Twitter Thread by Timothy Huyer



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IMO, it is sky palace bad. This will do lasting damage to the UCP, perhaps more than the party's performance on real issues that matter. Because it affects the perception of the UCP.

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> On a scale of 1-10 sky palaces, how bad is the latest UCP scandal? #ableg #abpoli
>
> — Stacey (@Blurg5) January 2, 2021

It used to be a gotcha question to ask politicians how much they spent on milk. The point of the question was to finger those politicians who didn't do their own shopping or otherwise were rich enough to not have to worry about how much it cost to feed their families.

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Today, people rail against the 'Laurentian Elites' who are out of touch with people. The complaint is that these politicians aren't affected by their policies the same way 'severely normal' people are, and hence come up with ideas that are bad for the non-elite.

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The sky palace wasn't necessarily a bad idea — the premier does need accommodations in Edmonton — but it created the image of an entitled premier, freed from the ordinary day-to-day struggles by virtue of the tax dollars from hardworking Albertans. The rhetoric writes itself.

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Bill Morneau's ultimate sin was to not notice that he hadn't paid for tens of thousands of dollars in travel expenses. That he could just write a cheque to fix that problem didn't help. It showed he lived in a world completely different than ours.

5/

A significant factor hurting the Governor General is the story of expensive renovations done to Rideau Hall just for her, even though she has yet to start living there. The disconnect between her and us angers us, even though she doesn't really represent us.

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The examples are legion. There is a reason why 24 Sussex is essentially a ruin and the PM has been flying in a plane that is literally falling apart. It is very damaging to do anything that suggests a politician isn't standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the rest of us.

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Call it political empathy. A sign that politicians understand our plight and are able to see themselves in our shoes. We actually don't mind rich or otherwise privileged politicians. We just want them to be empathetic.

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The UCP, however, has shown a complete lack of empathy. There is no empathy for how this pandemic has been affecting us. When it came to the simplest way of showing that they were standing shoulder-to-shoulder with us, they jetted off to Hawaii instead.

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And it isn't that they can afford to go to Hawaii (I expect such a trip will be forever out of my reach). It's that they went NOW, when we all have forgone travel, because we were doing our part to fight COVID-19.

10/

We have politicians who will not make even the most obvious sacrifice — the sacrifice they have asked us to make and which we are making — to protect our health. They have shown zero empathy. They're not us, and they're not with us.

11/

And if a politician cannot even pretend to care about us, will not even endure the smallest hardship just to maintain an illusion of empathy, then we repay their consideration in kind.

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And unlike policy decisions, it is the lack of political empathy that resonates. For most of us, policy decisions, while they can literally mean life or death for thousands, are more abstract and nebulous. Empathy is emotional; we feel it without having to think about it.

13/

And what we feel right now in Alberta is that the people entrusted to safeguard public health and to run government in a way to make people’s lives better just don’t give a damn about anyone else. This is the brand they revealed yesterday. This is the brand that will stick.

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