

**BC Election Results**

## **A New Government for British Columbia**



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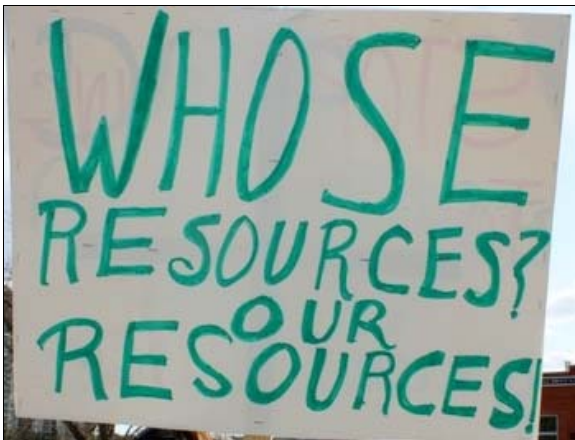
An agreement between the BC New Democratic Party and the BC Green Party to create the conditions for the NDP to form the new government of British Columbia was announced on May 30.

Liberal Premier Christy Clark responded in a short press conference the same day. Clark stated that she had reviewed constitutional advice and historical precedents and had met with her caucus. She has a duty to meet the Legislative Assembly and test its confidence in the Liberal government, and would do so before the end of June, she said. According to Clark, the agreement between the leaders of the NDP and the Green Party for a transfer of power should be done in public, "in the people's house." At times of uncertainty it is important to look to the institutions that govern us, she added.

In response to reporters' questions, Clark said that she would not resign, but would "take on any job the voters give" her, and that if there is a change of government she will stay on as leader of the Official Opposition. With regard to negotiations between her Liberal Party and the Green Party to allow the BC Liberals to continue to govern, she said these were unsuccessful and never reached a point where her presence was required (of the three party leaders, she was the only one who was not part of the negotiating team).

Clark said that she would not ask for another election to be called, but said that the decision ultimately rests with the Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon. Clark said that she expects the Lieutenant Governor to ask the NDP to form a government.

On May 31, the NDP caucus met and formally ratified the governing agreement with the Green Party.



The Legislature has now been called back for June 22. The first order of business is the election of a speaker and that has become a problem for all the parties. The media has reported that the Liberals say they will not give up a member to be the speaker but there has been no official word from the Liberal Party. Neither the NDP nor Green Party has addressed the issue publicly. The corporate media are also speculating that there is an "urban-rural" split and/or a "north-south" split because, outside the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island where the NDP and Green Party dominate, the Liberals

hold all but four seats, including overwhelmingly in the North and the Interior. This feeds the "Liberals care about jobs and the economy" mantra because the major resource and industrial projects are in the North (Site C, mining, most of the potential LNG sites) and most of the forestry jobs in terms of production, with Vancouver Island forestry having been reduced to not much more than exporting raw logs. To help the Liberals and sow divisions within the ranks of the people, the "Site C contractors" have gone on the offensive with a campaign that the NDP and Green Party want to issue "2,500 pink slips" to the construction workers working on Site C.

With such a tenuous balance in the Legislature there is speculation that the Liberals could defeat a Green-backed NDP government and force an election in which they could "correct their mistakes of the 2017 campaign" and secure the government for themselves. The results of the British election are however food for thought. There, the leader of the Conservative Party Theresa May followed the advice of private interests to call an early election on the grounds that she could turn her slim majority in the Parliament into a strong majority. Far from winning 50 more seats, her party lost 34! Meanwhile, not a lot has been heard from the unions aside from an initial applause for the Greens' decision to support the NDP and to say that now Clark should step aside and let the NDP govern.

All of it shows that the method used in the past to sort out problems within the ruling class by alternating political parties in power is defunct. The workers in BC will have to join forces with the workers in Alberta and sum up their experience with the NDP government of Rachel Notley. They will have to organize themselves politically outside of the system of party factions which divides them and work out their own views on how the problems they face must be sorted out. How to create a stable government in the BC Legislature within the current circumstances is out



of their hands because the electoral system, whether on the first-past-the-post or proportional basis, keeps the decision-making power out of their hands. The first step is for the workers to deliberate on how they are deprived of decision-making power and take measures to put it in their hands.

