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## **Mark Hume: Glen Clark makes sure B.C.'s NDP can't forget him**

### **Lack of legislative plan becomes glaring**

(Vancouver) - When the NDP cabinet met last week to bicker about policy and try to figure out an election strategy, Glen Clark, the former premier, went fishing.

No longer invited to the cabinet meetings he once chaired, Mr. Clark is forced to find new ways to amuse himself. When he came sailing back to port later that day, he had a fresh salmon for the barbecue, which is more than his colleagues had to show.

His replacement, Ujjal Dosanjh, British Columbia's indecisive new Premier, emerged from cabinet looking slightly bewildered, blinking in the television lights and fumbling for something important to say. Later in the legislature, Mr. Dosanjh made it clear his government is intellectually bankrupt. No new legislation. No new ideas. But Mr. Clark was soon on his feet with another private member's bill. He seems to have an endless store of them.

"They aren't big issues," said Mr. Clark, downplaying the significance of the bills he's been presenting with embarrassing effect, "but they're important to me. These are issues I've long supported, but couldn't get through caucus."

He's got several coming. So far, he's introduced a bill to allow tenants in apartment buildings to have pets and one to save grizzly bears.

Mr. Clark knows they will not be ignored by the public. In Victoria and Vancouver, thousands of elderly people live alone in apartments because their landlords won't let them have a cat or dog for company. They have taken note of Mr. Clark's efforts.

"My phone is ringing constantly," he said.

And many urbanites like the bill proposing to make it illegal to hunt grizzly bears.

The controversy over grizzly hunting has sent most NDP politicians scurrying for cover -- Mr. Dosanjh refused to touch it during his leadership campaign -- because in the rural heartland, where the party gets key votes, hunting restrictions don't go down well.

Mr. Clark, however, recognized that there is something wrong with the image of rich foreign hunters blowing away a symbol of the Canadian wilderness. So he took a position that scared his party.

It did not escape Mr. Clark's attention that while the NDP has been sinking in the polls -- with just 16% of the vote, down from 24% in March -- the Green Party in B.C. has been surging. One poll gives them 13% of the vote, more than double what they had a year ago. In his East Vancouver riding, which has always leaned hard left, Mr. Clark's biggest challenge may come not from the Liberals, but from the Greens. He now has the grizzly bear card in his pocket. Let's see them top that.

The NDP could use some smart policy moves like that, but they can't turn to Mr. Clark, the strategist who steered them to an upset win the last election, because he's an outcast. Even since Mr. Dosanjh came to power, the party has been striving to distance itself from the Clark legacy.

"The government is clearly campaigning against me," acknowledged Mr. Clark. "That's part of their political strategy."

Mr. Clark, who was forced to resign because police were investigating him over the awarding of a casino licence, said his colleagues are misguided.

Instead of attacking him, he says, the government should be presenting a strong legislative agenda of its own -- to show Mr. Dosanjh is firmly in command.

"I believe when you have the power and are the government, you should be trying to make change. That's what it's all about.

"The government's agenda, however, is fairly thin," he said. "And because the government has no agenda that I can detect, these private bills get more attention."

Mike Geoghegan, a political consultant, said Mr. Clark's bills are upstaging the government by highlighting its inadequacies.

"What it shows, in stark contrast, is the lack of a legislative agenda by Dosanjh's government," he said.

Mr. Geoghegan said the NDP government only has itself to blame.

"The best way for them to deal with Glen Clark was to have their own legislative agenda. But they failed to do that," he said.

With an election due sometime in the next 12 months, cabinet is under increasing pressure to come up with a strategy. But Mr. Geoghegan doubts it can.

"My sense is they are absolutely paralyzed. They are stunned," he said. "They don't know which way to go ... [and] they are staring political annihilation in the face."

Like dead fish.