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BC Hydro janitors get commitment from Ministry of Energy to raise concerns with BC Hydro CEO ahead of Throne Speech

Worker delegation representing janitors at BC Hydro asked Minister of Energy to ensure their jobs and union rights are protected by intervening on their behalf before contract flip March 1

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA – Minister of Energy, Michelle Mungall assured a delegation of janitors working at BC Hydro Tuesday that she would speak to BC Hydro CEO Chris O’Riley to explore “creative solutions” to their current situation.

Despite unusual snow fall in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, the five workers representing janitors at Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey worksites were able to make it to Victoria.

Each spoke about the precarious nature of the contract cleaning industry and urged the current government to take direct action on their case.

“This contract flip at BC Hydro has been very stressful on us and our families,” explained Mary Jane Bayangos, a cleaner at the downtown BC Hydro location. “We were forced to reapply to our own jobs, with no guarantee that we will keep these jobs and would be re-hired as probationary employees,” Bayangos added.

Minister of Labour, Harry Bains, also attended the meeting with the workers to discuss what his Ministry is doing to bring in retroactive successorship rights so workers would not have to endure such hardships in the future.

In January, the property manager and multi billion-dollar corporate entity, Brookfield Global Integrated Services (BGIS), awarded the cleaning contract at BC Hydro to Alpine Building Maintenance Inc. With the approval of BC Hydro, Alpine, a non-union company in BC, has been scheduled to take over the cleaning on March 1, 2019.

“We understand that successorship rights will be legislated later this year but before that happens, we need guarantees right now,” said Conception Hipona, another cleaner at BC Hydro.



“The government should be setting the standard higher, not bringing it down,” Hipona added.

Last October, the provincial government released the full report of recommendations of the Labour Code review Panel, which included some promising recommendations to reform the BC Labour Code, the most notable being the implementation of successorship provisions in the Code.

However, in the interim, the janitors remain vulnerable and desperate for more immediate guarantees.

“We believe that as a public utility and Crown corporation, BC Hydro has an obligation to serve the public’s best interest,” said Eleanor Labrador, another BC Hydro cleaner. “This means treating its employees – whether full-time regulars or contract workers – with dignity, respect and fairness.”

The janitors at these locations, currently employed by GDI Integrated Facility Services, are members of the Service Employees’ International Union. In March 2018, they ratified their most recent collective agreement, making modest, but important gains.

In explaining some of the improvements her coworkers have been able to win in collective bargaining, Subhashni Devi told the Ministers, “we do not want to lose the small gains we managed to make over the years.”

The Service Employees International Union, Local 2 represents 16,000 workers across Canada including over 10,000 workers in the janitorial sector. The goals of SEIU’s Justice for Janitors campaign is to organize janitors across a city or market, so together, workers can raise standards in the cleaning sector and reverse the race to the bottom.

For more information, please visit www.justiceforjanitors.ca

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