Together the NDP and the Green Party have 44 seats, the number required for a majority and one more than the Liberals' 43 seats. Together, they garnered 1,127,493 votes (57.12 per cent), compared to 796,672 for the Liberals (40.36 per cent).<sup>[1]</sup> The governing party is expected to provide a Speaker for the House who only votes in the case of a tie. This would reduce the number of voting NDP and Green MLAs to 43, equal to the Liberal vote. As a result, the fate of such a government is considered tenuous in spite of the governing agreement.

### **The Agreement**

The agreement between the NDP and the Green Party is a 10-page document entitled *2017 Confidence and Supply Agreement between the BC Green Caucus and the BC New Democrat Caucus*. "Confidence and Supply" refers to the fact that the agreement stipulates that BC Green Party MLAs will vote to support the NDP during motions of confidence -- in which the government must prevail in order to continue governing -- and supply motions, authorizing the government to spend money including on its budget. On other matters, Green Party MLAs are not required to support the government.

Section 1, titled "Foundation of Relationship," "establishes the basis for which the BC Green Caucus will provide confidence in a BC New Democrat Government," the document says. It states that both parties campaigned "for a government that put people at the centre of their decision-making" and notes the following points of agreement:

1. "Making democracy work for people."
2. "Creating jobs, acting on climate change, and building a sustainable economy that works for everyone."
3. "Fixing the services people count on."
4. "Making life more affordable for people."

The Agreement "sets out a new relationship between the two parties, founded on the principles of 'good faith and no surprises.'" In return, the Green Party will be recognized as having official party status, which grants certain parliamentary privileges and normally requires four seats. The NDP agreed to consult the BC Green Party Caucus on its legislative program, major policy issues, broad budget parameters, events/policy changes with provincial or budgetary implications.

Specific agreements on electoral reform, financing and governance are the following:

1. The Legislature will be recalled within one month of the swearing in of a BC NDP government. Legislation will be introduced in the first session for a referendum on whether to implement proportional representation in provincial elections, to take place in fall 2018. If passed via referendum, proportional representation will be in effect for the next provincial election. The form of proportional representation to be voted on will be determined through the two parties working together "in good faith to consult British Columbians." Both parties agree to campaign in favour of the reform;
2. Legislation will be introduced in the first sitting of the Legislature to ban corporate, union and non-resident donations to political parties, establish limits on individual contributions, restrict loans to political parties from banks or recognized financial institutions, "eliminate any other means by which individuals or entities may wield undue influence over government" and review campaign finance and the *Elections Act*;
3. Legislation will be introduced in the first sitting to address issues of lobbying, with a multi-year prohibition on lobbying for former Senior Public Office Holders and a review of the *Lobbyists Registration Act*;
4. Commitments to "respect the dignity and independence of a professional public service," "ensure more public input into decision-making by making more effective use of committees of the Legislature and allowing MLAs an opportunity to have input on policy decisions" and to require annual Spring and Fall sittings of the Legislature.
5. Legislation will be introduced in the first sitting to change fixed election date to a date in the fall of 2021 and then every four years, instead of the current May date.

Other specific measures fall under the category, "Jobs, Climate and a Sustainable Economy that Works for Everyone," including:

1. An increase to the carbon tax of \$5 per tonne per year starting April 1, 2108;
2. Immediate referral of the Site C Dam to the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) for review (the BCUC has twice rejected Site C);
3. Immediate employment of "every tool available to the new government to stop the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the seven-fold increase in tanker traffic on our coast, and the transportation of raw bitumen through our province."
4. Immediate establishment of a Fair Wages Commission to establish "a pathway to a minimum wage of at least \$15 per hour" and "bring forward recommendations regarding strategies to address the discrepancy between minimum wages and livable wages."
5. Promises to "improve fairness for workers, ensure balance in workplaces" and improve safety at work. Promises to work with the Mayor's Council to improve transit and transportation, invest in co-op apprenticeship and work experience programs for high-school and undergraduate students, establish an Emerging Economy Task Force "to address the changing nature of business over the next 10 to 25 years," establish an Innovation Commission to support the technology sector, "reinvigorate our forest sector to improve both environmental standards and jobs for local communities," revitalize the Environmental Assessment process and "review and address failures in the professional reliance model in BC so that British Columbians' faith in resource development can be restored," and to "build needed hospitals, schools and other infrastructure that reduce

emissions and increase energy efficiency throughout BC."

