



Lands and People

March 2007, VOL.5, NUMBER 1



Photo: David Dodge, The Pembina Institute

DOGWOOD INITIATIVE was founded by First Nations, environmentalists, and community and labour leaders.

Our mission is to help British Columbians exercise local control to create healthy and prosperous communities

The Tar Sands come to Kitimat

By Charles Campbell

If you travel up the Douglas Channel, the 140-kilometre fjord that joins Kitimat to the Pacific Ocean, your mind is unlikely to be on Alberta's tar sands. Maybe you are there to see some of its pristine wilderness or even catch a glimpse of the rare white Kermode (spirit) bear. Or you might be there to catch some of the huge Chinook or Coho salmon in one of BC's premier fishing grounds. Tourism and the fishery are big business in the area. Both

rely on being situated on one of the world's great stores of biodiversity, the Galapagos of the North: coastal British Columbia.

As you travel up the magnificent fjord your mind is unlikely to be on the tar sands, but maybe it should be. Eight oil and gas projects proposed for BC's north coast not only threaten to bring tar sands crude to the area, but tar sands problems as well.

Although there is a lot of talk about the

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Win an overnight stay at the world famous Sooke Harbour House! page 6

Editors Note: How many light blubs...

By Charles Campbell



It's a heady time for environmentalists. If we look back to the last federal election campaign, nary a word was mentioned about the environment. A year later, politicians are falling over themselves to present themselves as green. Previous climate change deniers and skeptics are now anxious to jump on board the new hybrid/bio-diesel bandwagon and take us to the Promised Land. Who could have imagined that things could move so far so fast?

In November I was engaged in yet another conversation about "the tipping point." Global warming has been in the news for some 20 years, my colleagues and I agreed;

How long it takes to get a hip replacement becomes a small concern next to How much time our civilization had left on this planet?"

at some point the public has to get it. But when? What's interesting is that I was having this conversation in November, just as polls were first showing the environment beating health care as Canadians' number one concern. "How long does it take to get a hip replacement?" becomes a much smaller question when put next to "How much time does our civilization have left on this planet?" The climate crisis forces us to ask this question, and realize that the answer lies in the actions we take today. In November environmentalists were still asking "When?" rather we should have been saying "The time is now."

Environmental NGOs are used to picking their battles and being thankful for small victories. We would like to save the world, but will settle for a grove of old growth and slowing the decline of the spotted owl. We've come to accept that our point of view just doesn't get much political traction. We've learned to be 'realistic' and ask for less than what's needed in the hopes that we might get half.

This attitude has now come back to bite us. In the case of global warming, ENGOs publicly cry for the adoption of Kyoto emission targets and privately lament that these are inadequate to halt climate change. Kyoto's strength is that it provides a mechanism for international action on climate change, but in content it is a bicycle with training wheels. We are now in a race to save the planet. It is time to take off the training wheels and pedal hard.

Spurring individuals to action, to "think globally, act locally" isn't enough either. In the face of an impending climate apocalypse the effect of an individual's actions are infinitesimal, and incentives for a free ride abound. While we rally people to take personal action and screw in more florescent light bulbs, the forest-destroying, water-polluting, greenhouse gas-emitting catastrophe that is the tar sands is not getting nearly the attention it deserves.

It is time to think big. We need razor sharp campaigns

that cut through the rhetoric and create change. We need to organize ourselves into a politically salient movement that forces all political parties to support real change. We each need to make some hard choices about how we live our lives, how big our footprint is, and how we want to leave the world for our grandchildren.

Collective action is the only thing that can make the changes we need to see happen. And that's where Dogwood Initiative comes in. What we've learned through our work with communities, First Nations and labour groups is how to help organize people and make that crucial link between people and meaningful political action.

Dogwood Initiative isn't just about defeating the next pipeline project or negotiating sustainable forest tenures

on First Nations land, it is about leaving a legacy of informed and engaged communities. Putting power back into the hands of the people is the only way to ensure that the new political rhetoric around climate change is more than just spin.

