

Ironic: NDP fundraiser celebrates public service legal profession, while government lawyers remain on strike

By Micah Weintraub

The invitation on the BC NDP website announced a “relaxed evening” fundraising event in Vancouver last Thursday “overlooking the skyline” with George Anderson, MLA for Nanaimo-Lantzville and Adrian Dix, Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions. The venue’s menu includes “caviar service” which I can only assume was enjoyed by “those who care about the rule of law and access to justice”. The event promised discussion of “building a strong legal community and institutions, reliable services, and an economy that works for people and businesses”.

I am drowning in the irony of the BC NDP holding such a bougie fundraising event themed “Where the profession meets public service” while the government’s very own lawyers, members of the Professional Employees Association (PEA), are embroiled in the longest BC public service strike in history.

Additionally, the government is in the midst of a trial in which the Law Society of BC alleges last year’s passage of Bill 21 amounts to a government takeover that erodes the independence of the legal profession and threatens the rule of law.

You may recall in 2023 that members of the BC Government Lawyers Association (BCGLA) sought to become our own union, but the same Eby-led NDP government interfered with an ongoing certification hearing before the BC Labour Relations Board and legislated us into the PEA instead. Our constitutional challenge to this retaliatory infringement of our Charter rights is set for trial in February 2027, so for now we remain in the PEA.

The PEA and the much larger BC General Employees’ Union (BCGEU) have been on strike since September 2 and because of our forced inclusion in the PEA, government lawyers now have legal and moral duties to strike with them. Though our issues may be different, we proudly stand and march beside other workers who have had to take second jobs to pay their rent and feed their families.

The unions are not asking for the moon. They have asked for wage increases that keep up with inflation (i.e. something better than a pay cut). They also want a job classification system that addresses chronic recruitment and retention problems, payment of required professional fees which is standard across the private sector, and

limits on contracting out which is much more costly than investing in a professional public service.

For our part, government lawyers have asked to restore (or maintain) terms of our employment that we had before we were forced into the PEA.

Premier Eby and Minister Bailey, hiding behind a deficit largely of their own making, have publicly stated that they want to get back to the bargaining table. Yet when they come, they bring nothing new to that table.

It seems the BC NDP leadership is perfectly happy to relax overlooking the Vancouver skyline, while reaching into the pockets of public servants and draining the coffers of the labour unions that got them elected. We will have to wait and see what mediation achieves for the BCGEU and whether a similar invitation will be made to the PEA.

Public servants are an economic engine of this Province. We live, work, pay taxes and invest in our local communities. Government lawyers care deeply about the rule of law and ensuring the law is followed, whichever party may be in power. Mr. Eby and his ministers have shown through their actions that they do not care about the rule of law. They believe “rule of law” means “the ruler is the law”.

If Mr. Eby’s NDP won’t listen to the people, then the people need to take their party back or invest their money and their votes elsewhere.

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