Under the section of the Agreement entitled, "Fixing the Services People Count On" a number of policy objectives are listed such as:

### **Health Care**

"Promote and protect the public health care system," increase emphasis on preventative health initiatives, in the first budget have a proposal for an "essential drugs program" to reduce the cost of drugs, invest in home care for seniors, ensure staffing in seniors' residences meets government guidelines, expand the use of team-based health care, establish a Minister dedicated to mental health and addiction issues.

### **Education**

Restore funding the Adult Basic Education and English language learning, improve cost and access to post-secondary education, fund in-service and retraining of workers displaced by automation or changing markets, "fast-track enhancement to K-12 education funding," invest more in child care, invest in child protection services.

### **Housing**

"Tighten the rules that protect good landlords and tenants and ensure the resources necessary exist to resolve disputes fairly and in a timely way."

Under the section, "Making Life More Affordable" are listed the following measures:

1. A province-wide poverty reduction strategy "that includes addressing the real causes of homelessness, including affordable accommodation, support for mental health and addictions and income security." In the first budget a "basic income pilot" will be funded "to test whether giving people a basic income is an effective way to reduce poverty, improve health, housing and employment."
2. Develop a genuine progress indicator in consultation with business and industry, communities, not-for-profit organizations and individuals.
3. Eliminate regressive MSP (Medical Service Plan) premiums.
4. "Make housing more affordable by increasing supply of affordable housing and take action to deal with the speculation and fraud that is driving up prices."

### **Note**

1. The final results of the BC election produced no majority for either the Liberals or the NDP, the three parties with seats in the Legislature. The Liberals, with 43 seats, the NDP with 41 and the Green Party with 3 then entered into a period of intense secret negotiations. The objective of the negotiations was to create an arrangement between two parties, the Green Party and either the Liberals or the NDP, to form a viable governing arrangement.

There was intense speculation and pressure from trade unions, and others for the Green Party to support the NDP. This included a 25,000-signature petition launched by Leadnow and supported by various environmental groups, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Health Coalition presented by NDP MLA Carole James and Green Party MLA Sonia Furstenuau to Green Party leader Andrew Weaver. The Green Party, until the May 30 announcement, claimed to be



considering an alliance with either the Liberals or the NDP.

To read the full governing agreement, click [here](#).



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## **Urgent Need to Step Up Struggle Against the Anti-Social Offensive**

**- Barbara Biley -**



The status quo of BC politics whereby one or another of the cartel parties wins a majority and claims a mandate to carry out a program came to an end with the final voting results of the May 9 election and now the conclusion of a deal between the NDP and the Green Party. The deal provides that the Green Party will support the NDP on supply and confidence motions for four years in order that the government be viable. In exchange the Green Party will receive official party status and a mechanism for cooperation and consultation on policy proposals between the two caucuses is established. The viability of this plan is only in terms of the numbers of seats that the parties hold in the Legislature. With the NDP-Green agreement and its acceptance by the Lieutenant Governor after the Liberals are defeated on a confidence motion in the house, the Legislature would have the Liberals as the official opposition with 43 seats, and the NDP the governing party with Green support holding a total of 44 seats, the bare minimum needed to win a confidence or supply motion and hold onto power.

A further complexity, from which the whole house of cards could fall, is the requirement for a speaker, normally a member of the party with a majority, who votes only in the case of a tie and, by custom, supports the government. Media reports say the Liberals will not agree to having one of their MLAs serve as speaker. If the NDP or Green Party appoint a speaker from their MLAs their numbers will be identical to those of the Liberals and all it would take for the government to fall would be the absence of more NDP or Green MLAs from the house than Liberals on a confidence motion.

