Premier Clark rebuffed critics who saw a "pay to play" threat to democracy, and rejected the NDP's call to ban corporate and union donations. Then the New York Times named B.C. "the wild west" of unregulated fundraising, noting that "much of what is considered business as usual in British Columbia is illegal in the rest of Canada." Clark's personal top-up from rich donors was ruled okay, noted the Times, by "the province's conflict-of-interest commissioner whose son works for Ms. Clark."

Deputy premier Rich Coleman, whose party raised \$12 million last year, called the NYT article "laughable" and "weak." Clark later dropped receiving the personal top-up from donors.

FEEDING FRENZY // Open Season for Oil and Gas Donors

A think tank report out in March found the Clark government was lobbied nearly 20,000 times in six years by oil and gas firms that donated millions to the BC Liberals, most of them based out of province and some overseas.

SCANDAL // Real Estate Sector Biggest BC Liberal Donors While Affordability Disappears

The real estate sector contributed \$12 million of \$70 million in corporate donations received by the BC Liberal Party between 2005 and 2015, more than from any other sector. While housing affordability disappeared for buyers and renters — especially but not only in Metro Vancouver — Clark's financial backers made windfall profits as rich foreign buyers speculated in residential property with no restrictions. "No corporation, no industry, no union gives the level of money that they give to politicians without expecting special consideration in return, and they do get it," confirmed Martyn Brown, former top aide to premier Gordon Campbell. Last year and this, eight of the 10 top donors to the BC Liberal Party are involved in the province's property development and construction industries.

FALSEHOOD // Clark Wrongly Accused NDP of Hacking Crime

With no proof, Premier Clark accused New Dems of criminally hacking the BC Liberals' website, later apologizing by leaving a voice message on NDP leader John Horgan's phone.

FALSEHOOD // 'Over Promising' Premier Kept Insisting BC 'on Target' for LNG Plants

Christy Clark won the 2013 election promising massive foreign investment in a trillion-dollar liquefied natural gas industry that would wipe out B.C.'s debt and create a \$100-billion savings fund. Experts warned a global glut and long development timelines made that highly dubious, but nearly two years later Clark was still insisting there would three plants done by 2020. Today, building hasn't started for one near Squamish, which Clark said would be operating now; as of last month only one job had been posted on its website. Investment in a second Prince Rupert plant cited by Clark has yet to be approved by Malaysian backers. A third project that Clark based her assurances on was dropped by Shell last month. Clark's "over promise," concluded

the CBC, means "The premier is poised to enter the 2017 campaign with no LNG revenues and the potential of no shovels in the ground on any major LNG facility."

BOONDOGGLE // Port Mann Sinkhole

Upon opening the \$2.5-billion tolled bridge over Fraser in 2012, Liberals said it would start turning a profit this spring. Instead it's lost \$407 million already with no profitability in sight.

BOONDOGGLE // \$1.5 Billion Plummet at ICBC

A few years after Liberals projected a \$678 million surplus, the insurer is \$833 million in the red, revealing a massive structural deficit caused by government interference and mismanagement according to an expert.

BOONDOGGLE // Bad Deal on Social Housing: Auditor General

At a moment when land values are skyrocketing, the BC Liberal government decided to offload a half billion dollars' worth of social housing properties to non-profit groups, allowing it to show a gain in its books at budget time. The complicated sale and lease deal by BC Housing, noted the auditor general last month, was shrouded in secrecy and lacks a business case. The government claims a \$95-million benefit but the AG says that's flat wrong, pointing to \$185 million in unaccounted for costs that make the deal really a \$73 million net loss for taxpayers that could climb to over \$500 million in years to come. While non-profits say they are a better safeguard for social housing, there's no locked in guarantee the properties will remain below market in rent, noted the AG.

THAT'S RICH // Junk Food Hypocrites

Despite Premier Gordon Campbell's 2005 throne speech promise to "make B.C. a model for healthy living and physical fitness," a number of his MLAs invested in the fast food industry.

One was the very minister in charge of getting people off junk food. "We have to move now to turn back the tide of obesity in B.C.," exhorted minister Gordon Hogg, owner of interests in Boston Pizza franchises, whose cheesesteak sandwich plate provided 1,790 calories, about a day's worth for a grown man. Other MLAs had stakes in Wendy's and A&W outlets.

Meanwhile, the minister in charge of fighting climate change was big into oil and gas stocks.