Oh, and by the way, change your light bulbs. ☒



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News Briefs

Early Valentine

The February 13 Throne Speech was filled with so many promises to address climate change it made environmentalists in BC swoon. We were almost ready to say "We love you too Gordon", then we took a look at the fine print. The speech set some impressive targets, a 33% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2020 stands out, as does requiring sequestration of carbon from power plants. But other commitments have little substance. Campbell's promise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas industry to 2000 levels by 2016 highlights this point. The government is pushing aggressively for a short



Campbell's Throne Speech love affair with the environment ended with him jilting us on Budget Day

term oil and gas boom and projections show that by 2016 it will pretty much be all tapped out. Mr. Campbell also seems better at committing his successors to hard targets than trying to achieve them himself. Most commitments come due well after Mr. Campbell will have left office. Still, the change in rhetoric did leave us with a warm tingly feeling. It didn't last long.

Budget Imbalance

A week after Mr Campbell wooed us with his come hither talk on climate

change the BC environmental community was already feeling jilted. After his brief flirtation with social and environmental responsibility Gord seemed to remember that his bed was made by the oil and gas industry and he better lie in it. The BC Budget saw a \$74 million increase in subsidies to the oil and gas industry bringing the amount to \$263 million. Gord did remember to send us a note, a \$4 million Climate Action Team. Bless his cheating heart.

Telkwa/Smithers Coalbed Methane

The citizens of Telkwa and Smithers await a decision on whether tenure will be granted to the Telkwa coalbed methane project. The government is attempting to combat the strong community and First Nation opposition to the project by tightening coalbed methane regulations. Citizen groups and First Nations remain sceptical. "Requiring wastewater re-injection is a positive step, but there is a question of whether government is simply using this announcement to draw attention away from our other major concerns," said Merran Smith, a spokesperson for Smithers-based group Citizens Concerned About Coalbed Methane. The Wet'suwet'en chiefs published an open letter unanimously opposing the granting of tenure to the Telkwa coalbed methane project.

Sacred Headwaters

Members of the Klabona Keepers, a group of Tahltan Elders, visited the provincial capital to speak with government officials and the mining industry on February 26. The Tahltan are defending the Sacred Headwaters against numerous mineral claims in the area. Lillian Moyer, an elder arrested on Sept 9 for protesting bc

Metals proposed gold/copper mine, has her criminal contempt plea date on March 5. The Tahltan are also facing renewed efforts from Shell to drill for coalbed methane this summer. They have successfully rebuffed Shell for the past two years.

Highway 37

Dogwood Initiative research found that since 1996, the mining and energy companies pushing for a new \$500 million transmission line along northern B.C.'s Cassiar Highway (Highway 37) donated over \$1.5 million to the BC Liberal Party. Donations came from the corporations, officers and directors and associated companies. Local First Nations and conservation groups are worried the proposed 287kV power line will allow an inappropriate number of mines and energy projects in the region. "Corporations who stand to make billions of dollars can afford this power line without a public subsidy. It's a classic case of public costs for private profit."

Money & Politics



With evidence mounting of the link between government decisions and donors to the BC Liberals (see related article page 7) Dogwood Initiative is preparing to post its database of contributions to political parties on line. To help us expedite this project and make transparent the role big money is playing in politics please donate to Dogwood Initiative. ☒

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Photo: David Dodge, The Pembina Institute



left: Mining trucks weighing more than two 747s load up at the tar sands; *right:* Proposed pipeline routes cross mountain ranges and over 1000 rivers; *facing:* 250,000 birds were killed by the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

money generated by Alberta's oil patch, many British Columbians think of our cousins in Fort McMurray as somewhat poorer. The tar sands are a distant and dirty place, a boomtown where the quality of life of the inhabitants and the integrity of the environment has been sacrificed to capitalize on the temporary economic gains of a world near peak oil production. As the social and physical infrastructure strains under the pressure of runaway development of oil and gas, even the residents of Fort McMurray are crying for a halt to the unfettered growth.

In BC we celebrate our glacier-tipped mountains, our salmon streams, and our ancient forests. The tar sands have "overburden," tailing ponds, and strip mines. A tar

oil. Every single barrel of oil produced creates 80 kg of carbon emissions—more than the average car produces driving from Vancouver to Whistler and back. Tar sands production currently tops 1.1 million barrels a day. If the oil industry has its way that number will be closer to five million by 2030.

But wait a minute, weren't we just on the Douglas Channel, taking in the spectacular mountain scenery? What could be further from the strip mines of Fort McMurray? What's the link? The link of course is pipelines.

