

# STATEMENT BY MR. JOHN VAN DONGEN, MLA, IN THE BC LEGISLATURE

MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2012

Mr. Speaker, I rise and ask for the attention of the House to make a personal statement.

For almost 17 years I have risen in this chamber to represent the best interests of both my constituents, and the best interests of all British Columbians. I have done so as a member of the Official Opposition for 6 years, a Cabinet Minister for 8 years and as a private member for the last 3 years.

Throughout that time I have been keenly aware of both the **privilege** and **responsibility** that comes with being an elected member of this Assembly. I have always tried to conduct myself in a manner consistent with the expectations of those who entrusted me with this office. I am by no means a flawless individual, but have strived for personal and political integrity. I have always taken ownership of my own shortcomings.

Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that there would have been renewal in my party and in government. But, in the past 12 months, that has not happened. Indeed, every week constituents question government actions and issues that I am not able to defend.

What I believe people expect from political leadership are core values that include **integrity** and a genuine **commitment to public service**.

Integrity includes honesty, ethics and personal character. Integrity is non-negotiable. It is foundational for a strong organization. Most importantly, integrity includes **accountability**.

To this day, Mr. Speaker, there are still **serious unanswered** questions regarding the writing-off of 6 million dollars in legal fees in the BC Rail case contrary to government policy. Questions I have been asking for a year-and-a-half, and questions the Auditor General is seeking answers to through the courts.

Most recently, the unexplainable cancellation of a 35 million dollar naming rights agreement with Telus is another example of failed leadership.

There have been other lapses in proper accountability and I expect more to come. When more and more decisions are being made for the wrong reasons, then you have an organization that is heading for failure.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise because I can no longer carry on with my duties as a member of this government. I have decided to resign as a member of the BC Liberal Government Caucus and I am cancelling my membership with the BC Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the **people** of BC **deserve** a government that will look in the mirror and honestly contemplate what it sees in the reflection; a government that people have trust and confidence in; a government that models true accountability for its own actions.

To my colleagues in the government caucus, as well as those in opposition and those who sit as independent MLA's --- I celebrate each of you and your willingness to serve the people of British Columbia. This is not an easy job, and so to all of you who continue to strive for excellence, I applaud your efforts.

To my constituents --- in the coming days and weeks I look forward to speaking with you and further discussing the decision I have made. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I have much to share -- and will in the coming weeks, make it clear that while this was not an easy decision, it was the only decision I could arrive at in good conscience.

To the government caucus staff, constituency assistants and party staff --- it has been a privilege to work with you.

To all those public servants who I have had the honour of working with --- rest assured that my work with you to accomplish the goals and policies that were right for all British Columbians has been one of the most meaningful aspects of my time in public office.

To my family and friends --- thank you for standing by me through some difficult times. In particular, I wish to thank Sherri and Lukas for their continued love and support.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, moving forward I will do what I have done for the past 17 years --- I will put my time, energy and talents to serve my constituents and the party that can **best** provide British Columbians with a **broadly-based, credible, free enterprise** option.

Therefore, I am pleased to announce that I will now be sitting in this House as a member of the BC Conservative Party. I look forward to continuing to work hard for my constituents in Abbotsford-South, and for all British Columbians.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, and thank you members.

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