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## INSIDE:

### How Big is BC's Public Sector?

By Iglia Ivanova  
page 2

### Communities in Crisis: A Case Study of Campbell River

By Blair Redlin  
page 3

### 2010 and All That

By Marvin Shaffer  
page 4

### Public or Private —How the Choice for P3s Gets Made

By Keith Reynolds  
page 5

### Food Bank Use Takes a Distressing Jump

By Seth Klein  
page 5

## Managing BC's Forests for a Cooler Planet: Carbon Storage, Sustainable Jobs and Conservation

By Ben Parfitt

*Climate change has hit BC forests hard. A billion or more pine trees are now dead in the interior of the province, the result of an insect attack of unprecedented proportions, made worse by warmer than average winter temperatures. Meanwhile, due to unusually dry conditions, forest fires burn with increasing intensity.*

As greenhouse gases continue to accumulate in the Earth's atmosphere, there is a pressing need to manage our forests in new ways. Properly done, management techniques that maximize carbon storage both in our forests and forest products can go a considerable way to counteracting greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in society. Such efforts can also create a stronger, more diversified and more sustainable forest economy.

Climate change also brings the opportunity to create new alliances—as we've done with the recently released study, *Managing BC's Forests for a Cooler Planet*, bringing together environmentalists, loggers and pulp and paper workers as co-publishers to jointly present a new model for forest management.

Traditionally, discussions of forest usage have been arguments between two polar opposites: conservation versus human use. We propose instead a model where forest managers choose from an array of options, with the bottom line being vastly improved carbon storage in our forests and forest products.



PHOTO: NADENE REHNBY

BC is blessed with an abundance of forests that store tremendous amounts of carbon. The longer these trees live, the more CO<sub>2</sub> they pull out of the atmosphere and store, thus offsetting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Forest conservation is a powerful and much needed tool as societies struggle to lower overall GHG emissions. In that regard, it's particularly important to conserve more of BC's older coastal temperate rainforests, with their disproportionately large pools of stored carbon, and the rarer and smaller interior temperate rainforests. Conservation is also one of the best ways to give trees a more than fighting chance to adapt in the face of changes in average temperatures and site-specific rises or declines in precipitation.

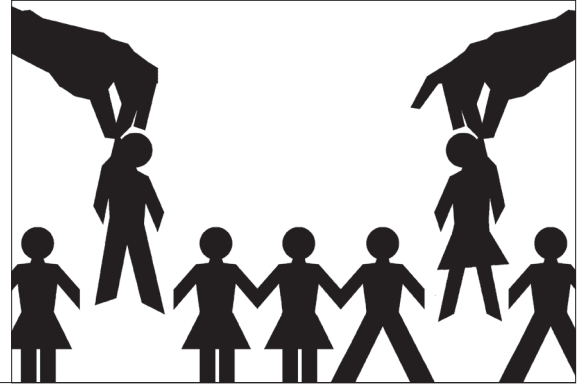
At the same time, there is growing awareness that some forests no longer do a very good job of storing carbon. Studies suggest that in much of the interior of the province forests have switched from carbon storehouses to GHG emissions sources. One billion or more pine trees stand or lie dead following the epic beetle attack that began in the

*Continued on page 6*

# How Big is BC's Public Sector?

By Iglika Ivanova

*The global recession hit British Columbia hard, wreaking havoc in the provincial treasury as taxation revenues declined sharply, while demand for social assistance and other social services increased. Although the provincial government recognized that deficits are needed to weather the economic storm, it also used the recession as an excuse to attack the public sector.*



*Simply put, BC already has one of the leanest public sectors in the country and there is little room for cuts without compromising much-needed public services.*

Both the February Budget and the September BC Budget Update imposed significant “savings in administrative and other discretionary spending” in order to reduce the size of the deficit. These so-called savings, many of which were not identified at budget time, are based on the notion that there is plenty of waste to trim from provincial programs and administration.

But is this really the case?