The massive expansion of the tar sands can only take place if there is a way to get the oil to market. Currently this means piping the oil south to the U.S., but fossil fuel

the Federal government was considering lifting the tanker ban when the Exxon Valdez hit a reef in Prince William Sound

sands mine is a barren moonscape. Overburden (what scientists and wildlife call boreal forest), including all the soil and vegetation, is stripped away to reveal the bituminous clay. Tailing ponds, massive lakes of toxic waste water, have now grown large enough to be visible from space. For each barrel of oil produced, two to five barrels of waste water are left behind. Four tonnes of earth are dug up to produce that same barrel of oil. Shovels the size of a two-car garage fill mining trucks weighing as much as two fully loaded 747s and remove enough "overburden" to fill BC Place every two days. The tar sands are devastating their local environment.

Driving climate change

But their impact doesn't stop there. The tar sands' global legacy is its contribution to climate change. The sands only give up their oil through energy-intensive processing. The oil has to be steamed out of the sand. To produce one barrel of oil takes enough natural gas to heat the average house for a day and a half. It takes three to four times more energy to extract a barrel of tar sands crude than it does to extract a barrel of conventional

companies want to open up new pipeline routes to the north coast of BC. From Kitimat, oil tankers can ship tar sands crude to new markets in Asia, most notably China.

There and back again

Proposed tar sands infrastructure on the coast of BC doesn't stop there, though. The tar sands itself is a hungry beast. The oil it produces is too thick to flow through pipelines and needs to be diluted by a toxic chemical brew called condensate (a kerosene-like by-product of natural gas). Condensate from Russia and other natural gas producers is to be shipped to Kitimat, and each crude oil pipeline proposal from the tar sands is twinned with a condensate pipeline travelling east. Imported shipments of condensate have in fact already started arriving at Kitimat's Methanex/Encana terminal and are currently being sent on to Fort McMurray by rail.

And then there are the tar sands operations energy needs. It takes huge quantities of natural gas to heat the water used to steam the oil out of the ground. Kitimat LNG and Westpac Terminals LNG in Prince Rupert are



ying for the privilege of importing liquefied natural gas (LNG), which could be used to facilitate the runaway development of Canada's worst polluter. Why?

Inviting Disaster

It is much easier to see what BC stands to lose than what it stands to gain from these proposed projects. The pipelines themselves, travelling 1,100 km from Alberta to coastal BC, traversing mountain ranges and crossing over 1,000 rivers and streams, pose a major environmental hazard themselves, but the biggest and most obvious threat to our coast is from oil and gas tankers.

For the projects to go through, the thirty-five-year-old moratorium on oil tanker traffic along BC's coast would have to be lifted. In place since 1972, the Federal government last considered lifting the ban in the 1980s. Then the Exxon Valdez hit a reef in Prince William Sound spilling 257,000 barrels (41.5 million litres) of oil and leaving a devastating legacy of damage still felt today.

The Exxon Valdez oil spill sticks out in our mind as one of the most environmentally destructive spills in history. In the world of oil spills it ranks only as the 53rd largest. Its disproportionate impact relates to the wealth of the west coast marine environment.

If the current coastal oil and gas proposals go ahead, each year we could see 320 tankers the size of the Exxon Valdez winding along the labyrinthine coastline of BC, through grey whale migratory routes, past approximately 650 salmon spawning rivers, through feeding grounds for humpback and orca whales. The tankers will travel past the tip of Gil Island, resting place of the sunken ferry Queen of the North. They will travel through waters that are home to the 1.7-billion dollar west coast fishery, the same waters that 500,000 cruise ship passengers travel each year to Prince Rupert. A spill in these waters would spell disaster.

When, not if

A spill is more a question of when, and how large,

than if. Industry averages suggest there will be a spill of over 1,000 barrels (159,000 litres) every 2 to 3 years, and a major spill of over 10,000 barrels (1.59 million litres) every 6-7 years. Transport Canada estimates that there will be about a hundred minor spills and ten moderate spills a year. The entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound is noted for its submerged pinnacles of rock and extreme weather conditions. The tanker industry considers a 15% spill clean-up a success in ideal conditions. The conditions in coastal BC are far from ideal.

