

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 

Earlier discussion

After Gordon Campbell: The leadership campaign

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As speculation abounds as to who will run for the leadership of the BC Liberal Party, Globe and Mail Victoria reporter Justine Hunter and Greg Lyle, managing director of the Innovative Research Group, a research and strategy firm with offices in Vancouver and Toronto, joined us for a debate.

Mr. Lyle has worked as a strategist and pollster for the Progressive Conservative Party, the federal Conservative Party, the BC Liberal Party, and Vancouver NPA, and others. He is a former campaign manager for B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell.

Do you have a favourite successor to Gordon Campbell? Or do you think more is needed than a change in leadership to reverse the Liberal party's position in the polls?

Whatever your view, please join us for what should be a lively discussion.

Click in the window below to read the earlier discussion.

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The BC Liberal leadership (11/12/2010)

Friday November 12, 2010

1:00 Fiona Morrow: Hello and welcome to today's discussion on the leadership of the BC Liberal Party.

I am the Globe's online editor for B.C. and I will be moderating today's chat.

Joining us are Greg Lyle, managing director of the Innovative Research Group, a research and strategy firm, and Globe Victoria reporter, Justine Hunter.

Justine, could you start us off with a question for Greg, please?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:00 Fiona Morrow

1:03 Fiona Morrow: Justine is having some technical issues - she has sent me the question to post.

The executive of the BC Liberal party is meeting this weekend to set a date for the leadership convention. The rules around when, where and how the votes will counted will influence who runs - and who wins. What kind of flexibility does the party executive have? And what kind of forces are being brought to bear on those decisions?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:03 Fiona Morrow

1:04 Greg Lyle: There is no question that the party constitution requires a one member one vote race. the question the experts are looking at is whether the party can weight those votes by riding

Friday November 12, 2010 1:04 Greg Lyle

1:05 Greg Lyle: In a weighted system, each riding has the same number of votes

Friday November 12, 2010 1:05 Greg Lyle

1:05 Greg Lyle: Your vote is equal in your riding. Your riding is equal in the province.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:05 Greg Lyle

1:06 Justine Hunter: This came up in the 1993 leadership race, there was a fight to have a weighted system and it lost narrowly on a vote. Who do you think stands to benefit from keeping the rules as a simple, one member one vote ballot?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:06 Justine Hunter

1:06 Greg Lyle: Pure one member one vote works best for people who have access to large blocks of voters. Typically that means ethnic block but can include other groups such as churches

Friday November 12, 2010 1:06 Greg Lyle

1:07 [Comment From whiterockjwhiterockj:]

does that mean we should change our provincial election laws so people in ridings with less population get a weighted "more important" vote?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:07 whiterockj

1:08 Greg Lyle: Mike De Jong, Rich Coleman and Kevin Falcon are all seen as doing well with Indo Canadians and are seen as having an edge

Friday November 12, 2010 1:08 Greg Lyle

1:08 Greg Lyle: Good point. Right now in a general election the party with the most votes may not win. In fact, in 1996, the Liberals had more votes but the NDP won with more seats

Friday November 12, 2010 1:08 Greg Lyle

1:09 Greg Lyle: ironic typo

Friday November 12, 2010 1:09 Greg Lyle

1:09 [Comment From RayRay:]

How does the BC Liberal leadership voting system compare to that of the BC NDP?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:09 Ray

1:10 Greg Lyle: I don't know the current NDP rules. They are internal to parties in BC. Elsewhere election rules makes some basic requirements

Friday November 12, 2010 1:10 Greg Lyle

1:10 [Comment From CuriousCurious:]

Are there any out-of-left-field candidates that the media hasn't identified, do you think?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:10 Curious

1:11 Greg Lyle: I don't hear of any yet. All the names are either current or former Liberal MLAs, federal politicians or Mayors.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:11 Greg Lyle

1:12 [Comment From GuestGuest:]

Given all this Liberal leadership chat (with attendant headlines), are the NDP in any danger of being snowballed like they were in 1986?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:12 Guest

1:12 Greg Lyle: Yes they are. The latest headlines on internal dissent don't help

Friday November 12, 2010 1:12 Greg Lyle

1:12 [Comment From Justine HunterJustine Hunter:]

Leadership races often bring out some "dark horse" candidates but this will be a costly campaign. What do you think about the challenges of being an outsider, Greg, someone who doesn't have ten years of serving under Gordon Campbell?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:12 Justine Hunter