SCANDAL // Children's Rep Ties Indigenous Youth Misery to Low, Misplaced Funding

More than 60 per cent of some 7,000 B.C. children and youth in government care are Indigenous; they are almost 17 times more likely to end up in care. It's a terrible tilt of the tables, because prospects for foster kids are dismal in B.C. For years the BC Liberal and federal governments have fueled the problem by devoting far too little money to shoring up families to keep them together rather than pulling out children. That's the finding of the Representative for Children and Youth, whose March

report said an underfunded, two-tiered child welfare system in B.C. fails to provide prevention services. The BC Liberal minister in charge responded the report doesn't take into account \$14.4 million more funding newly budgeted. The representative retorted: "It seems like the ministry would like us to report on their good intentions. We'll have to wait and see."

BOONDOGGLE // BC Liberals Pull Plug on Costly BC Hydro Outsourcing

When BC Hydro entered into a 10-year contract with Accenture in 2003, later renewed for five more years, the BC Liberal government claimed the arrangement would save \$250 million. By year six of the contract, BC Hydro had already paid Accenture \$1.17 billion, or more than 80 per cent of the agreed total. Instead of delivering the promised savings, the amounts paid to Accenture rose by tens of millions of dollars. In 2007-2008, for example, BC Hydro paid the company \$201 million, about 50 per cent more than expected. This month the Clark government pulled the plug on the contract and took the work in-house again. The union for BC Hydro's workers said no savings had materialized. The BC Liberals insisted \$250 million had been saved, but offered no evidence.

BOONDOGGLE // Public Millions Spent on Partisan Ads

Lawyers launched a B.C. taxpayers' suit against the government last month for wasting public dollars on pre-election ads favouring the BC Liberals. Last election the Clark government bragged to voters using \$15 million of their own money. This time it plans to spend even more. "Not only have the Liberals managed to amass a huge war chest because of the lack of restrictions on party financing," observed one political scientist, "they have the audacity to supplement it with public funds."

SCANDAL // RCMP Launches Investigation into Lobbyists' Donations

After the Globe and Mail reported B.C. lobbyists were breaking one of B.C.'s few political donation rules by pouring money into party coffers under their own names and being reimbursed by clients, Elections BC asked the RCMP to investigate. One watchdog estimated the improper indirect donations could top \$1.5 million. Premier Clark reacted by promising an independent commission to fix things, if she and her party are re-elected.

SCANDAL // 'World Class Conflict of Interest'

That's what the Globe and Mail named B.C., seeing so many BC Liberal donors rake in public money. It's "a situation where companies seeking government contracts, approvals or tax breaks can give unlimited sums of money to the governing party. Lobbyists in the province have told The Globe and Mail they feel they need to donate, or their entreaties on behalf of their clients will be ignored." In fact, B.C.'s transportation ministry gives three-quarters of its sole-sourced contract dollars to BC Liberal donors.

Most of the world's countries ban foreign contributions but not B.C., noted the Vancouver Sun's Doug Todd: "The BC Liberals have in recent years received hundreds of thousands of dollars from offshore real estate developers, mining companies, railways and others. At least indirectly, the B.C. Liberals have even received donations from foreign governments, specifically China."



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The Gordon Campbell Era

2001-2010

15 FALSEHOODS • 20 BOONDOGGLES • 18 SCANDALS

FALSEHOOD // Premier Misled Public on NDP Finances

Incoming premier Gordon Campbell misled British Columbians when he claimed the NDP had left his government financially in the hole. In fact, documents The Tyee's Will McMartin gained through a freedom of info request showed the NDP had left a \$1.5-billion surplus, a figure eventually confirmed by B.C.'s auditor general. Campbell handpicked a panel that tied itself in knots to project a "structural deficit" three years on, but before the report was done the BC Liberals announced deep tax cuts that, when the economy dove, wiped out the surplus.

SCANDAL // Toddler's Death Tied to Deep Ministry Cuts

An independent review launched after the 2002 killing of 19-month-old Sherry Charlie in foster care blasted the BC Liberal government for "wrong" cuts to Ministry of Children and Family Development that "took the knife too far." Improperly trained social workers failed to prevent the placement of the toddler with her uncle, who had a lengthy criminal record, before he beat her to death. The coroner's inquest into her death criticized the government for closing the Children's Commissioner. The subsequent independent review, headed by retired judge Ted Hughes, urged a new independent advocacy and oversight body, the Representative for Children and Youth, among 62 other recommendations to safeguard children in provincial care. The BC Liberals followed by crafting a bill to hide future such inquiries' recommendations from the public.

SCANDAL // Cuts Create Huge Backlog of Child Death Files

When the BC Liberals closed the Children's Commission to cut costs in 2002, hundreds of child death files were accidentally left unexamined for patterns that might prevent further deaths. The BC Coroner Service tried to take over the chore, eventually finding and reviewing more than 700 files that had slipped

through the cracks. Whistleblowing forensic experts who helped expose the mess assembled a detailed case the coroner's service was dangerously underfunded, which the minister in charge dismissed.