It is a little known fact that BC's public sector has been shrinking both in terms of employees per capita and in terms of provincial expenditures relative to GDP (or the size of the economy) since the early 1990s. This is hardly surprising given that our public service went through several comprehensive reviews in recent years that looked for ways to cut costs. Simply put, BC already has one of the leanest public sectors in the country and there is little room for cuts without compromising much-needed public services.

According to data from Statistics Canada, BC's public sector provided 393,016 jobs in 2008, or 17 per cent of all jobs in the province. This figure includes employees of all three levels of government—federal, provincial and local—as well as members of the RCMP and the Canadian Armed Forces, people working for crown corporations, such as BC Hydro or ICBC, and employees providing government-funded education, health and social services.

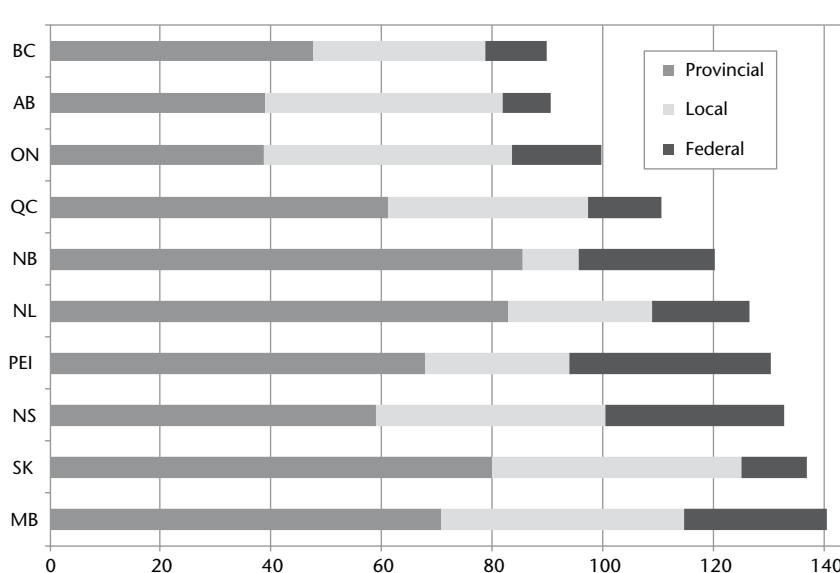
Just over half of all public sector workers in BC are employed at the provincial government level, with the majority delivering education, health care and social services. Statistics Canada counts 100 per cent of these jobs as “public sector,” even though privatization and contracting out have put working conditions, pay and benefits for many of these workers into the hands of private employers.

Compared to the rest of Canada, BC has the lowest level of public sector employment relative to population. In 2008, there were about 89.7 public sector employees per 1,000 people in BC, slightly less than Alberta's 90.4 and Ontario's 99.6. Saskatchewan and Manitoba had the highest public sector employment rates—close to 140 public sector workers for every 1,000 citizens. More than one quarter of all employees in these two provinces worked in the public sector—27 per cent in Saskatchewan and 28 per cent in Manitoba—compared to only 17 per cent in BC.

What about public sector employment specifically at the provincial level? The figure shows that BC has one of the leanest provincial public sectors in Canada with 47.5 employees per 1,000 people. Only Ontario and Alberta employ fewer people in their provincial-level public sector, 38.6 and 38.9 per 1,000, respectively. Note, however, that their local government employment is higher than BC's.

In fact, it's difficult to directly compare provincial public sector employment rates in different

Public sector employment rate (per 1,000 population), 2008



Source: Author's calculations based on Statistics Canada data on public sector employment (CANSIM 183-0002) and provincial population estimates (CANSIM 051-0001).

# Communities in Crisis: A Case Study of Campbell River

By Blair Redlin

*Like many resource-dependent communities around BC, Campbell River has been hard hit by the global recession. Both the forestry and commercial fishing industries in Campbell River are shadows of their former selves, and the mining sector is also contracting.*



The impact of the recession has been compounded by a series of deregulatory policy changes by the BC government which help big corporations but are hurting the local economy.