The deal reached by the NDP and the Green Party calls for implementation of campaign financing changes including a ban on corporate, union and out-of-country contributions to parties,

proportional representation which would be put to a referendum in 2018 at the time of the next municipal elections, changes to legislation to restrict lobbying, a review of the Site C Dam project by the BC Utilities Commission, the use of "every tool" to stop the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, as well as promises to improve forestry, public health care and education and an anti-poverty plan. Aside from the commitment to "consult" on electoral reform through legislative committees and giving more voice to MLAs, the workers and people of BC do not figure in the new arrangement that would see the NDP come to power with the support of the Green Party.

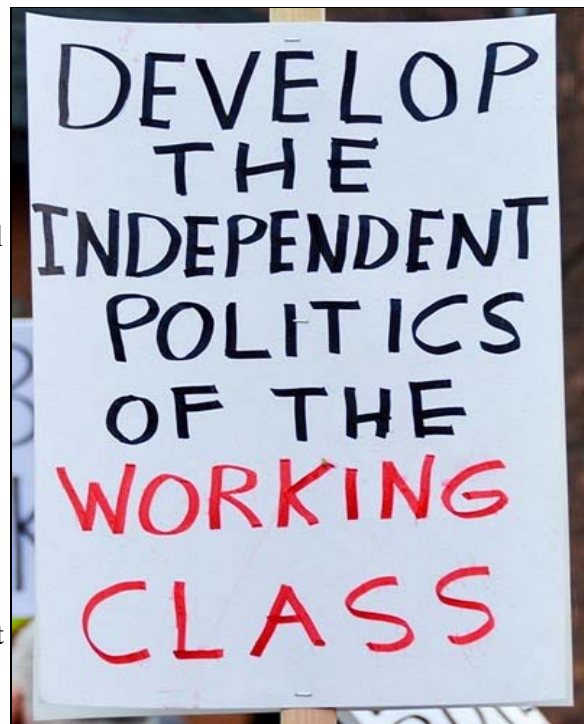


Based on the opposition of both the NDP and Greens to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project, there is already a war of words between Premier Rachel Notley of Alberta who, along with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, support the project as a means to get oil sands bitumen to tide water in BC for export.

The continuing drama regarding which party or parties will be able to establish a stable government actually makes the issue of the marginalization of the people even more

prominent. Everyone is supposed to focus all their attention on these machinations in hopes that something positive for the people will come from it, while forever putting off the reckoning with the fundamental problem that regardless of which arrangement of governance is established there will be no space for the working class and its allies to identify and discuss the problems facing the society. These problems include the effects of the anti-social offensive and the necessity for a new direction for the economy in which the needs of a modern nation-building project, not the empire building of global oligopolies, that determines government policy.

Regardless of the fact that all three parties with seats in the Legislature consider themselves the legitimate parts of the mechanisms of governance and consider the workers a mere productive force to be used as the oligopolies dictate, the current situation provides an opportunity for the working class to further elaborate and fight for a pro-social program. The situation in which a political elite can wheel and deal and act like gods deciding everyone's fate is the height of corruption, of which the lobbying and financing scandals are merely details. The proposed "clean-up" of politics or political financing will not alter the fundamental problem of the marginalization of the people of the province. The way the government of British Columbia is being decided is proof positive that the current electoral system in which the people are reduced to casting a ballot and then having to accept the decisions of the parties and the Lieutenant Governor is an attack on the democratic right of the people to participate in deciding all the matters that affect their lives.



It is up to the working class to step up the struggle for a new direction for the economy including;

- a forestry industry that restricts monopoly right and develops sustainable, regulated practice and secondary and tertiary manufacturing, with the same for mining, fishing, manufacturing and other sectors,

- an end to privatization in education, health care and social services,

- increased investments in social programs,

- democratic renewal and electoral reform so that it is the people who decide how the resources of the province will be developed in order to meet the needs of British Columbians, of Canadians and for international trade based on mutual benefit.

- housing and transportation that meet the needs of the working class, youth, students regardless of income, and not developers and speculators

It is helpful that the NDP-Green agreement includes a review of Site C and opposition to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project as there is widespread popular opposition to both projects. Now is not the time for the working class to take a back seat. Now is the time for the working class to step up its demands to break the stranglehold of the financial oligarchy over the economy, to deprive the oligopolies of the power to dictate government policy and to defend the rights of all to health care, education and a livelihood.