BOONDOGGLE // Illegally Ripping up Teachers' Contracts Set off 15 Years of Upheaval

The BC Liberal government tore up a contract with the province's teachers allowing them to bargain size and composition of classes, touching off a 15-year dispute that included strikes and legal fights all the way to Canada's Supreme Court. The teachers won, but a generation of students were shortchanged as government evaded spending billions on more teachers. When the dust cleared, taxpayers got stuck with \$2.6 million in lawyers' bills.

BOONDOGGLE // Nixed Health Contracts Caused Misery, Broke Charter

The Campbell government violated Charter rights when it killed health union contracts it inherited in 2002, ruled Canada's Supreme Court in 2007. But not before those cuts caused suffering for patients. A probe into grim conditions in a Victoria senior home, for example, blamed disruptions caused by contracting out care jobs. The illegal law hurt unions but likely created slim if any savings for taxpayers.

SCANDAL // Premier Jailed for Drunk Driving

Nabbed for weaving down a Hawaiian highway way over the blood alcohol limit, Gordon Campbell pled no contest, apologized, but refused to resign. A year later his government explored softening B.C.'s drunk driving laws, but backed off when the public caught wind.

FALSEHOOD // BC Liberals Promised Not to Sell BC Rail, then Did

Running in 2001, the BC Liberals promised to “not sell or privatize BC Rail.” Once elected, that’s just what they did, to Canadian National Railway for \$1 billion. “Did we break that promise?” offered a BC Liberal MLA. “Yes we did, plain and simple.”

SCANDAL // Police Raid Legislature, BC Lib Staffers Bribed

A byzantine probe into corruption in the sale of BC Rail by the BC Liberal government began with Mounties raiding the B.C. legislature in 2003 and ended with 2010 guilty pleas by two ministerial aides. Dave Basi and Bob Virk admitted to giving insider information to bidders on the \$1-billion deal in exchange for benefits. They received house arrest for two years, and Basi a \$75,600 fine. In vain, the NDP demanded a public inquiry.

FALSEHOOD // Mirage Tax Cuts for Middle-Class

Gordon Campbell never mentioned tax breaks for the rich when seeking to topple the NDP in 2001, just pledging them for the middle-class on down. But days after taking office he gave all income levels the same 25 per cent tax cut. A few years later only the well off were benefiting because, for everyone else, the cuts had been eaten up by increases in various taxes and fees.

CHEERS! // ‘How Many Bottles to Build a Hospital?’

When you do private public partnerships, partners need to meet — and drink the good stuff. An audit of Partnerships British Columbia Inc.’s expenses revealed its CEO and others had enjoyed much wine and good food at taxpayer expense. At one 2005 meal, for example, 17 guests at Vancouver’s Al Porto Ristorante imbibed five bottles of Wild Goose Pinot Gris, three of Columbia Crest Merlot, two of Penfolds Chardonnay, and three of the d’Arenberg’s The Stump Jump.

The bill also included a martini, a cosmopolitan, a rum, three bottles of beer, and a glass of the Scotch whisky Lagavulin. And they went through 13 bottles of San Pellegrino mineral water for \$103.35. Along with food, the bill the CEO paid and charged back to PBC came to \$1,567.11, including taxes and a \$235 tip. The CEO, by the way, earned \$519,448 in salary and bonuses that year and claimed \$45,325 in expenses.

PBC’s booze bills weren’t supposed to be picked up by the public. The CEO is said to have repaid them. But NDP finance critic Bruce Ralston observed in the legislature, “The invited guests included board members and senior staff and other honchos from the public-private partnerships world. Can the Minister of Finance answer this: how many bottles of wine does it take to build a hospital?”

BOONDOGGLE // \$9-Million Treaty Referendum Useless and ‘One-sided’

In 2002 the BC Liberals held a province-wide referendum on how to frame treaty negotiations that veteran pollster Angus Reid called “one of the most amateurish, one-sided attempts

to gauge the public will that I have seen in my professional career,” the federal government opposed, and civil rights scholar Michael Ignatieff compared to the minority-crushing Jim Crow laws of the U.S. South. The referendum, a Gordon Campbell campaign promise, cost \$9 million. Only about a third of the ballots were returned, many were trashed or burned, and the First Nations Summit boycotted the process. Some of the eight principles on the ballot proposed by the BC Liberal government were obviated by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Of those who participated, 80 per cent voted for the principles, a result that held no binding power but deepened divisions and made negotiating treaties more difficult, noted experts.