1:13 Greg Lyle: A federal politician or mayor would have access to money and talent and some background on the issues. Their downside is they don't know the party that well

Friday November 12, 2010 1:13 Greg Lyle

1:13 [Comment From whiterockjwhiterockj:]

how is changing one mla (premeir) supposed to change the publics view of the liberal party who have shown they can not be trusted to tell the truth?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:13 whiterockj

1:15 Greg Lyle: The party membership is low, so an outsider who generates excitement could make a real differences. Anyone who wins will have to deal with the baggae the whiterock comment identified. All I can say is actions speak louder than words, they will have to earn trust.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:15 Greg Lyle

1:15 [Comment From RayRay:]

I hear Dianne Watts and Carol Taylor's names being thrown around (with Falcon even pushing her to run). Do you think that is because as they were not in Cabinet and not part of the HST introduction that they have a significant polling advantage over candidates who were in Cabinet or even caucus?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:15 Ray

1:15 Greg Lyle: All the polls say an outsider has an edge in the public over an insider

Friday November 12, 2010 1:15 Greg Lyle

1:16 [Comment From whiterockjwhiterockj:]

do you think that a new leader of the liberals will do what the public has asked for (and what is right) and call an inquiry into bc rail?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:16 whiterockj

1:16 Greg Lyle: I think any new leader will look for opportunities to show they are 1) different from Campbell and 2) worth trusting

Friday November 12, 2010 1:16 Greg Lyle

1:17 [Comment From whiterockjwhiterockj:]

for diane watts specifically, wouldnt it be at best putting her career on hold... if not career suicide to join the libeerals right now?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:17 whiterockj

1:17 Greg Lyle: However, ask Paul Martin about whether calling an inquiry is the best way to do that

Friday November 12, 2010 1:17 Greg Lyle

1:18 Greg Lyle: Politics is very risky all the time. Most candidates lose. Sometimes you win and wish you had lost. Mayor Watts would be taking a big risk - but the payoff is a chance to make a big difference

Friday November 12, 2010 1:18 Greg Lyle

1:18 Justine Hunter: Distinguishing yourself from Gordon Campbell is tricky, though, when you are member of his government. How constrained are members of the current cabinet to make themselves stand out?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:18 Justine Hunter

1:19 Greg Lyle: So long as a candidate is in cabinet, their hands are tied. However, if you look at Glen Clark, he waited until he won the race before he really put some distance between himself and Mike Harcourt

Friday November 12, 2010 1:19 Greg Lyle

1:20 [Comment From RayRay:]

Short of repealing the GST (which will not likely happen regardless of who is running) what is the next most popular major policy that a BC Liberal leader could campaign on to get an advantage over the NDP?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:20 Ray

1:21 Greg Lyle: Nice question ray. What has people most upset after HST is not a specific issue but a style of government. The new Premier will need to be seen as more open and transparent. They can't promise that, they have to do it

Friday November 12, 2010 1:21 Greg Lyle

1:23 [Comment From GuestGuest:]

"Transparency" as a promise has the same popularity that kissing babies used to... how does it keep getting promised, then dropped... who's not paying the right kind of attention?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:23 Guest

1:25 Greg Lyle: Definitely. Actions speak louder than words. Campbell was seen as surprising people with policy out of the blue. The next leader will want to be more deliberate. They will want to start by talking about the problem and identifying options before coming out with a final policy.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:25 Greg Lyle

1:25 Fiona Morrow: Another question from Justine Hunter who is still having computer issues:

According to the Globe's web poll, Diane Watts is the current favourite to run. But she doesn't have a base in the party like Kevin Falcon, Rich Coleman or George Abbott. What would it take for her to build that base? If they go to a leadership convention in January, would she have enough time?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:25 Fiona Morrow

1:26 Justine Hunter: What could a leadership hopeful who is inside the tent right now - in cabinet or caucus - do to set themselves apart from Gordon Campbell's government?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:26 Justine Hunter

1:26 Greg Lyle: A Diane Watts campaign would probably both want and need to reach outside the party. She is well regarded in the broader public, She would need to reach out to her fans and ask them to join.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:26 Greg Lyle

1:28 Greg Lyle: For an insider, they will likely want to send a clear message that real change is possible. That likely includes a real discussion of whether the party can afford to stay with the HST, regardless of the policy pros and cons