So what is the upside? This is one area where the traditional jobs vs. the environment argument doesn't hold. After a short-lived construction boom, there will only be a handful of full-time jobs. Enbridge Gateway, the largest pipeline project and the one furthest along in the regulatory process, promises seventy-five full time jobs throughout BC, thirty in Kitimat. By contrast, 16,000 people are currently employed in the west coast fishery.

Despite the huge risks, and despite both the provincial and federal governments' recent rhetoric on climate change and the environment, neither government is willing to stand up and defend the tanker moratorium. Documents obtained by Dogwood Initiative under the *Freedom of Information Act* show that the BC Government has offered to assist Enbridge in its bid to have tankers ply BC's coastal waters. The documents claim the moratorium only applies to "foreign" oil tankers

transiting the coast on their way to Alaska, not domestic tankers bound for BC's own coast. Though patently absurd, the BC government's statements point to the vulnerability of a moratorium that was laid out in policy, but never legislated.

The federal Conservatives have remained quiet on the matter, but are allowing pipeline projects to go ahead. Their natural allegiance to the oil and gas industry is perhaps tempered by polls commissioned by Dogwood Initiative showing 75% of British Columbians of all political stripes support a ban on oil tankers in northern waters.

You can stop the tankers

Stopping the foray of the tar sands into our wild and beautiful coast may seem like a mammoth task, but it is a strong case for how a little organized local action can make a huge difference to carbon emissions and the environment. It shows how protecting our livelihoods can help protect the world for future generations.

The future of the tanker moratorium can be decided by just two men: Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources and MP for Saanich and the Gulf Islands. The lone Conservative MP on the BC coast, Gary Lunn would no doubt like to keep his job. It's time to tell him he'll lose it if he fails to support and strengthen the moratorium on oil tankers. ✉

Write Gary Lunn and tell him to make the Tanker Moratorium Law:

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lunn@parl.gc.ca

Predicting the Future - Energy - By Will Horter

Every year at Dogwood Initiative begins with a rigorous ritual of generating predictions for the year to come. Last year we consulted astrological charts and a crystal ball among other esoteric methods. The laborious process seemed to work as most of our predictions for 2006 came to fruition.

This year we tried something even crazier, we just watched a lot of TV, read the newspapers and kept in touch with community and First Nation activists from around BC.

You judge whether our forecasts for upcoming trends are accurate in 2007.

The science is clear, we need 90 percent reductions below 1990 levels globally or bad things will hap-

pen. This requires dramatic, transformative action. A few incentives and new programs will not offset the growing emissions from our energy intensive economy. Stepped emissions caps combined with an emissions trading system and escalating carbon taxes are the best path forward. The government should set sectoral limits on emissions that would be reduced over time and allow innovators who reduce emissions below their allotment to trade their savings for cash. Excess emitters could also be taxed.

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Mr. Harper has finally realized his contempt for all things environmental is costing him votes. But doubts about his recent conversion are running high. Mere words will not reverse his record of cutting climate change programs and environmental budgets, gutting regulations and enforcement while providing subsidies to fossil fuel companies.

Expect his government's overt support for fossil fuel mega projects such as the Mackenzie Valley

pipeline, the tar sands, and pipelines to and from BC's north coast to slow down, but not stop in 2007. The climate crisis has reached a public tipping point. As the climate change tectonics shift expect Mr. Harper's Conservatives to scramble to regain credibility on global warming and the environment by announcing soft climate change programs such as home energy-efficiency tax credits while continuing to approving fossil fuel based energy projects which will increase, not reduce, emissions.

Mr. Harper's hopes for a majority government vanished with rising public concern about global warming. Although unlikely, his only chance to achieve this dream

Calculating that Alberta voters are unlikely to vote for the Liberals whatever he does, Mr. Harper could steal the climate change issue, and perhaps the coming election.

would be to impose aggressive hard caps on large emitters like fossil fuel companies and car manufacturers. Calculating that Alberta voters are unlikely to vote for the Liberals whatever he does, Mr. Harper could, like Nixon going to China, steal the climate change issue and perhaps the coming election. This would be a test of Mr. Harper's political courage.