Fifty-five wood milling plants have been closed and 25,000 forestry jobs have been lost province-wide since 2001, and the mill closure trend has hit Campbell River particularly hard. TimberWest permanently closed its Elk Falls lumber sawmill in 2008, resulting in the loss of 257 jobs. That closure created a shortage of locally produced sawdust, which put added pressure on the Catalyst pulp and paper mill, which shut down one of its paper machines, putting 145 more people out of work. In November 2008, Catalyst permanently closed its Elk Falls Kraft mill, resulting in the loss of 440 jobs. That was followed in 2009 with the indefinite closure of Catalyst's Elk Falls paper mill and the loss of another 350 jobs.

That's a combined loss of 1,200 direct well-paid jobs, with significant negative spin-off effects in a community with a total population of only 31,000. Many of those laid off have sought work in the tar sands of Northern Alberta, creating social and family strain.

The area's remaining mills then seized the opportunity to press local governments for concessions. Catalyst Paper announced in 2009 that it would only pay one quarter of its property taxes in the four coastal communities in which it owns mills (Campbell River, Port Alberni, North Cowichan and Powell River). Catalyst has also said it is contemplating permanent closure of one of the four mills. By playing hard-pressed communities off against each other, the company is clearly hoping for significant concessions from at least one of them.

Energy producer Island Cogen also declined to pay the property taxes it was assessed. Its refusal to do so, along with Catalyst's and TimberWest's tax payment withdrawals, left Campbell River with a \$5 million hole in its budget for 2009.

Catalyst and Cogen have also launched court actions challenging their tax assessments, arguing that they should only pay for the municipal services they actually use. In October 2009, the BC Supreme Court rejected Catalyst's application, though the company is appealing.

TimberWest Forest Corp has piled on with a court action of its own. TimberWest owns 3,125 hectares of private managed forestland within the boundaries of the municipality. When the company applied to subdivide 65 hectares for development as residential property, the City of Campbell River assessed the property as residential real estate rather than forestland. Faced with a higher tax assessment, the company launched a court action. In early January 2010, the BC Supreme Court ruled against the municipality and confirmed that provincial managed forest legislation gives the company the right to do what it is doing.

The provincial policy context has been anything but helpful. The elimination of requirements to mill locally in exchange for public timber, combined with the expansion of raw log exports and the removal of private land from tree farm licenses has added to the grim situation already facing BC forestry workers. The Softwood Lumber Agreement, in particular, has provided new incentives to export logs in unprocessed form, since the Agreement places export taxes on most softwood lumber products, but exempts softwood logs from such taxes. As a result, approximately four million cubic metres of raw logs are exported from BC every year. These exports and large amounts of unprocessed wood waste are estimated to cost the BC economy some 5,800 direct jobs per year.

Outside of forestry, other resource sectors are also feeling the crunch. Another 132 union and salaried workers were laid off at the NVI Mine at Myra Falls in March 2008, adding to the region's woes.

*The impact of the recession, however, has been compounded by a series of deregulatory policy changes by the BC government which help big corporations but are hurting the local economy.*

*There has yet to be a full accounting by government of all of the resources that have been allocated to the Olympics.*

## 2010 and All That

By Marvin Shaffer

*It is a basic principle in economics that estimates of employment and GDP impacts in themselves tell us nothing about the benefits and costs of government initiatives.*

Government spending creates jobs. More spending creates more jobs. But whether that is in the public interest raises very different questions. Will the job creation employ people who would otherwise be unemployed, or just bid up wages and attract workers from other activities or regions? What is being produced—how much is it valued? How much of the cost will ultimately fall on taxpayers, and what other activities or expenditures might that consequently displace?

The recently-released PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) report on the economic impacts of the 2010 Games, like the InterVistas report that preceded it, does not ask any of these questions. Notwithstanding all of the government and media attention it has received, it provides no insight into the net benefits or costs of hosting the Games.

