

Wow—That’s a lot of money!

In a recent *Vancouver Sun* article¹, Vaughn Palmer repeated his assertion that paying all BC’s public sector employees a 1% increase would cost \$200 million:

The government, for its part, calculates that even a one-per-cent increase in public sector compensation translates into an additional \$200 million on the bottom line.

The government’s perspective is they simply can’t afford it.

Vaughn Palmer should perhaps check back to one of his earlier columns, published on August 17, 2010². It tells the story of the retractable roof being built on BC Place to enable football and other essential activities to take place protected from the weather.

Original cost of the new roof? \$365 million

Revised cost of new roof in 2010? \$563 million.

Palmer intimates there are suggestions that the actual costs will be higher still; he stated in May 2011:

As my colleague Jeff Lee notes on his blog, BC Place flatly denies the rumour that the cost of the roof replacement, formerly priced at \$563 million, is now in the \$850 million range. Denial noted.

So we know the roof’s cost was once estimated at \$365 million, is now at least \$563 million, and that the government denied the \$850 million estimate while not actually saying if it was up from \$563 million.

So to award every public sector worker across this large province a 1% pay raise would cost about one-third of the current “official” cost of the retractable roof, or less than one-quarter, if in fact the roof will actually cost over \$800 million, as some expect. The government could have paid all public sector workers close to a 3% increase for approximately the same price as the roof as currently estimated, or a 4% raise if roof costs go above the \$800 million mark.

Those public sector workers would be spending more money in every town in this province from Dawson Creek and Nelson, to Cranbrook and Nanaimo, boosting the economy and supporting small business. They would be paying more taxes into provincial coffers.

And they all go to work in the rain, which is more than can be said for the new roof.

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¹ *Vancouver Sun*, September 13, 2011. “Opinion: Courts might provide BC teachers and government with salary wiggle room.” Online at <http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Opinion+Courts+might+provide+teachers+government+with+salary+wiggle+room/5397860/story.html#ixzz1XwOREhsQ>

² Quoted in “BC Place budget: the story so far.” The *Vancouver Sun*, May 11, 2011. Online at <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2011/05/11/bc-place-budget-the-story-so-far/>