In Victoria, Mr. Campbell's policies will continue to subsidize coalbed methane, and increased oil and gas production. Campbell will continue trying to convince the public that he is getting tough on climate change. If he is smart, his soon to be released *Energy Plan* will lay the roadmap for his Throne Speech Commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33% by 2020. Campbell's promise to require carbon sequestration in power plants will shelve proposals for coal-fire power plants in Princeton and Tumbler Ridge. But expect ongoing support for coastal oil drilling, oil tankers and oil and gas exploration, as well as subsidies for fossil fuel exploration to continue.

Coastal drilling and oil tankers

The Conservative's will continue their attempt to circumvent the ban on oil tankers in BC's northern waters put in place in 1972 to protect BC's vulnerable coastline from oil spills.

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The eight projects requiring tanker traffic in BC's Coastal Inside Passage are proposed to facilitate the growth of the tar sands, Canada's largest contributor to new greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the BC coast will not be threatened by coastal drilling until after 2010. Last fall, Garry Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources, promised coastal First Nations that the Conservatives would not roll back the ban on coastal drilling in place since 1972. Expect them to keep this promise even if they are re-elected.

We expect the profile and opposition to tanker issues to grow in 2007 and to become a wedge issue in some coastal ridings in the coming federal election, becoming BC's litmus test for the sincerity of each party's climate change rhetoric.

Canadian Energy Policy

If either the Conservatives or the Liberals can convince Canadians that they have a coherent, sustainable and secure plan for Canada's future energy, they could win a majority. If not, then another minority government is inevitable.

As we are seeing the lack of a national plan to secure Canada's sustainable energy future is a political omission with potentially disastrous consequences. Harper's blunders on global warming and Stephan Dion's focus on sustainability should lead to a debate on alternative approaches to Canada's energy future in the lead up to the election in 2007.

For our predictions on Democracy First Nations, Forests and Communities visit our website: www.dogwoodinitiative.org

"Wild West"- money & BC politics - By Matt Takach

Like it or not, political campaigns live and die on financial contributions. Without a considerable amount of money it is extremely difficult to successfully run for office. Within most jurisdictions in Canada, political parties rely almost solely on private contributions to mount their campaigns, with an ever increasing amount of money coming from corporations, trade unions, and a relatively small number of very wealthy individuals.

any person, corporation, union, or association in the entire world.

That's right, you read correctly: anyone in the world may donate any amount they wish to a BC party. Citizens of France and the U.S. unite; have your say on BC politics! Also, under the current BC legislation, political parties may accept up to \$10,000 of anonymous contributions per year, which allows some big donors to give without ever being identified.

This database will give people a way to link political contributions to the actions of our government

With contribution rules tightening up on the federal scene now is a good time for a quick comparison of political financing legislation throughout Canada. How does BC stack up to its provincial cousins and to the new rules in place in Ottawa since January?

The financial rules surrounding elections vary widely from province to province. They are now the most stringent at the federal level, followed by Manitoba and Quebec. British Columbia is at the other end of the spectrum. The rules here are some of the loosest in Canada, along with P.E.I. and Newfoundland, allowing contributions of any amount to be received by any political party from

The lack of restrictions on contributions to BC political parties makes the potential for buying political influence a real issue. And there are already concerns about some government decisions in favour of big donors to the Liberal party.

A recent example is the government's bailout of Western Forest Products, which donated nearly \$100,000 to the BC Liberals in the past 10 years (over \$44,000 during the last election campaign). The government has allowed WFP to remove 28,000 hectares from its tree farm licenses on Vancouver Island, most of which is valuable land

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It is hard to draw a line of direct cause-and-effect between the contributions to the governing party and the actions of the government. But red flags go up when some of the ruling party's largest contributors receive massive subsidies that provide little to no benefit to the citizens of BC. We should, at least, start asking serious questions about certain policy decisions made by this government. And we should resolve to eliminate the potential for such red flags in the future.

Bringing British Columbia's electoral legislation up to the level of many other provinces and Canada would be one very easy way of restoring public confidence in politicians and the political process in our province. A few simple steps for reform:

- Limit contributions to individuals (no more contributions from unions and corporations).
- Cap contributions at \$1,000 per year.
- Require donors to be

Canadian citizens and residents of BC.

