



The Brief

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“I have hope that I can count on us:” Speech at the Fredericton March Against Islamophobia and Deportations

By GÜL ÇALIŞKAN



A crowd of about 200 people gathered at Fredericton City Hall to demand an end to Islamophobia and deportations and more humane refugee and immigration policies on a cold winter day on Feb. 4, 2017. They then marched through the streets of downtown Fredericton chanting, “No One Is Illegal,” and “No hate! No fear! Refugees are welcome here!” Photo by Biff Mitchell.

My name is Gül Çalışkan. I am an immigrant, I am a Muslim, I am Canadian, and Fredericton is where I call home, where my heart is.

Three feelings fill my heart today: a feeling of sorrow, a feeling of love, and a feeling of hope.

I am grieving for the victims of hate, racism and discrimination from the Quebec shooting and beyond. I am grieving for all the victims who have ever suffered from displacement and deportation. I am disheartened that the Quebec attack has reminded us of how persistent



Gül Çalışkan speaking at the Rally & March to Stop Islamophobia & Deportations in Fredericton on Feb. 4, 2017. Photo by Biff Mitchell.

xenophobia and hate are in pockets of our nation’s cities. I am shaken that hate crimes have increased since the attack last weekend. In Montreal alone, 29 reports of hate crimes were received since the attack, as of last count on Feb. 1st, according to The Globe and Mail. I am disheartened that sentiments and acts of islamophobia, discrimination, and racism are ever more open and out there. This is my sorrow and worry.

But I also feel love. I am here as part of this circle of peace.

Last week has also witnessed countless acts of reassurance for Muslim friends and neighbours all over Canada, and in our city. Canadians are sending a very strong message to haters, that we won’t allow their hatred get near to any Muslim, or any immigrant. On Feb. 3rd, at seven mosques in Toronto, people of all faiths formed human chains to protect worshipers during Friday prayers. On January 28th, people of my city, Fredericton, left a note at the door of our only mosque. It read, “Dear Muslim friends and neighbours, you are loved. You are respected. You belong. You are us,” with a little red heart ending it. Now, Fredericton residents are raising money for the city’s mosque to have a safer and larger space. These acts of love, empathy and recognition send a very strong message to the haters. It is this love that fills my heart.

I have hope. That is the strongest feeling I have here today. I have hope that we are creating a very open space for dialogue in our city, for open discussion of racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia. I have hope that no one should or will remain in silence when they face any of these things. I have hope that I can count on us. All of our friends and neighbours, whether they are Muslims, refugees, or people of colour, will always know that we can build human shields. They know they will be surrounded by circles of peace. They will know that we will not tolerate hatred.

This is my message, I am heartbroken. Nonetheless, my hope for dialogue and solidarity is much bigger than my sadness. The love and peace demonstrated all week is bigger than hate. And it always will be.

Editor’s Note: This speech was delivered by Gül Çalışkan, a member of No One Is Illegal Fredericton, on February 4, 2017, at the Fredericton March Against Islamophobia and Deportations, attended by 200 people.

Hundreds gather for Fredericton women’s march

By SOPHIE M. LAVOIE

The Fredericton March of Women garnered a turnout of hundreds despite last-minute organization.

Close to 500 people gathered in front of City Hall in Fredericton on Saturday, Jan. 21, 2017 to show solidarity to the Women’s March organized in Washington, D.C., in reaction to the new U.S.’s President’s blatant disregard for women’s rights.

The enthusiastic crowd first heard from Fredericton March organizer Marsha Clark. The next speakers were Najat Abdou-McFarland, from the NB Coalition for Pay Equity, and Nelly Dennene, Executive Director of the francophone feminist group, Regroupement Féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick. RFNB’s delegation drove into Fredericton from Moncton especially for the event, armed with two colourful homemade banners and an large Acadian flag.

From the steps of City Hall, the Fredericton band Panda Bee Catastrophe delighted the crowd with a song from their debut EP, Consent is Sexy, released in the summer of 2016.