SCANDAL // Fraudster Given Big Contracts, Key Post

The BC Liberal Ministry of Children and Family Development improperly awarded \$300,000 in contracts to Doug Walls, a former BC Liberal riding president related by marriage to Gordon Campbell, and wrote off a \$1.2-million debt to a society Walls controlled. Despite warnings Walls likely committed fraud in a bankrupted business, to which he’d eventually plead guilty, the ministry put him in charge of \$500-million Community Living B.C. After the story broke the minister in charge resigned, was eventually cleared and returned to cabinet. His deputy was fired.

BOONDOGGLE // Privatized Welfare to Jobs Program a Bust

A BC Liberal government report revealed outsourcing job training for unemployed people on government support lost taxpayers millions, and contractors’ success level was barely better than if the poor sought work on their own.

BOONDOGGLE // BC Paid Germans \$542 Million for Faulty, Fuel Hungry Ferries

Rather than invest in B.C.’s own shipyards, the BC Liberal government awarded a \$542-million contract to a German firm to build three superclass ferries, arguing it was the right deal, period. But once delivered, the ships had major problems including noise, high fuel consumption and vibrations that kept the ferry company from putting them into full service. Supposed to save BC Ferries fuel, the German vessels guzzled much more than similar sized ferries on the same routes.

FALSEHOOD // Nixed Pledge Not to Expand Gambling

BC Liberals promised voters in 2001 they would not expand gambling in the province, but the next year, leaked letters showed, minister Rich Coleman was already backing off that stance. By 2005 the government was allowing a massive increase of slot machines in casinos and pushing to stock bingo halls with electronic slot machines an expert termed “highly deceptive.”

SCANDAL // Soliciting Illegal Donations, BC Liberals Duped Town Officials

BC Liberals illegally solicited campaign funds from municipalities, including Kitimat, where officials say they were misled into giving, thinking the money was for a government forum.

After The Tyee's report a BC Liberal official quickly resigned and other news media turned up further donation illegalities by the party.

FALSEHOOD // Reversed Promise on Power Lines Carved Swath through Delta

Tsawwassen Residents Against Higher Voltage Overhead Lines sprung up to fight proposed transmission towers marching through their neighbourhoods. Weeks before the 2005 election, the BC Liberal minister of energy sent them a letter assuring it wouldn't happen. After a BC Liberal narrowly won the riding, the project went ahead. The province spent \$58 million buying 104 hard-to-resell homes from residents fleeing the tall, buzzing eyesores and their feared health effects. As CTV reported: "The province could have avoided purchasing the homes by burying the power lines at a cost of \$24 million. The option was deemed too expensive — but the cost of upgrading, maintaining and selling all 104 homes is now projected at \$23 million."

SCANDAL // Farmworkers Deaths Tied to Safety Loop-hole, Cuts

The 2007 deaths of three immigrant farmworkers in a van crash likely would not have happened if the BC Liberal government had closed a seatbelt safety loophole. And the tragedy shed light on deep cuts to farm worker safeguards. As the CBC reported: "In 2001, the newly elected Liberal government did away with a program that routinely inspected the vans. Since then, four people have died and more than 30 have been injured in accidents involving the transportation of farm workers in B.C."



The 'Golden Tree' by artists Dean and Christina Lauzé in Abbotsford, BC, now stands as the first memorial in Canada recognizing seasonal farmworkers – in particular those who died in the 2007 tragedy. Photo by David P. Ball.

FALSEHOOD // Promised Toddler Death Reforms Abandoned

Four years after toddler Sherry Charlie was beaten to death by the relative the province had entrusted to care for her, the resulting Hughes Review of the foster care system urged dozens

of reforms that the BC Liberal government pledged to adopt. But just a year later, in 2007, those reform promises were dismissed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development's top bureaucrat, who wrote that "the recommendations were not possible to achieve." The ministry's approach was "strongly influenced" by the Hughes Review, the bureaucrat stated, but it won't "be used as a blueprint for transformation." Two years later investigative reporter Sean Holman concluded the children's ministry "never got fixed" and four years after that, in 2013, the Tyee ran a special investigation headlined: "Near Daily, a Child Is Hurt or Dies in Care of Province."

BOONDOGGLE // Hired Big Pharma Advisors Urged Defunding Lives Saving Unit

B.C.'s independent Therapeutics Initiative reviewed medicines used by Pharmacare, saving, in just one case, an estimated 600 lives and \$500 million by blocking a bad drug. But a task force BC Liberals stacked with drug firm reps recommended killing the watchdog. The chief of the task force eventually landed a post with Pfizer Global. Therapeutics Initiative did later see its funding pulled for a year but restored after public pressure.