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## Open Letter of Union of BC Indian Chiefs



**Grand Chief Stewart Phillip (front row, second from right) leads protest against Kinder Morgan on Burnaby Mountain in November 2014. (M. Recker)**

Dear Premier Christy Clark, John Horgan and Andrew Weaver:

From April 28 to May 9 nearly two million British Columbians took to the polls to give expression to their deep concerns relative to the previous sixteen years of a BC Liberal majority rule. Clearly, 60 per cent of those British Columbians have overwhelmingly voted for change.



Six years of a heavy-handed Clark majority government has left British Columbians deeply mired in an overwhelming debt, subsequent to a litany of highly outdated, unfeasible and environmentally destructive mega projects, including the Site C Dam, the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project and the fading market-dead LNG pipe dream. British Columbia's economy has become reliant on an industry propped up by a temporary and transient workforce precariously perched on archaic notions requiring the complete destruction of our pristine air, land, and waters, and on an industry which runs rough-shod over the democratic and human rights of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike.

British Columbians demand a different way of governing and have called for a dramatic shift from protecting foreign corporate interests to ensuring the health, safety, well-being and the long-term, sustainable livelihoods of our families and communities.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) calls on the newly elected government of BC to enact the change British Columbians have called for. More specifically, we call on the government of BC to immediately implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, to enact the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and to begin to implement the principles and provisions of the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*. The Province's piecemeal approach of agreement making with First Nations across BC can no longer stand in place of recognizing Indigenous peoples' Inherent Title, Rights, jurisdiction and especially First Nations' right to consent.



We must immediately begin to make significant changes to strengthen the BC Environmental Assessment process by disposing of the problematic and dangerous MOU between the BC Environmental Assessment Office and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency allowing BC to substitute its EA process for projects where both provincial and federal EAs are required, and to promote the wellbeing of communities across BC. First Nations have called for significant engagement that is both genuine and meaningful.

Further, we must work together to address the destructive policies and practices permeating the state of child and family care in BC. A new BC government must not only provide safe healthy environments for children but must ensure future opportunities for their growth and development, to do so we must address the funding and resourcing shortfalls of First Nations education and health care services throughout the province. Homelessness and affordable housing must also become immediate priorities of the new government. BC must also take significant movement to address and effectively end the devastating opioid crises gripping numerous BC communities.

The new BC government must make great strides to rebuild the trust of British Columbians and to protect the future of our environment and our communities.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

*Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President*

*Chief Robert Chamberlin, Vice-President*

(May 29, 2017)



### Trek from Victoria to Burnaby

## Kinder Morgan Shall Not Pass!

- Brian Sproule -



Four-day trek concludes in Vancouver on May 28, 2017.

On May 28, First Nations activists and people from all walks of life completed a 77-kilometre, four-day trek from Victoria to Kinder Morgan's Westridge Terminal on Burrard Inlet in Burnaby to rally support for the campaign to stop Kinder Morgan's twinning of its Trans Mountain Pipeline from northern Alberta to the BC Coast. If built, the pipeline would result in greatly expanded oil tanker traffic in the heavily-congested Burrard Inlet, as well as the busy Salish Sea. This would increase the chances of a collision and threatening the few remaining orcas (killer whales), food fish stocks and other marine life as well as polluting the coast.