Illustrating this very clearly is PWC's explanation of why they conclude the 2010 Games have produced similar impacts to what InterVistas predicted in 2003, despite the fact that virtually none of the tourism impacts forecast in the InterVistas report has materialized. The lack of tourism impacts has been offset by larger than expected spending on the City of Vancouver's Olympic Village project and Richmond's speed skating oval. More city spending has meant more employment impact.

The government's press release accompanying the PWC report states this study confirms that the benefits expected from the 2010 Games are being realized. In effect it is saying the increased city spending has made us better off because of the additional jobs the additional spending has generated.

Of course this analysis and conclusion is fundamentally flawed. As the famous conservative

economist Milton Friedman liked to point out, there is no free lunch. There certainly is no free Olympic Village housing or speed skating oval. The cities' net costs for those projects will mean less spending on other initiatives or higher taxes. Alternative public or private spending will be displaced.

The economic issue for the 2010 Games is whether the Olympic housing, the oval and the other facilities and opportunities created by the Games are valued more than what else could have been produced or done. And that question is something PWC and the government have not begun to address.

Indeed, there has yet to be a full accounting by government of all of the resources that have been allocated to these Games—the expenditures incurred and staff time provided by all levels of government, including crown corporations and agencies; and the costs that have been and will be imposed on residents and business by the construction and the Games themselves.

No doubt there will be significant benefits from the infrastructure that has been built and from the pride and opportunities that hosting the Games will provide. There may even be some employment benefits, not so much during the construction period when the economy was overheated, but now that there is more widespread unemployment. But the impact estimates seized on by the government shed no light on the magnitude of those benefits, and in the absence of any estimate of the full costs are meaningless in any event.

Governments like focusing on impact studies. Since spending creates impacts and impacts are assumed to be unequivocally good, they can justify virtually any spending or policy initiative—the more spending the better. However, it is a practice that should be resisted. It serves only to obscure and often prevent a proper debate over the benefits and costs of what is being proposed or done.

*Marvin Shaffer is author of the CCPA's 2004 Olympic Costs & Benefits: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Proposed Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, and adjunct professor in the Public Policy Masters Program at SFU.*

# Public or Private—How the Choice for P3s Gets Made

By Keith Reynolds

*Did you ever wonder how Partnerships BC justifies using 35-year contracts for public private partnerships rather than borrowing the money publicly and doing things like hospitals and roads as public projects?*

Well now you can find out. PBC has published its methodology at [www.partnershipsbc.ca/files/quantitative-procurement-options-analysis.html](http://www.partnershipsbc.ca/files/quantitative-procurement-options-analysis.html). They have even asked for comments on the methodology, though not in a very public way. It is a pretty useful document if for no other reason than it shows the degree to which the game is fixed in favour of P3s. Let me give you an example.

Risk transfer is one of the big selling points for P3s. BC's government says with P3s they can transfer lots of risks on projects.

This is then compared to traditional procurement where, Partnerships BC says,

*Traditional procurement has typically involved construction management (CM) and design bid build (DBB), representing points along a continuum of possible procurement methods where there is very little or no transfer of project-related risk to a private partner.*

In other words, PBC assumes it is impossible to transfer risk with traditional procurement even though this has been routinely accomplished in projects in the past. When it is in its interest

Partnerships BC will even admit they can get risk transfer without private investment and a 35-year contract.

PBC was a consultant for and wrote the value for money report on the Charles Jago Northern Sports Centre. This centre was built as a Design/Build project without private financing or operation. Partnerships BC reported that the contractor on the project assumed:

*the majority of the risks relating to construction cost overruns in this project, protecting BC taxpayers from these potential costs. The early partnering process proved effective in transferring risk to the private partner in this agreement.*

Partnerships BC's assumption in its published methodology that you can't transfer risk with public procurement is just one of the ways a thumb gets placed on the scales when balancing the choice between public procurement and a P3 with private financing and long term contracts.