BOONDOGGLE // Feds Threw in with Fake 'Green' Mega-Project

When the Harper government gave B.C. \$200 million for green efforts, the BC Liberals opted to pour most of it into a mega-project British Columbians also were bankrolling, the Northwest Transmission Line. Billed as an alternative to dirty diesel generators in a few small communities along Highway 37, the massive costs for such a small fix didn't add up until critics pointed out the line was really a huge subsidy to proposed polluting mines with big electricity needs. How huge? Original estimates nearly doubled, soaring to \$736 million.

SCANDAL // Pioneer of Privatized Welfare-to-Work Training Disgraced, Fired

JobWave was fired in the Interior by the province after a 2007 probe found the firm falsely billed, padded fees and fudged results. JobWave had been among the first hired by the BC Liberal government to privatize job training for the poor. Despite the disaster, one JobWave insider was selected a 2009 Liberal MLA candidate, and lost.

BOONDOGGLE // \$90-Million Hydrogen Buses a Failed Greenwash

For the 2010 Olympics BC Liberals purchased 20 hydrogen powered buses costing roughly \$4.5 million each. The total could have paid for 120 hybrid diesel-electric busses with lower maintenance costs and overall emissions. After breaking down a bunch, they were scrapped for diesels.

FREEZE! // When No News Was Good News

The government's media relations arm suppressed the release of potentially embarrassing welfare stats until after the May 12, 2009 election. The Public Affairs Bureau also instructed that government websites be "frozen" during the campaign.

FALSEHOOD // Promise to Protect Elk in Big Timber Deal Wasn't True

When forest minister Rich Coleman released more than 28,000 hectares of private timber land owned by Western Forest Products to become suburbs, his brother was high up in the corporation. Both denied a conflict. The auditor general found the decision went ahead without sufficiently considering the public interest. And after minister Coleman pledged elk habitat would be protected, the government excused the company from doing so.

SCANDAL // Libs Deregulated Private Schools, Students Ripped Off

A government report found B.C.'s billion-dollar education industry had its global reputation tarnished by schools that oversold their credentials or left students in the lurch. The BC Liberals had killed government oversight that could have prevented the misery, rolling the dice instead on "self-regulation."

BOONDOGGLE // BC Ferries Revamp Inflicted 'Hardship on Customers

In 2003 the BC Liberals turned BC Ferries from a Crown corporation into a private, taxpayer subsidized company with an American CEO. This was supposed to make for less financial drama and happier customers. It's been the opposite ever since, given a spiral of hiked fares suppressed ridership, debt grew to billions, and ferry dependent communities suffered significant hardship," a commission found. That American CEO was overpaid at \$1 million a year, deduced B.C.'s comptroller general, to which the CEO replied with words like "nonsense," "craziness" and "dumb." This, after the premier had recently chucked an extra \$20-million taxpayer subsidy at BC Ferries to quell citizen anger a bit by cutting fares for just two months.



BC Ferries is now a private, taxpayer-subsidized company thanks to the BC Liberals. Photo by Kam Abbott, Creative Commons licensed.

SCANDAL // Premier's Go-to Guy Broke Lobbying Laws

Ken Dobell, premier Campbell's "right hand man" when he worked in the B.C. government, later broke the law lobbying.

He avoided federal prosecution by writing an essay about it, and went unpunished despite pleading guilty to violating B.C.'s Lobbyists Registration Act. The Crown prosecutor (whose firm was later revealed to be a long time BC Liberal donor) said there was ample evidence to press influence peddling charges, too, but opted not to do so.

SCANDAL // Solicitor General Resigned over Land Deal Investigation

Former Chilliwack mayor John Les received special treatment in an Agricultural Land Reserve rezoning decision and as mayor encouraged staff to see laws as mere "guidelines," a special prosecutor found in 2010. The start of the probe prompted Les to step down from his cabinet job at the time: B.C.'s top cop. He ended up not charged with any crime.

BOONDOGGLE // Deals Worth Hundreds of Millions, No Cost Benefit Analysis

B.C.'s auditor general found the government awarded a \$149-million contract to a private medical records managing firm without a business case for why. Just one of several big contracts the 2008 report said lacked due diligence.

BOONDOGGLE // Olympics Outsourced, Lib Bagmen Helped Americans Profit

Premier Campbell promised B.C. businesses the Olympics would be their gold rush, but some of his top political aides hired themselves out to U.S. groups to help them win the spoils. Many foreign firms landed millions in contracts over B.C. competitors, to whom the BC Liberal government granted no advantages.

BOONDOGGLE // Payments Ballooned to Private Records Provider

BC Liberals said contracting out admin for Medical Service Plan and PharmaCare programs would improve service at a fixed price. But almost immediately surging customer complaints against U.S.-based Maximus B.C. Health Inc. triggered fines and half way through the 10-year, \$324-million contract yearly costs had exploded 60 per cent.

