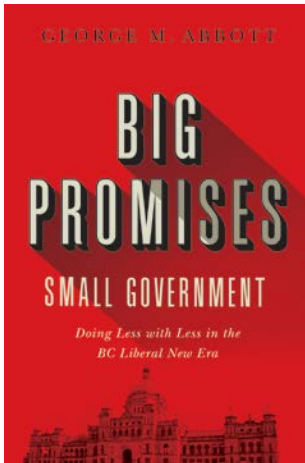




## For Immediate Release

***Big Promises, Small Government* is a compelling critique of former B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell's government, and a cautionary tale for all of us as politicians respond to the crises wrought by COVID-19**



259 pages, 6 x 9"  
Paperback | \$32.95

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**(Vancouver BC, August 26, 2020)** As the immediate health threats of COVID-19 abate, governments will be faced with another unwieldy problem: massive fiscal deficits. Political prescriptions will vary: stimulus spending, tax cuts, or reductions in “non-vital” services?

George Abbott served for thirty-five years in public office and was a cabinet minister during the first term of Gordon Campbell's Liberal government after it won a massive majority in 2001. He witnessed the enormous tax cuts and government downsizing that came hard and fast that first term. Abbott's new book ***Big Promises, Small Governments: Doing Less with Less in the BC Liberal Era***, due on September 1st, offers vital lessons drawn from experience at the critical intersection of tax and social policy.

“This book can be read as both an ugly slice of political history and an academic case study in public policy failure. But at the end of it, Abbott also reminds us that there were real victims in all this, and they included some of the most vulnerable citizens in the province.”  
**Vaughn Palmer**, *Vancouver Sun*

At the heart of Campbell's reign was the Liberal electoral manifesto “A New Era for British Columbia.” It was shaped by the tenets of New Public Management, a doctrine that found its roots in Margaret Thatcher's Britain, and was inspired by the experiences of other jurisdictions, including those led by Alberta's Ralph Klein and Ontario's Mike Harris, putting Gordon Campbell's policies squarely in the realm of neo-liberalism.

“*Big Promises, Small Government* is an excellent case study in public policy and New Public Management, written not just by a former political practitioner but by someone who was inside the very government that made these decisions.” **Hamish Telford**, University of the Fraser Valley

Within twenty-four hours of taking office, Campbell dramatically cut public taxes by twenty-five percent, a defining moment for his government. The tax cuts were introduced during a period of steeply declining energy and commodity revenues and negligible growth. Abbott asks if the cuts were “an instance of prescription before diagnosis” and suggests that Campbell was driven by ideology rather than a clear understanding of the economic state of the province. With

deficits mounting Campbell had to decide what changes he thought were the most important: “he sacrificed his New Era social agenda to protect his New Era economic agenda” leaving the most vulnerable without a safety net.

In the wake of COVID-19, ideologically based prescriptions should not be unleashed without rigorous attention to unintended consequences and cumulative impacts, or again vulnerable and disadvantaged people will pay a disproportionate price. This insider recounting of the real-world genesis, implementation and consequences of dramatic tax cuts and social policy changes offers an important cautionary tale.

**George M. Abbott** is a public policy consultant and president of Circle Square Solutions Ltd. in Victoria, British Columbia. He enjoyed thirty-five years in elected public office, including seventeen years as MLA for Shuswap and twelve years as a cabinet minister. Among his portfolios were Health; Education; Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation; Sustainable Resource Management; and Community, Aboriginal, and Women’s Services.

Digital and print review copies of ***Big Promises, Small Government*** are available now. For permission to excerpt, or to arrange an interview with George Abbott, please contact Kerry Kilmartin at [kilmartin@ubcpres.ca](mailto:kilmartin@ubcpres.ca).

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