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B.C. political makeover could leave the province unrecognizable

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Globe and Mail Update

NDP, Greens have a plan to transform and modernize the province in many respects

While B.C. Liberal Leader Christy Clark was letting the world know she will not go gently into that good night, her political adversaries were unveiling a policy manifesto to radically reshape British Columbia.

Many wondered if Ms. Clark might simply resign Tuesday, a day after the provincial NDP and Green Party announced an agreement to govern. But anyone who imagined that scenario doesn't truly know the woman. She got where she is by dint of a fierce political will. Her party is one seat short of a governing majority – not five, not 10. So she will recall the legislature and make the NDP and the Greens defeat her on a vote – which, Ms. Clark conceded, they almost certainly will.

Then it will be up to Judith Guichon, the province's Lieutenant-Governor, to call upon NDP Leader John Horgan, with the co-operation of the Greens, to form a government.

Read more: B.C. NDP, Greens pledge to kill Kinder Morgan pipeline in minority agreement¹

Read more: Trudeau, Notley affirm support of Trans Mountain pipeline despite B.C. shakeup²

Read more: What Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline would mean for B.C.'s coast³

Ms. Clark's decision to fight on until her party officially loses the confidence of the house was not the biggest news of the day, however. No, that was the terms upon which the Greens and the NDP agreed to govern B.C. for what they hope will be four years. The declaration released on Tuesday amounts to a de facto Speech from the Throne.

For the first time you could actually see just how different B.C. is going to look in a couple of years if the NDP, with the help of the Greens, is allowed to govern that long. Mr. Horgan has said often since the election that 60 per cent of the public voted for change on May 9. Well, if things go as planned, they are going to get it.

The business community will be apoplectic, of course. So will the rich and powerful, who will not only have lost a government they trusted to represent their interests but also the right to greatly influence the course of democracy in the province as a consequence of their wealth. No longer will they be able to cozy up to the Premier at intimate \$10,000-a-plate fundraising dinners; those types of soirées will soon be outlawed, along with union, corporate and foreign donations.

What will the rich do?

They will complain, of course, that the NDP and the Greens are going to drive business out of the province. They will point to their plans to raise the carbon tax by \$5 a tonne a year starting in April, 2018. They will train their rage at the

parties' declared desire to drive a stake through Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and possibly the Site C hydro-electric dam project as well. They will carp about yet another referendum on electoral reform, one that could, if successful, usher in proportional representation and more minority governments such as the one that will soon take over in B.C. And most certainly, they will protest the NDP's intention to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – which some have suggested gives the Indigenous community veto powers that will be the death of resource and other development in the province.

It's all there in black and white now, a plan to transform and modernize B.C. in many respects.

It will be interesting to see how this alliance between the NDP and the Greens works in practice. The agreement says it is "founded on the principle of 'good faith and no surprises.'" Well, in politics there are always surprises. Just as important to watch will be the working relationship between Mr. Horgan and Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver. That is sure to be tested often, and on many different levels.

At their news conference Tuesday, the two men were asked what tools they had at their disposal to kill Trans Mountain. This led Mr. Weaver to begin a finger-wagging lecture of Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley on the dangers and moral failings of an economy based on fossil fuels.

"I think they should get with the program," he said.

As the Green Leader continued to bash Alberta's NDP Premier, I thought I could see Mr. Horgan wince, just a little. If given the chance, his will be one of only two NDP governments in the country. So he will have to have words with his limelight-loving Green compatriot about his propensity to slag the Alberta NDP, at every turn, over Kinder Morgan while ignoring all the good Ms. Notley and her party have done on the environment.

In less than a month, B.C. could get a political makeover that could leave the province unrecognizable. What people eventually think of the new look will be fascinating to see.

References

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