FALSEHOOD // Broken Promise of 5,000 New Senior Care Beds

An early pledge by Gordon Campbell's BC Liberals was to insure better care for disabled seniors by working "with non-profit societies to build and operate an additional 5,000 new intermediate and long-term-care beds by 2006." By 2009 it still hadn't happened but the minister in charge pretended victory, as the Globe and Mail reported, by using definitions "at odds with those used by B.C. Medical Association, and his own ministry website." Back in 2005 premier Campbell had already thrown in the towel. "We're not going to be able to meet that goal," he said. There was an election campaign on, and Campbell's BC Liberals changed their commitment to something more cheaply and easily done: 5,000 new residential and assisted living beds.

FALSEHOOD // Elect Us and Get a Soccer Centre... Never Mind

During the 2009 provincial campaign, premier Campbell appeared in Delta with MLA candidate Wally Oppal to promise a \$17.5-million soccer centre would be built there if the BC Liberals were returned to power. The BC Liberals won but Oppal lost. So did Delta. The centre was built at UBC instead.

SCANDAL // Deregulated Recovery Homes Preyed on Addict Residents

Eight years after the BC Liberals stopped regulating recovery houses in the province, the CBC found a flourishing rip-off industry where “operators were taking social assistance cheques from drug addicts in exchange for unsafe, overcrowded accommodation.” To howls from the opposition blaming deregulation, the minister in charge promised to look into the mess.

FALSEHOOD // Libs Bragged Economy Was Growing as It Shrunk

An election looming, BC Liberal finance minister Colin Hansen assured their economy was expanding with “all leading economists” forecasting more of the same. Not true. B.C.’s economy was in recession. After the BC Liberals won re-election, Hansen revealed that while campaigning he did know revenues were tanking.

SCANDAL // Top Cop’s Driver’s License Yanked, Resigns

BC Liberal solicitor general John van Dongen, the province’s top law enforcement official, resigned from cabinet amidst the 2009 election after his driver’s licence was taken away for speeding offences. He was re-elected.

SCANDAL // Solicitor General’s Campaign Team Violated Election Rules

Kash Heed stepped down as solicitor general in April 2009 amid allegations of Elections Act violations by his campaign staff. In May 2010, charges were laid against two staffers and a contractor, and Heed was cleared of any wrongdoing. The next day he was back in cabinet — for all of 24 hours. Then the special prosecutor who handled the investigation quit, revealing that his law firm had donated to Heed’s campaign. Heed resigned again. Heed was eventually cleared of criminal wrongdoing by a second special prosecutor.

Two men connected with the Heed campaign ended up pleading guilty. In August 2011, Heed was fined \$8,000 for going over the spending limit in the 2009 campaign.

GRAVY TRAIN // The Disappearing Railway Blues

BC Rail hadn’t owned any trains for years, but it still carried some high rollers in the executive suite. Railway president and CEO Kevin Mahoney and executive vice-president real estate John Lusney were let go in 2010, seven years after the government sold the railway. Their severance? A combined \$600,000.

FALSEHOOD // The HST Debacle

During the 2009 election the BC Liberal Party was asked by two industry groups if it planned to replace the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) with a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) that folded in the federal GST. The feds were pushing it, but a lot of people in B.C. worried an HST would hit their pockets hard. The party’s official response was “A harmonized GST is not something that is contemplated in the BC Liberal platform.” Shortly after they were re-elected the BC Liberals announced an additional seven per cent tax would be added to the existing five per cent PST for a combined 12 per cent HST — but it would now apply to hundreds of goods and services previously exempted, including basic telephone and cable, restaurant meals, Canadian air and rail travel and much more.

Accused of keeping the plan secret, Premier Campbell assured the HST “wasn’t on my mind” and “not anywhere on our radar... as we went through the election” but documents later showed the HST was being discussed before and during the election at the highest government levels. Two months before voting day, the B.C. finance minister was briefed on a C.D. Howe report projecting the HST could hurt B.C. jobs and wages for over five years. Post-election, the same minister sold the HST as the best thing to boost the economy. Anger and distrust forced Campbell to resign before voters rejected the HST in an historic B.C.-wide referendum spurred by the first ever successful Citizens’ Initiative petition.

SCANDAL // The eHealth Scam

Ron Danderfer was a senior civil servant, in charge of the B.C. government’s eHealth program, which involved computerizing health records. James Taylor was an official with the Fraser Health Authority. Jonathan Burns was a doctor doing business with the health ministry and Fraser Health. Things got sticky when media reports exposed some suspicious links between the three. As it turned out, Taylor’s wife got a \$250,000 job with Burns without going through the proper government procedures. Danderfer and Taylor both enjoyed vacations at Burns’s condominium in Kelowna. In the end, all three men pleaded guilty to corruption-related offences.