Friday November 12, 2010 1:28 Greg Lyle

1:28 [Comment From JimideeJimidee:]

does the delay in choosing the next liberal leader/Premier ie: campbell still there for new throne speech/new budget help or hurt the Liberals?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:28 Jimidee

1:30 Greg Lyle: If Campbell really delivers a throne speech or budget, that would be a problem for a new leader. I would be surprised if after they work through the details this weekend that remains the plan. However, whatever Premier Campbell does, the new leader starts with a blank slate and can do anything, including undoing anything Campbell does if it is a big enough problem.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:30 Greg Lyle

1:31 [Comment From RayRay:]

Is this style of one member one vote "convention" going to turn into a huge rush to see who can sign up the most new members? Since word is that current membership numbers are relatively few?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:31 Ray

1:31 Greg Lyle: Yes, the membership sign up phase is key.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:31 Greg Lyle

1:32 Greg Lyle: However, in one member one vote, just because you sign someone up, there is no guarantee that they will 1) vote or 2) vote for you

Friday November 12, 2010 1:32 Greg Lyle

1:33 Greg Lyle: I believe in 1993 if the PCs had one member one vote, Kim Campbell would have lost because of her performance in the campaign

Friday November 12, 2010 1:33 Greg Lyle

1:33 [Comment From RayRay:]

Who do you think has the advantage when it comes to signing up new members? Is it money or popularity? Selling the BC Liberal brand will be a challenge.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:33 Ray

1:33 Greg Lyle: Delegate races force people to pick early in the process and it is hard to move, no matter how your candidate performs

Friday November 12, 2010 1:33 Greg Lyle

1:33 Greg Lyle: If I could choose, I would pick popularity

Friday November 12, 2010 1:33 Greg Lyle

1:34 Greg Lyle: You can start phoning with volunteers and raise money as you go

Friday November 12, 2010 1:34 Greg Lyle

1:34 Greg Lyle: No amount of money can sell a candidate no one knows or likes

Friday November 12, 2010 1:34 Greg Lyle

1:34 [Comment From GuestGuest:]

Is there a deadline for membership signups, or will this be chequebook recruitment at the door on voting day?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:34 Guest

1:34 Greg Lyle: We don't know yet.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:34 Greg Lyle

1:35 Greg Lyle: When Ralph Klein won in Alberta, the PCs had a first ballot on one week and then had a membership sign up for a week between ballots

Friday November 12, 2010 1:35 Greg Lyle

1:35 Fiona Morrow: Another question from Justine:

I want to go back to the earlier question from one of our guests about the BC NDP. Because I think Premier Campbell's decision to step down has added to the pressure on NDP leader Carole James over her leadership. So let's have a wee bit of speculative fun: I wonder if a new Liberal leader might sidestep the HST referendum entirely and call an election next fall. I know the law provides for fixed election dates, but surely you could make a good argument that a new premier needs a new mandate? It would have the advantage of catching the NDP off balance before they can resolve their own leadership questions.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:35 Fiona Morrow

1:36 Greg Lyle: Calling an early election is a risky option

Friday November 12, 2010 1:36 Greg Lyle

1:36 Greg Lyle: You can't argue that an election is the ultimate in accountability

Friday November 12, 2010 1:36 Greg Lyle

1:36 Greg Lyle: However, I would argue James is better than many people think

Friday November 12, 2010 1:36 Greg Lyle

1:37 Greg Lyle: I think she got into trouble in the past by not following her own instincts

Friday November 12, 2010 1:37 Greg Lyle

1:37 [Comment From impala910impala910:]

Doesn't the law need to be changed in order to call an election outside of the set dates?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:37 impala910

1:38 Greg Lyle: I think she personally agrees with a carbon tax, but listened to campaign advice to oppose it and then was painted as an opportunist

Friday November 12, 2010 1:38 Greg Lyle

1:38 [Comment From Justine HunterJustine Hunter:]

I miss those delegate conventions, though, for the excitement. A computer balloting system might give faster turnaround but it's not the same as watching a candidate walk across the room to throw their support behind someone else.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:38 Justine Hunter

1:38 Greg Lyle: If there is a rush election, we might get the Carole James - and people may like her

Friday November 12, 2010 1:38 Greg Lyle

1:39 [Comment From GuestGuest:]