NGOs and citizen groups have been calling for a review of and reforms to the BC legislation for a number of years, but the government has refused to change the laws it successfully used to get elected. However, calls for reform are starting to come from within the public service as well. The Chief Executive Officer of Elections BC's wrote in March 2006 that British Columbia's electoral legislation has fallen behind the Province's counterparts in Canada. He goes on, "[in other provinces and at the federal level] public policy has continued to evolve. ... it may be appropriate to review all current election financing provisions in light of national trends and shifting public expectations and social attitudes."

Since the modernization of electoral legislation is not on the BC government's radar screen, Dogwood Initiative has decided to take constructive action. We are in the process of establishing a searchable database of all political contributions made to political parties in British Columbia. We plan to make this available to you within the next few months.

This database will give all people of British Columbia a place to easily research the funders of political parties, and help connect the dots between money in politics and the actions of our government. ☒



Corporate benefit, public loss

big returns for BC Liberal donors - *By Will Horter*

"The bounty to the white-herring fishery is a tonnage bounty [subsidy]; and is proportioned to the burden of the ship, not to her diligence or success in the fishery; and it has, I am afraid, been too common for vessels to fit out for the sole purpose of catching, not the fish, but the bounty."

— Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*

Gordon Campbell tries to project the image of a frugal fiscal conservative out to protect the tax dollars of British Columbians. But his recent actions tell another story: a tawdry tale of massive corporate subsidies that would make Adam Smith, father of conservative economics, turn over in his grave.

With a couple strokes of the pen, and no public process, the Campbell government has inked deals that could potentially provide billions of dollars in profits to Western Forest Products (WFP) and aluminum giant Alcan. It would be the easiest money these corporations will ever make. The profits won't come from innovation, diligence, or success in creating better wood and alumi-

num products. The profits will come from the sale of land, raw logs, and electricity: corporate bounty.

The potential bounty being handed to corporations in these deals is staggering, as is the absence of public benefits.

It appears Mr. Campbell's promise to "end subsidies to business" was about as sincere as his commitment to be the most transparent government in BC's history.

In late January, Rich Coleman, the Minister of Forests, announced he had approved WFP's request to pull 28,000 hectares of private land from tree farm licences on Vancouver Island. The decision allows the debt-ridden company to liquidate the timber on the land and sell the property for housing and recreational use. With current land values reported in the order \$117,000 per acre near Jordan River, WFP stands to make over \$3.5 billion from the subdivision and sale of 120 square kilometres in that area alone. The Minister's action will also save the corporation a reported \$5.5 million to \$7.5 million a year in lower compliance costs for not having to meet

Continued on page 9

provincial forestry laws.

Environmental, labour, and community leaders were outraged by the agreement, which was negotiated secretly, with no involvement of the public or First Nations. They questioned whether the \$44,000 that WFP had donated to the BC liberals in the run up to the 2005 election campaign influenced the privatization.

The privatization was a windfall for the corporation. It now faces less stringent environmental and logging regulations, and has the freedom to sell the land to developers and raw logs to foreign mills after three years. "For the average British Columbian ... it's hard to see where we're benefiting," said Jessica Clogg, staff lawyer with West Coast Environmental Law. "This is a corporate benefit. In fact, it goes beyond that. It's a huge [public] loss."

The government justified the deal by saying it would stabilize Western Forest Products, which has \$200 million of debt. But a closer look at the company's financing tells a different story. As part of the company's bankruptcy

The Minister's action will save the corporation \$5.5 million to \$7.5 million a year by not having to meet provincial forestry laws

restructuring in 2004, WFP came under the control of Brookfield Asset Management (which was named Brascan at the time).

Brookfield is doing quite well. It owns and manages a portfolio worth more than US\$50 billion, comprising office properties, hydroelectric power generation and transmission facilities, and timberland operations. Since the bankruptcy takeover by Brookfield, Western Forest Products has been busy: first, it was involved in Brookfield's \$1.2 billion takeover of Weyerhaeuser's coastal operations; then it acquired Canfor's Englewood logging division for more than \$45 million; and finally, WFP received \$109 million in rebated softwood tariffs. I wish I was so financially unstable.

And guess who controls much of that vaunted \$200 million in debt? You guessed it: Brookfield Asset Management, through Tricap Management Limited, which is described in government filings as "an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of BAM [Brookfield] that acts in the interests of its underlying investors."