BOONDOGGLE // Taxpayers Ate \$388-Million Overrun on Centre that Opened Not Fully Safe

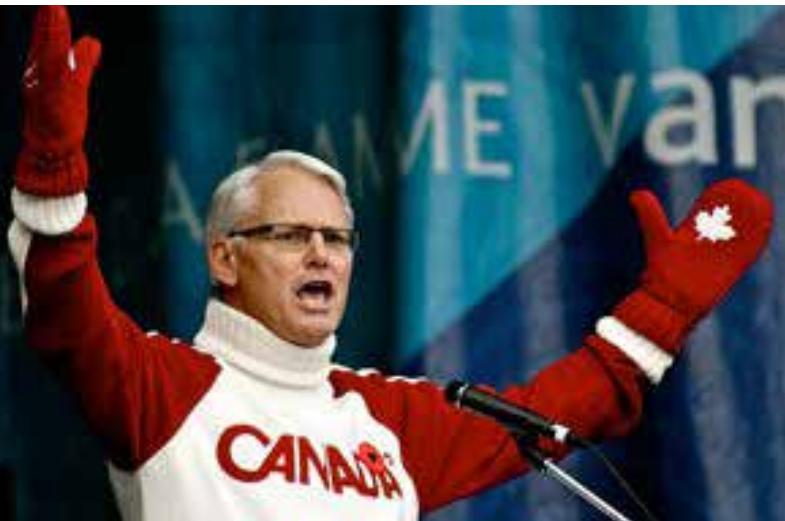
As the original \$495-million budget for the Vancouver Convention Centre kept rising, the federal contribution was capped, leaving the province to pick up the near \$400-million overrun. A 2007 auditor general’s report suggested last-minute building changes and a rush to meet a tight Winter Games deadline helped costs skyrocket.

An eager premier Campbell opened its doors April 3, 2009 to tens of thousands of visitors not told safety inspectors had ruled fire risks still needed fixing.

FALSEHOOD // Mi’kmaq Children’s Choir Snubbed

Please come and sing in the opening ceremony of our Olympics! According to several reports, that’s the invitation premier Campbell extended to the kids of the Se’t A’newey First Nation

Choir while visiting Newfoundland. But the official invite never came. After Mi'kmaq Chief Mi'sel Joe demanded an apology Campbell said he was sorry "if there was a misunderstanding."



Promises of a grand Olympic windfall never quite materialized.
Photo by the Blackbird in Your BC: The Tyee's Photo Pool.

FALSEHOOD // Olympics Economy Boost Oversold by Factor of Five

BC Liberal leaders whipped up support for a taxpayer-backed Olympics by projecting \$10.7 billion in generated economic activity. Months before the games they quietly lopped \$6.7 billion off the promise, then, when pressed, vaguely mused it would be "billions and billions." Billion and billion, actually. Post-Olympics, a government-ordered independent study pegged resulting economic activity at \$2.3 billion over seven years, or annually about one-sixth of one per cent of B.C.'s then-GDP. Ignorance is no excuse. Since 2002 the B.C. government owned a tool to nail down such forecasts, but didn't use it.

BOONDOGGLE // Half Billion Spent on Giant Lemon

First the BC Libs said BC Place could be re-roofed for \$100 million. A year later, 2009, a fancier German approach was unveiled, for \$365 million. But taxpayers' real bill inflated to over \$563 million. All that cash, and the roof still leaked water and grease, the giant videoboard can't get rained on, and the full business case remains secret as the stadium annually bleeds money, projecting a \$52 million loss for 2017. The BC Lions had better attendance before the reno.

FALSEHOOD // Vow to Cull High Paid Bureaucrats Vanished into Murk

Admitting B.C. faced two years of deficits, premier Campbell pledged to save money by eliminating positions of one out of five of the province's senior bureaucrats. Nine months later The Tyee combed government records and found the goal only halfway achieved. No, we're "quite confident" we've done it, replied the minister in charge, offering zero evidence.

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activity. Months before the games they quietly lopped \$6.7 billion off the promise, then, when pressed, vaguely mused it would be "billions and billions." Billion and billion, actually. Post-Olympics, a government-ordered independent study pegged resulting economic activity at \$2.3 billion over seven years, or annually about one-sixth of one per cent of B.C.'s then-GDP. Ignorance is no excuse. Since 2002 the B.C. government owned a tool to nail down such forecasts, but didn't use it.

SCANDAL // Ministry Hire with Criminal Past Breached Privacy of 1,400 Clients

A Ministry of Children and Families worker with a criminal record who used a forged criminal record check to get his job was caught keeping at home 1,400 files with sensitive personal info on low-income clients. To Richard Wainright's rap sheet a judge added fraud as the government scrambled to shore up lax security.

