

STATEMENT

For Immediate Release  
June 11, 2010

STATEMENT FROM MLA BLAIR LEKSTROM

MLA Blair Lekstrom issued the following statement today:

VICTORIA - Today I submitted to the Premier my formal resignation from the Cabinet position of Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources and I informed him that I would no longer be able to serve as a member of the BC Liberal Caucus. I will continue my duties as MLA for Peace River South.

I was elected to represent the people of Peace River South and I have always committed to working with and for my constituents. I believe that my first priority as an elected official is to the people that elect me and then to the political party I represent. It is clear to me that the residents of Peace River South are opposed to the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) and are unhappy with the way in which our government moved forward with this policy. The people of my riding face additional challenges as a border community.

I recognize and admit that I supported the HST when our government made the decision to move forward with it last summer. And, as a member of Caucus and Cabinet, I can confirm that the HST was not contemplated before the May 2009 election. This is not about being right or wrong; in fact, I firmly believe that government is making a decision they believe will help the province, but as we have been unable to bring the public along, I acknowledge there is a need to re-evaluate this decision.

In light of the widespread opposition to the HST, I believe it would be prudent to bring the move toward the HST to a halt and immediately engage British Columbians in a dialogue about our taxation policy. This is a major tax policy shift and it is time to engage British Columbians with a series of discussions about our province's future.

As the demand for services continues to grow, we must review current systems and make some difficult decisions; do we increase income taxes, increase the PST, implement the HST or cut programs and services? I firmly believe that British Columbians must be realistic and recognize that without a strong economy and competitive tax regimes, government cannot afford to meet their continued demands for increased investments in health care, education, social services and all other programs British Columbians enjoy.

It has been a privilege to serve with this government for the past nine years and I was honoured to be asked to serve in Cabinet for the last two years. I am proud of what our government has accomplished; it is clear that the issues we have addressed and the majority of our decisions have benefited British Columbians and helped to create a stronger, more vibrant province.

My decision to resign from Cabinet and the BC Liberal Caucus was very difficult, but I fundamentally disagree with the direction our government is headed on the HST. When I was elected, I promised myself, my family and my constituents that I would not change who I am to do this job, and I have reached a point where my beliefs and values no longer align with my government.

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MLA Lekstrom will be available to the Press Gallery and regional Peace River media this afternoon via conference call

Time: 2:30 PM  
Dial In Number: 1-877-385-4099  
Participant Code: 9176929