

BULLETIN

Speak up now, while you still can

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ordon Campbell just wants you to shut up BC. That was the message unions delivered through advertising when the B.C. government introduced Bill 42, the election gag law that limits organizations ability to comment on governments actions.

-The legislation effectively muzzles discussion about the throne speech, the budget, and any other government action for the three months preceding the May 2009 provincial election. Bill 42 changes the definition of third party advertising to include -an advertising message that promotes or opposes, directly or indirectly, a registered political party• including an advertising message that takes a position on an issue with which a registered political party or candidate is associated."

Take a moment to read that again. Yes. The legislation limits advertising about an issue with which a registered political party or candidate is associated.

Want to talk about health care? Want to talk about public sector bargaining? Want to talk about education? Want to talk about the econo-my? You can. Just a bit.

Bill 42 limits any spending on public interest communication for a full three months before the election. Public advocacy organizations, environmental groups, unions and others will have their ability to print materials or buy advertising limited to \$3,000 in a riding or \$150,000 in total from mid-February to after May, 2009. While \$150,000 may sound like quite a bit, in reality, one newspaper ad across the province would eat that budget up. And advertising is one of the few ways third parties can get their message out.

-So what?" you might say. There are other ways besides advertising campaigns to keep government informed and accountable. There is debate and discussion in the legislature.

Except, this fall, the government shut down the legislature. It cancelled the scheduled sitting of the legislature. No question period. No discussion about the important issues that government should be acting on.

The obvious message from Bill 42 and the cancellation of the legislative sitting is government doesnt want to hear from you. And it doesnt want to hear from the opposition.

Not so, Premier Gordon Campbell says. By shutting down the legislature, that means MLAs have more time and opportunity to hear from their constituents.

So get out there and talk to them.

Call your local MLA, make an appointment to see her or him, and make sure that your elected representatives know what is going on in your workplace and in your community and that you need your government to address the issues that matter to you. 

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