Incestuous isn't it? That explains how a company with a reported \$200 million in debt can afford a \$44,000 donation to the Liberal party in the run-up to the 2005 election. NDP MLA John Horgan, whose Malahat-Juan de Fuca riding includes some of WFP's privatized lands, pointed this out in the Times Colonist saying Western Forest Products appears to have got a "pretty good return on investment" for its donation. The MLA added, "Donate thousands to the Liberals ... and you get millions worth of real estate with no strings attached."

But the deal could still be unravelling. First Nations whose territories are affected by the privatization were

not consulted and are considering litigation. And they have court precedents on their side. Back in 2004, when Weyerhaeuser (at the time the second largest donor to the B.C. Liberal party) had over 870 square kilometres privatized in a similar fashion, the Hupacasath First Nation near Port Alberni sued. The court ruled that the Crown breached its duty to "consult with the [First Nation] regarding the removal of the land". The court said "The decision to remove the land from the Tree Farm License was a decision with important ramifications for the future of that land."

Alcan deal rejected

Luckily for British Columbians, the B.C. Liberals' other massive corporate giveaway has already unravelled. Back in the fall, a controversial \$2-billion "sweetheart" deal between BC Hydro and Alcan was quashed by the B.C. Utilities Commission. The deal included a \$110-million incentive payment to Alcan, plus electricity purchases worth up to \$97 million per year, for 20 years.

Just recently the Utilities Commission released its reasoning. Its findings were contemptuous of BC Hydro and Premier Campbell, who personally vouched for the Hydro-Alcan deal, hyping it as a good thing for British Columbians and the economy.

The ruling torpedoed various arguments the government and BC Hydro have made to explain the deal. The commission found that:

- Hydro "does not need [electricity from] Alcan";
- The deal does not support BC becoming energy self-sufficient; and
- Hydro had over-valued components of the deal, including one that BC Hydro estimated to be worth "up to \$74 million". The commission found it was worth only \$18 million.

Unfortunately, there isn't a similar panel empowered to evaluate WFP's windfall and all the other sweetheart deals and corporate subsidies the government is handing out. There is no formal body with the power to reject these deals and subsidies if they don't serve the larger public interest. The only body that can do it is you, the public.

So it will come down to good old-fashioned politics to reverse the trends. Step one: between now and 2009, build public profile and broad opposition to these windfall subsidy deals. Step two: in May 2009, make sure these issues are top of mind when people vote in the provincial elections.

Dogwood Initiative will be working on step one, with your help. It's up to you and all your friends to work on step two. ☒

Grandma's strong convictions - *By Helena Mahoney*

Have you been in touch with granny lately? Sat down with her for a cup of tea? Maybe she fed your soul with some baked cookies, or won the last hand of gin rummy?

But have you really found out what she does once you go on with your day?

A group called the Raging Grannies has altered my perception of our respected elders. These Grannies, with their satire and spunk, are stirring the pot and providing leadership for future generations. They are spreading their voices of wisdom that reflect cumulative life experience—a legacy of knowledge so vital to the seeds of society.

We were able to snag a Granny for a cup of tea and a few words before the newsletter went to print. And, wo-man, I was impressed. At the age of 71, Gillian Sanderson is considered a “young” Granny and was invited to join the group last July. Originally from England, she came to Canada in 1973 and worked as a social worker and an outreach sessional teacher in northern Alberta before moving to Duncan. She finally made her way to

“I’m fed up with society, and appalled at the erosion of civil liberties...”

Victoria five years ago, slowly readjusting to city life, but enjoying it nonetheless.

Gillian informed us that the Grannies in Victoria have been busy, not only with feisty weekly meetings, but protesting Stephen Harper’s aggressive military recruitment tactics at the UVic Career Fair, taking part in peace vigils, rallying at the legislative buildings, and marching for the homeless.

The activist grannies protest with satirical songs and theatre, making themselves heard on issues such as pipelines, clear-cut logging, uranium mining, nuclear facilities, corporate greed, poverty, racism, and pollution. Their rage is sparked by the conditions that people are forced to endure, and by the state of the Earth that we are leaving for our grandchildren. But most of all they are just plain tired of the corporate, institutional, and government agendas plundering our very quality of life.