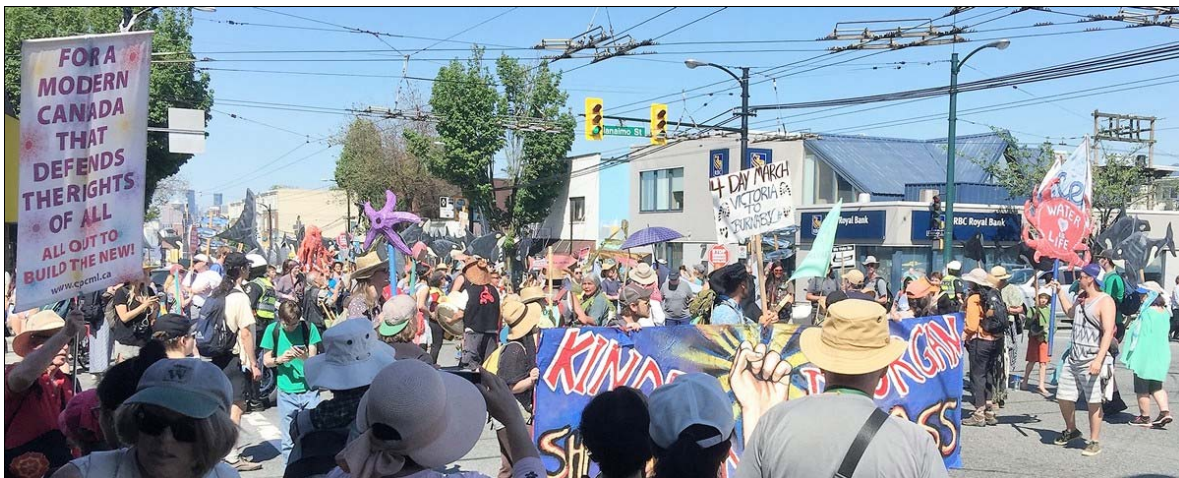
The trek, dubbed "Walk For the Salish Sea," raised about \$20,000 towards legal expenses for court challenges launched by Tsleil Waututh, Squamish and Coldwater First Nations. Participants were warmly greeted by people along the route. After an early morning rally in east Vancouver, around 300 people set out on the final 11-kilometre section of the journey. A militant atmosphere prevailed with shouting slogans and singing. A piper played popular tunes as well as the *Internationale*.





**Walk for the Salish Sea launches in Victoria, May 25, 2017.**

The procession was led by First Nations drummers and a colourful banner reading "Kinder Morgan Shall Not Pass." Dozens of placards depicting fish and orcas were held aloft. Passing motorists and pedestrians honked horns and waved, giving thumbs up and raising fists. The march concluded at the gates of Westridge Terminal, where the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion would conclude. There a short rally was held, followed by a longer rally at a nearby park where an all-afternoon festival was also held. Later that evening several activists chained themselves to the terminal gates to affirm that Kinder Morgan shall not pass. Four people were arrested the next day.







## Opposition to Privatization of Health Care **Hospital Workers Rally in Support of Housekeeping and Food Service Workers**



Hospital workers from across the province and housekeeping and food service workers from the Vancouver area rallied at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver on May 31 to support the demands of more than 4,000 housekeeping and food service workers employed by the multinationals Compass-Marquise, Sodexo, Aramark and Acciona.

Collective agreement negotiations have gone on for over a year. The workers are demanding wage increases and benefits commensurate with the crucial work that they do, as well as job security. There is fierce competition amongst the biggest cleaning and food service monopolies for the contracts, and when a Health Authority changes contractors, hundreds of workers lose their jobs and are forced to re-apply. Those who are re-hired start from scratch with no seniority and at starting wages. The May 31 action was one of many ongoing actions, including province-wide rallies on May 1.

The local workers were joined by delegates to the Hospital Employees' Union's (HEU) Equity Conference, attended by workers from all sectors and from all regions of the province. Contracted workers from Vancouver General Hospital addressed the rally, followed by Irene Lanzinger, President of the BC Federation of Labour, Donisa Bernardo and Jennifer Whiteside, Financial Secretary and Secretary-Business Manager of HEU, respectively. The rally was also attended by



members of the BC Government and Service Employees Union and the Service Employees International Union.

In her speech to the rally, HEU Secretary Jennifer Whiteside brought a message to the workers and to the Health Authorities that the workers have the support of all of HEU and other unions for their just demands and that the Health Authorities have to "stop treating housekeepers and dietary workers as disposable." Whiteside said, "Hospital cleaners and dietary workers are not disposable. They are an essential part of the health care team. [...] But when BC's health authorities contracted out these critical support services to multi-national corporations in 2003, they abandoned their responsibility for the workers and the patients who rely on clean hospitals and nourishing meals." She concluded that "it's time for BC's health authorities to ensure our hospitals are staffed by a stable, experienced workforce with fair wages and job security. It's time to respect the work and the workers."



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