The perception of James is what people think... people who know her may believe she is better, but the voters don't... and that kind of whistling in the dark has knee-capped previous NDP hopefuls. Ask Bob Skelly.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:39 Guest

1:40 Greg Lyle: Delegated conventions have a lot of advantages but one member one vote is arguably a better way of testing candidates before they get the job and allows more people to stay engaged longer

Friday November 12, 2010 1:40 Greg Lyle

1:41 [Comment From RayRay:]

What about the Ant-HST people and the BC Conservatives. What would happen if they put forward a candidate and mobilized their machine behind his/her candidacy? (assuming that candidate was a decent candidate).

Friday November 12, 2010 1:41 Ray

1:41 Greg Lyle: The Conservatives are now an important force

Friday November 12, 2010 1:41 Greg Lyle

1:42 Greg Lyle: More than 1 in 10 BCers see themselves provincially as a Conservative

Friday November 12, 2010 1:42 Greg Lyle

1:42 Greg Lyle: The BC Liberals have to find a way to reach out to them

Friday November 12, 2010 1:42 Greg Lyle

1:43 [Comment From Justine HunterJustine Hunter:]

Her fortunes will depend I think on who is elected to leader the B.C. Liberals. And member of the current government might not be able to get the "bounce" that would panic the NDP. What do you think, Greg?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:43 Justine Hunter

1:43 Greg Lyle: the irony is that getting rid of the HST may be the best gesture to reach out to BC Conservatives even though federal Conservatives have been driving harmonization

Friday November 12, 2010 1:43 Greg Lyle

1:43 Greg Lyle: Right now, no insider will get a bounce

Friday November 12, 2010 1:43 Greg Lyle

1:43 Justine Hunter: Ray, I'm glad you brought up the B.C. Conservatives. Because that is what this leadership campaign is about - the BC Liberals want to bring those votes home before the next election.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:43 Justine Hunter

1:44 Greg Lyle: However, that may change either with their campaigns or with their performance during transition. Back to the conservatives

Friday November 12, 2010 1:44 Greg Lyle

1:44 [Comment From RayRay:]

t the BC Conservatives going to be a one trick pony - anti-HST. And that machine is arguably the best in the province right now?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:44 Ray

1:44 Greg Lyle: I think the leadership is about more than the Conservatives

Friday November 12, 2010 1:44 Greg Lyle

1:44 Greg Lyle: The BC Liberal coalition is much more complicated

Friday November 12, 2010 1:44 Greg Lyle

1:45 Greg Lyle: One key group are the besieged middle class. they can go anywhere

Friday November 12, 2010 1:45 Greg Lyle

1:45 Greg Lyle: The 'Left Liberals' are also at risk

Friday November 12, 2010 1:45 Greg Lyle

1:46 Greg Lyle: If the candidates aim to much for Conservatives and give up the Left Liberals, the NDP wins

Friday November 12, 2010 1:46 Greg Lyle

1:46 Greg Lyle: When you reflect on it, it makes Campbell's 3 wins that much mor remarkable,

Friday November 12, 2010 1:46 Greg Lyle

1:46 [Comment From whiterockjwhiterockj:]

so summing up many of the comments you have made here, is it fair to say that the only way the liberals stay as the coalition they are is if a new leader comes out against the hst?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:46 whiterockj

1:47 Greg Lyle: It is hard to see an insider succeed any other way

Friday November 12, 2010 1:47 Greg Lyle

1:47 Justine Hunter: The fact that Gordon Campbell held together his coalition as long as he did is a remarkable feat. What were the elements that worked for him?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:47 Justine Hunter

1:48 Greg Lyle: First, Gordon campbell is smarter than most and works harder than almost anyone

Friday November 12, 2010 1:48 Greg Lyle

1:48 Greg Lyle: Second, Campbell wasn't from either the federal Liberals or Conservatives, so both could 'share' him

Friday November 12, 2010 1:48 Greg Lyle

1:49 [Comment From CuriousCurious:]

Justine brings up a good point; I've always wondered how Campbell survived the drunk driving scandal.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:49 Curious

1:49 Greg Lyle: Third, Gordon has been a great consensus builder in the past. A vancouver mayor as head of the ubcm? If he hadn't done it, you would have said it couldn;t be done