“I’m fed up,” says Gillian. “I’m fed up with society, and appalled at the erosion of civil liberties, the military industrial complex that is ruling us, the cutting of social programs, and of profit being the only governing objective.” She has seen so much injustice as a counsellor and social worker that she can no longer stick her head in the ground. In response to what is happening, she wants to be a part of change.

The Grannies add unique strengths to the activist community that expand beyond the obvious provocative and mocking songs they sing, the public display of ridiculousness, or the strength behind their frailty (the cops are always afraid of breaking their bones). These Grannies are effective because of the roles they fill in society, as women, mothers, grandmothers, and elders.



Victoria's Raging Grannies rage on.

Specifically as elders, they have buckets full of experience. The direction of trends and political perspectives becomes very clear when you’ve been around long enough to watch the aftermath of some appalling development choices. Gillian says she has no patience for the ignorant. Her eyes have seen the cumulative losses in the environment and health, and it’s clear that society needs to change the framework in which it exists. Otherwise it won’t be around for much longer.

The first group of “Raging Grannies” sprang up in Victoria over the winter of 1986-87. Since then, groups

have manifested themselves across Canada and indeed around the world. There are now Grannies in several major U.S. cities and as far afield as Australia. They are ex-teachers, ex-nurses, and ex-social workers, and they directly address the political roots of our cultural, societal, and environmental aches and pains.

All of these women, the elders of our society, have something to say. They sustain a legacy of knowledge that comes only with age. It is vital for our society to recognize the value of this legacy.

Women in politics bring unique strengths that enable progressive change toward social and environmental justice. These qualities include patience, flexibility, attention to relationships, good listening, and a strong political constitution. Add a cup of endearment, two tablespoons of nurturing, some compassion, a sprinkle of non-partisanship, some satire and spunk for flavor, and you’ve got a Raging Granny: activism with a different flavor of icing. ☒

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Staff and Volunteer Update

Another new year and we are growing stronger and more diverse here at Dogwood Initiative, with the addition of some new faces. We are very happy to announce two new additions to our growing staff team, Helena Mahoney and Matt Takach.

Helena joined the Dogwood this January as the Communications and Outreach Assistant. After spending a few years tree-planting in B.C. she started volunteering at Dogwood Initiative, helping out with research, writing, and event planning. A longtime resident of Vancouver Island, she has enjoyed settling into the Victoria community over the past few years. When she is not in the office, she is training to become a yoga teacher, and hanging out by the ocean.



Matt & Helena join the Dogwood team

Matt joins our team as our new Office Manager. Matt has four years experience as an Administrator, Director and Project Manager with the Green Party of Canada. He brings a wide range of professional skills to his new position, including human resource management, financial planning, and volunteer co-ordination. Matt and his wife Kelly have recently relocated to Victoria from Ottawa and look forward to establishing themselves in Victoria for the long term.

Also joining our staff team as a contractor is Penny Murray. Penny is back again this year to help us co-ordinate Dogwood's second annual *Strength in Community Festival*, which will take place in Victoria on May 21, Victoria Day.



Congratulations Dianne

Dianne Milson holds up the limited edition Robert Bateman Print she won in our last Newsletter draw.

Welcoming so many new faces inevitably means we are saying goodbye to some familiar ones. We bid a fond farewell to Mabel Chung, our past Office Manager, and to Mike Retasket, Dogwood Initiative's former Vice-President and board member. A big thanks to both Mabel and Mike for all of their hard work and dedication. We wish them both the best of luck with their future projects.

Our ever expanding team of hard-working volunteers has also seen an increase in strength with the addition of four new regular volunteers: Cara Lenoir, Maurita Prato, Renee Simard, and Kyle Russell. Cara is helping us in the office with our database and other administrative support. Maurita and Renée join our outreach team, which is currently raising

awareness in communities along the coast about the proposal to lift the tanker moratorium on B.C.'s Inside Passage. Kyle is working with our communications team as our new media assistant, helping to keep our Website updated.

As always a big thank you to all of our continued supporters and volunteers for their unshakable dedication and hard work. We couldn't do it without you.

Get involved! Share your skills! Join our team by volunteering. For more information on volunteering, please call Matt Takach at (250) 370-9930 ext. 21 or e-mail mtakach@dogwoodinitiative.org. ☒

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ISSN 1703-8553



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