

MLA REPORT

Deceptive HST “Voters Guide” taints independence of legislature

Delta, B.C., 13 June – Did you receive the HST Referendum “Voters Guide” the other day? I did. And so did the good people whom I work with at the Ladner constituency office. The guide struck us as a peculiar, agenda-driven voter information package, so we phoned Elections BC to confirm that they had sent it.

No such luck.

An Elections BC employee advised us, in no uncertain terms, that the Ministry of Finance was responsible for the booklet – not Elections BC. The folks at Elections BC are an independent, non-partisan office of the Legislative Assembly, after all.

We’re all used to receiving sneaky junk mail designed to deceive – only usually it’s from bad credit card companies, “sweepstake” marketing surveys and the like. Not propaganda from the Ministry of Finance. Add another page to the HST’s long story of deceit.

The booklet doesn’t identify its source. The only indication that you are reading a government-produced document is a dime-sized “British Columbia” logo positioned on the front corner, brushing up next to an image of a pencil eraser. Flip to the back page though, and you see, in emphasis, an “Important Notice to BC voters from Elections BC.”

This “voter’s guide” is a government PR document deliberately designed to make you think you are receiving valuable, non-partisan voter information from Elections BC.

Exploiting an independent office in such a premeditated and consciously partisan manner is simply unacceptable. It is beneath a government to do so, and disrespects voting British Columbians. Yet it is so typical of this government, isn’t it? The more we are told “things are different,” the more things stay the same. It is almost as if this government can’t help itself.

The BC government has a long way to go to prove that “change” is more than mere electioneering. It is one thing to see that the time-old “buy-the-vote” style of politics is clearly alive and well in BC today. It is quite another observe the contempt displayed by those in power when they seek to deceive the very people whom they represent.

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The brochure, at its core, is deceptive: it purposely misleads the public and sullies an independent office of the Legislature. It is unacceptable politics. Good tax or bad tax, the government deceived us. And it continues to deceive us. And I am really tired of it.

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