Friday November 12, 2010 1:49 Greg Lyle

1:50 Greg Lyle: The Maui scandal is an example where Campbell went against type and was seen as absolute honest and human. Its a shame for him he couldn't connect that way on more mundane issues

Friday November 12, 2010 1:50 Greg Lyle

1:50 [Comment From GuestGuest:]

Are you saying the next liberal leader needs to have Campbell's drive in order to capitalize?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:50 Guest

1:51 Greg Lyle: Not necessarily. There are lots of different successful leadership styles.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:51 Greg Lyle

1:52 Greg Lyle: But its hard to imagine anyone as Premier who doesn't work a lot harder than most people

Friday November 12, 2010 1:52 Greg Lyle

1:52 [Comment From Justine HunterJustine Hunter:]

Which makes you wonder, who among the potential successors we are hearing about has that broad appeal?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:52 Justine Hunter

1:52 Greg Lyle: That's the challenge

Friday November 12, 2010 1:52 Greg Lyle

1:53 [Comment From Justine HunterJustine Hunter:]

I agree, Greg, it is about more than re-connecting with the folks who have parked their support with the BC Conservatives, but they can't really afford to give up that ground.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:53 Justine Hunter

1:53 Greg Lyle: One of the early tests of the viability of a leadership campaign is not do we see the expected supporters but which unexpected supporters do we see

Friday November 12, 2010 1:53 Greg Lyle

1:54 [Comment From GuestGuest:]

They are figuring out they don't need a broad appeal. they just have to keep the NDP in front on them... the next election will be (like most others) a distasteful choice for the voters

Friday November 12, 2010 1:54 Guest

1:54 Greg Lyle: The key problem for the Liberals is not ideology but anger. Voters of all stripes will be watching to see if the Liberals 'get it'

Friday November 12, 2010 1:54 Greg Lyle

1:55 Greg Lyle: Just scaring people about your opponents is not likely to work, especially as time passes since the 90s.

Friday November 12, 2010 1:55 Greg Lyle

1:55 Greg Lyle: remember, no one under 30 voted in the elections of the 90s

Friday November 12, 2010 1:55 Greg Lyle

1:56 Fiona Morrow: From Justine Hunter:

You've seen these campaigns from the inside, can you give us a peek into what is going on right now as potential candidates make up their minds? What kind of money do they need to raise, how do they assess their support?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:56 Fiona Morrow

1:58 Greg Lyle: Its hard to imagine a province wide campaign in BC for under \$1 million dollars. You need recruiters, media people, tour people, policy people. Lots can be done by volunteers by a minimum staff is required

Friday November 12, 2010 1:58 Greg Lyle

1:58 Greg Lyle: travel is a huge bill

Friday November 12, 2010 1:58 Greg Lyle

1:58 Greg Lyle: member ship sign up is a huge and potentially expensive task

Friday November 12, 2010 1:58 Greg Lyle

1:58 Greg Lyle: The first question though is why?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:58 Greg Lyle

1:59 Greg Lyle: Why do you want to be Premier?

Friday November 12, 2010 1:59 Greg Lyle

1:59 Greg Lyle: Some candidates stop right there because they don;t have a compelling answer

Friday November 12, 2010 1:59 Greg Lyle

1:59 Greg Lyle: Others should stop because their answer is not as compelling as they think

Friday November 12, 2010 1:59 Greg Lyle

2:00 Greg Lyle: Then you have to ask is it worth the hassle, not just for you but for absolutely everyone you care about and who care about you

Friday November 12, 2010 2:00 Greg Lyle

2:00 Greg Lyle: Its amazing anyone runs

Friday November 12, 2010 2:00 Greg Lyle

2:01 [Comment From Justine HunterJustine Hunter:]

One last question from me - I expect we'll start seeing some people announcing their intentions starting next week. What are the most critical things they should think about before they decide to make that leap?

Friday November 12, 2010 2:01 Justine Hunter

2:02 Greg Lyle: Do they have a case for support? Can they handle the bad days? Are they ready to put their families through their bad days? And can they see a big enough coalition of supporters to win.
Friday November 12, 2010 2:02 Greg Lyle

2:03 Fiona Morrow: That's all we have time for today. I am sure we will be returning to this subject as teh candidates throw their names in the ring. Thanks to everyone who joined us today.

Thanks also to Greg and Justine.

Friday November 12, 2010 2:03 Fiona Morrow