Writing in the British Newspaper the Guardian on November 13, 2009, Peter Dixon, the man in charge of England's largest P3 hospital, raised some good points. One of them was,

*Let's face it, if the public sector can't be trusted to procure a sensible building contract, it certainly can't be relied upon to procure a successful PFI [what the British call a P3] with a 35-year term.*

Somehow, that doesn't get mentioned in the Partnerships BC methodology.

*Keith Reynolds is a National Research Representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees and a CCPA-BC research associate.*

*It is a pretty useful document if for no other reason than it shows the degree to which the game is fixed in favour of P3s.*

# Food Bank Use Takes a Distressing Jump

By Seth Klein

*Last November, Food Banks Canada (the national association of food banks) released its annual Hunger Count report. While the report received some good national coverage (particularly on CBC), I was surprised to see no mention of it in the Vancouver Sun.*

The report, which surveys food banks across the country every March, found that in March 2009, food bank use was up nearly 18 per cent nationally,

and 15 per cent in BC — the largest single-year jump and the highest number of people assisted on record. 81 per cent of BC food banks reported an increase in demand in 2009. Of the nearly 90,000 British Columbians who relied on food banks that month, 31 per cent were children, 12 per cent reported employment income, 6 per cent were on EI, 19 per cent were receiving disability-related income support, and 44 per cent were receiving social assistance (yet more proof that our welfare system is structurally dependent on food banks and other charities for people to meet their basic food needs).

Food bank usage had been in decline since 2004, until this year. And so, this report provides

1990s and is only now coming to an end. As the dead trees decay, GHGs will be released back into the atmosphere. Making matters worse, many such forests may be at increased risk of catching fire due to these same warmer and drier conditions and the abundance of beetle-killed trees. Such fires result in uncontrolled, large pulses of GHG emissions into the atmosphere, which then increases the risk of future fires, and so on.

Making matters more complex, logging forests—even dead forests—has implications for our climate. Whenever trees are removed, logging sites become sources of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for years, due to the release of the stored gas from exposed forest soils.

But this does not provide a compelling reason to stop all logging. Most of us live in houses or apartments that are built, in part, from wood. Wood is also put to many other uses that most of us, most of the time, see as good. And, crucially, every solid piece of wood utilized continues to store the carbon from the tree from which it came. This storage only ceases when renovations or demolition result in the wood going to bioenergy plants, recycling depots or landfills.

This is just one of the many points of tension in an ongoing debate over how best to manage our vitally important forest resources in light of the challenges posed by climate change.

We propose a re-imagining of forestry in BC, not through the traditional (and opposing) lenses of maximizing human use or maximizing protected areas, but rather, with a view towards maximizing carbon storage.

A carefully coordinated approach to managing BC's public forests ensures that a natural wall of defence against climate change is maintained. Critically, it also ensures that realistic prospects continue for forestry-derived jobs in our province. With public investment in reforestation leading the way, the foundation for a strong forest economy in future years is possible. But that economy rests, more than ever, on a healthy environment. Such will be the case only with a coordinated approach to addressing the tremendous challenges that global warming poses for BC's forests.

### **The Carbon Forest: 10 Steps Forward**

Maximizing the carbon stored in BC's forests and forest products requires a coordinated,

multifaceted effort. We recommend a 10-point plan for doing so:

1. *Conserve more forests.* In light of the stresses that forests face as a result of climate change, BC should increase the area of old-growth and, in some cases, second-growth forests conserved. Where such increases occur and by how much should be decided by a provincially appointed, independent science panel that reports publicly.
2. *Delay or reduce logging activities in certain forests to increase carbon storage.* BC should pioneer a new system for deciding what forests are logged and when, called the Carbon Cut Calculation or CCC, replacing the existing Annual Allowable Cut (AAC).
3. *Let many trees live longer before they are logged.* More time should pass between logging cycles in certain managed forests so that trees are allowed to grow older and store more carbon.
4. *Account for carbon in the "urban forest."* All carbon temporarily stored in forest products should be accounted for in a broad strategy to optimize carbon storage in both forests and wood products.
5. *Limit wood waste.* A zero tolerance policy on usable wood waste at all logging sites should be mandated.
6. *Establish carbon plantations.* Well-managed carbon plantations should be established on a portion of the land base, first for their carbon-storing properties, and second, where appropriate, as supply sources for new bioenergy facilities.
7. *Promote wood.* Wise use of lumber and other solid wood products is the smart choice from a carbon storage perspective, and should be promoted as such.
8. *Proceed with caution when burning wood for energy.* Bioenergy opportunities do exist and should be pursued. But scale is important, as are linkages with other activities that turn logs into lumber and other solid wood products that store carbon.
9. *Commit fully to a true no net deforestation policy.* With one notable exception, BC should lead by example and have a true no net deforestation policy. The one exception being on the

*A carefully coordinated approach to managing BC's public forests ensures that a natural wall of defence against climate change is maintained. Critically, it also ensures that realistic prospects continue for forestry-derived jobs in our province.*

Continued from page 2  
How big is BC's public sector?

provinces, because social service responsibilities are split differently between provincial and local governments across the country. Provinces like Ontario have chosen to deliver more social services via municipal governments and therefore have smaller provincial government employment rates but larger local government employment rates than the Maritimes, for example, where most social services are delivered directly by the provincial-level governments.

Another way to measure the size of government is to track government expenditures over time. There are different ways to measure provincial expenditures in BC, but the most common ones—the Consolidated Revenue Fund and the operating statement under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles—show that provincial spending has been shrinking as a share of the economy since the early 1990s. Consolidated revenue spending, which includes BC's annual direct disbursements, fell from over 20 per cent of provincial GDP in the early 1990s to about 15 per cent in 2008/09, a drop of one fifth over 17 years. The results are similar when provincial spending is measured under generally accepted accounting principles (or GAAP)—the new system of accounts the government introduced in 2004/05, which includes the expenditures of public schools, universities and hospitals, as well as various service delivery agencies and the net financial results for provincial crown corporations. GAAP expenditures were 22 per cent of GDP at the start of the new millennium, but fell to 19 per cent of GDP in 2008/09, a 13.5 per cent drop over nine years.

The last 20 years have seen a deliberate reduction

in the size and scope of BC's public sector. We have increasingly shifted away from collectively providing services paid for by taxes and towards increased responsibility of individuals, families and charities to pay for social services, education, seniors' care and other needed services. The results have been lower economic security and increased hardship for the most vulnerable British Columbians, well-documented in a number of CCPA studies.

Proponents of small government keep telling us that our public sector is bloated and inefficient, but in reality BC's public sector is the leanest in Canada. Now that public sector budgets have come under pressure from the recession and there is talk of additional belt-tightening after the Olympics, it is more important than ever to go back to the facts. Given the recent employment and spending trends in the provincial public sector, further reductions at this point would be a mistake.

Cutting public sector jobs and/or reducing public sector wages would reduce incomes for a large number of hard-working British Columbians and put a drag on the economy precisely at the wrong time, as the province enters what is likely to be a slow and weak recovery from the recession.

*Iglika Ivanova is CCPA-BC's Public Interest Researcher and a co-author, with Will McMartin, of the 2009 BC Federation of Labour publication BC's Public Sector at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Re-investing in a Strong and Dynamic Public Sector to Benefit All British Columbians (prepared for the BC Federation Policy Convention in November 2009. Available at [www.bcfed.com/files/Convention-2009-Public-Sector-Paper.pdf](http://www.bcfed.com/files/Convention-2009-Public-Sector-Paper.pdf)).*

*The last twenty years have seen a deliberate reduction in the size and scope of BC's public sector. We have increasingly shifted away from collectively providing services paid for by taxes and towards increased responsibility of individuals, families and charities to pay for social services.*

Continued from opposite  
Managing BC's forests for a cooler planet

edge of communities where fewer trees may be precisely what is needed to reduce the risk of catastrophic forest fires.