SCANDAL // Loose Health Record Protection Repeatedly Slammed

The BC Liberal government's tendency has been to push for looser privacy standards for health information. But B.C.'s privacy commissioners have warned repeatedly that the government has the wrong attitude when it comes to protecting citizens' health information.

FALSEHOOD // Province Fudged Price Tag for Olympics

The BC Liberal government promised staging and hosting the Olympics would cost the province \$600 million, but the government put its own final tally at \$925 million and the auditor general and others estimated that left out many Olympics related expenses, including pay for government employees loaned to work on the games, and mega-projects including the Canada Line, the Sea-to-Sky Highway upgrade and the Vancouver Trade Centre that if included would have pushed cost to provincial taxpayers above \$2.5 billion.

BOONDOGGLE // \$65 Million to Spin off, Spin down BC Hydro Outfit

The BC Liberals, elected in 2001 with a pledge to protect BC Hydro, instead broke it into parts. Responsibility for the province's electric transmission lines was shifted, along with 276 employees, to the newly created BC Transmission Corp in 2003. Seven years later, BCTC was folded, its mission returned to BC Hydro. B.C. taxpayers and BC Hydro ratepayers were stuck with the expense of setting up, operating and dismantling a Crown corporation that proved unnecessary – about \$65 million based on BCTC's annual filings under the Financial Information Act.

BOONDOGGLE // Taxpayers Paid \$6.4-Million Legal Bills for Guilty BC Liberal Aides

Upon entering guilty pleas that prematurely ended the Railgate corruption trial as several high profile BC Liberal witnesses were slated to testify, Dave Basi and Bob Virk paid not a penny for their defence. In the controversial plea deal, the public picked up the tab.

SCANDAL // Some of 21 Babies Who Died Could Have Been Saved

Twenty-one babies died in their sleep, and not enough was done to protect them, B.C.'s independent watchdog for children and youth found. Her report on deaths of 21 children under two years of age between 2007 and 2009 highlighted the role of poverty and intergenerational trauma in their families, and called for a much more integrated and coordinated approach to child welfare in the province. Had that been in place, some of the babies "very likely" would have lived, said the author. All the deceased children were known to the Ministry of Children and Family Development but warning signs were missed.

BOONDOGGLE // Pacific Carbon Trust Punished Cash-strapped Hospitals, Schools

Part of Gordon Campbell's climate change plan forced government bodies to buy carbon credits from the Pacific Carbon Trust in an attempt to claim the government was carbon neutral. Not only did this put a burden on the already-strapped institutions, but a lot of the credits they were forced to buy turned out to be really expensive and pretty dubious. The Pacific Carbon Trust was quietly wound down a few years later.

BOONDOGGLE // Corporations Given Public Millions for Things They'd Do Anyway

The Pacific Carbon Trust, set up by the BC Liberal government, diverted piles of public dollars to corporations who didn't need the incentives. Big companies hauled in around \$3 million by reducing carbon emissions and selling credits to the trust, often for projects they would have done without the payments, concluded the auditor general and news media investigations. Taxpayers were further gouged as public institutions paid far more for credits than the price the trust paid for them.

BOONDOGGLE // Bungled Handling of Uranium Mine Cost Taxpayers Extra \$21 Million

Boss Power Corp. had a legal right to develop a uranium mine near Kelowna. But in 2008, the government got panicky about the political fallout. Instead of just cancelling the permit and compensating Boss for its costs, the government broke the law, according to its own admissions in a lawsuit launched by the company. The province's Chief Inspector of Mines was ordered by higher-ups to ignore the company's development application, even though government lawyers had said that would be illegal. Boss added "misfeasance" — government abuse of power — to its lawsuit. In 2011, before the case was due to go to court and government officials would have to testify, the BC Liberal government paid Boss \$30 million, plus its legal costs, to avoid the trial. An independent report prepared for the BC Supreme Court had put fair compensation at \$8.7 million.

BOONDOGGLE // Taxpayers Dinged Millions to Reverse Hated HST

Voters resoundingly rejecting the HST in a 2011 referendum that cost taxpayers \$8 million, and B.C. was forced to pay back \$1.6 billion to feds who'd tied the money to the province adopting the tax. B.C.'s finance minister predicted the admin costs of going back to how taxes were collected pre-HST would be \$30 million a year. In 2010 the BC Liberal government blew \$780,000 on a pro-HST flyer to be sent to every household, but scrapped it. Taxpayers also funded a \$5-million ad campaign billed as "neutral" HST info but slanted pro-HST. All to reverse the tax surprise so ill conceived it drove premier Gordon Campbell from office.

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