10. *Account for all forest carbon debits and credits.* All forest carbon credits bought and sold in a regional market for tradable carbon credits must account for all debits and credits. Only when the carbon stored is in addition to the carbon that would be stored in the course of normal events should a marketable credit be claimed.

*Ben Parfitt, resource policy analyst with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office, is author of*

*Managing BC's Forests for a Cooler Planet: Carbon Storage, Sustainable Jobs and Conservation, which was co-published by the CCPA; BC Government and Service Employees' Union; Communications, Energy and Paperworkers of Canada; David Suzuki Foundation; Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada; Sierra Club BC; United Steelworkers District 3 – Western Canada; and Western Canada Wilderness Committee. The study is available at [www.policyalternatives.ca/coolforests](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/coolforests).*

Adding insult to injury in a community long known as the Salmon Fishing Capital, the once robust commercial salmon fishery in Campbell River and area is a shadow of its former self. This is in large part due to declining wild salmon stocks and much lower prices. The decline in stocks is partially related to the growth in environmentally damaging fish farms. Young wild salmon smolts are being infested by sea lice as they pass fish farms, so many blame part of the decline in wild stocks on the expansion of fish farms. Meanwhile, the recreational fishery continues to be an important part of the Campbell River economy, though it too has suffered from declining salmon stocks.

Because of the decline in these sectors, the official unemployment rate grew to 7.8 per cent in November 2009, up from 5.1 per cent in January and sharply up from 4.1 per cent in September 2008. In September 2007, 1.7 per cent of the working age population in the Campbell River regional district was collecting Employment Insurance. That grew to 3.7 per cent in September 2008 and jumped to 6.5 per cent by June 2009. The percentage collecting either income assistance or EI nearly tripled from 2.9 per cent in June 2007 to 8.4 per cent in March 2009.

Future economic options for Campbell River are limited. The beautiful physical setting and mild climate of the area remain significant assets. The town has a growing population of retirees, creating a demand for health and social service workers. Tourism will continue to be an important component of the local economy.

For resource industries, the main options offered are an increase in fish farms and more privatized electricity projects that divert and place power plants on wild rivers and streams. As well, the nearby community of Gold River has been approached by U.S. based Covanta with a proposal to convert a former mill into an incinerator that would burn garbage imported from the Lower Mainland. These environmentally destructive activities will create only a small number of good jobs to replace those lost over the last few years.

It doesn't have to be this way. The provincial government could end its hands-off approach to the industrial property tax revolt while also helping the community to identify diversification options. The BC government needs to play

an active role in finding long-term solutions, such as tenure reform to create local milling jobs in exchange for access to Crown timber, an end to raw log exports, and proactive action on U.S. pulp and paper subsidies to help create forestry jobs. Overall, they need to undo deregulatory policies that have exacerbated the recession in communities like Campbell River, and concentrate instead on economic development that sustains the local environment and local communities.

*Blair Redlin is a researcher at CUPE-BC and a Research Associate of the CCPA-BC. This article draws on research for the Communities in Crisis project of the Canadian Labour Congress, which is studying the impact of the recession on seven Canadian communities. The full report from that research will be published next year.*

Continued from page 5  
Food bank use takes a distressing jump

important evidence of the impact of the recession. We won't have up-to-date poverty statistics for another year or so, so reports like this provide an early glimpse of how vulnerable people are impacted by the downturn.

If we are going to end hunger in our society, charity alone is not going to get the job done. We need an income support system and wages that ensure people can meet basic needs. And the report provides yet more evidence that both BC and Canada need comprehensive poverty reduction plans, something Food Banks Canada itself calls for in this report.

*Seth Klein is the Director of the CCPA's BC Office. The 2009 HungerCount report is available at: [www.foodbankscanada.ca/](http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/) and you can learn more about the call for a BC poverty reduction plan at: [www.bcpovertyreduction.ca](http://www.bcpovertyreduction.ca)*

## BC COMMENTARY

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