People of all ages, including entire families, held up creative hand-painted signs with feminist or other political slogans such as “Love Trumps Hate,” a refrain which developed from the recent U.S. election. There was also a smattering of pink “pussy” hats in the crowd knitted by participants especially for the march in reaction to Trump’s contempt for women.

The significant crowd marched from City Hall to the Legislature grounds, down Queen Street, garnering honks of support from passersby. At the NB Legislature, while it waited for all the participants to arrive, the crowd chanted slogans calling for the end of patriarchy, for solidarity, for the recognition of women’s rights, and other social justice slogans in French and English.

From the Legislature steps, Mary Milliken took the bullhorn as representative of Reproductive Justice New Brunswick. She spoke of her reasons for participating and some of the battles that remain to be fought in the province, including her organization’s most recent campaign to abolish regulation 84-20 of the Medical Services Payment Act, that limits reimbursement for abortions to those done in hospital settings, creating restrictions to abortion access to all in the province. Abortions are only performed in hospitals in two cities in the provinces, Moncton and Bathurst.

The march was part of a global movement of women making their voices heard all over the world. In the Atlantic region, supporters were present in Halifax (where over 1,000 people gathered), Charlottetown, and Sydney.

Sophie M. Lavoie is a board member of the UNB/STU University Women’s Centre, a member of Reproductive Justice NB and an editorial board member of the NB Media Co-op.



Fredericton Women’s March on Jan. 21, 2017. Photo by Biff Mitchell.

Coming soon to New Brunswick: corporate control of hospital services

By SUSAN O'DONNELL



Hospital workers, members of CUPE 1252, and supporters greeting Health Minister Victor Boudreau outside the Fredericton pre-budget consultation in late 2016. Photo from CUPE 1252.

Will a corporation care more about the quality of its hospital services or the profits it can make for its shareholders? New Brunswick residents will soon have an opportunity to find out. The provincial government is negotiating a multi-million dollar contract with Sodexo, an international corporation with operations in Canada. After the contract is signed this spring, Sodexo will take over the management of the food, cleaning and patient transportation services in New Brunswick hospitals.

Multinational corporations survive by making big profits. Headquartered in France, with 425,000 employees in 80 countries, Sodexo is the 19th largest employer in the world. Sodexo is owned primarily by the Bellon family of France. The family patriarch Pierre Bellon is #338 on the Forbes list of billionaires with a net worth of \$4.1 billion (just slightly below the two Irving patriarchs with James Irving in 240th place and Arthur Irving in 308th place). At its January 2017 annual shareholder’s meeting outside Paris, Sodexo announced it is aiming for an average annual growth rate of 4 to 7 percent in sales and 8 to 10 percent in operating income.

How will the Sodexo corporation’s need for profits play out in New Brunswick? Few, if any, Sodexo shareholders live in New Brunswick, so the dividends from their corporate stocks are unlikely to be spent in the province. In fact, it is difficult to see how any of the profits Sodexo will make from its public contract will benefit the province financially.

Many Canadians believe that corporations should not be operating hospital services. One is Norma Robinson, president of CUPE local 1252, the union representing

the cleaning and food services staff in New Brunswick hospitals. In the new system, the staff who keep their jobs will remain with CUPE but be supervised and directed by Sodexo staff instead of provincial government administrators.

Robinson is very concerned about what the transition will mean for the quality of health services in hospitals. Her main concern is a reduction of care for patients. “It’s very disheartening that the Government of New Brunswick is going down the road of privatizing health services,” she said. “Where will it end?”

The government has already advised Robinson that 280 full-time hospital services jobs will be eliminated during the two to three-year transition period. “They said the losses would happen through vacant positions remaining unfilled and through retirements,” said Robinson. She questions that scenario, given that there are few existing job vacancies and the retirement plans of many staff remain unknown. Robinson expects significant lay-offs.

The planned loss of 280 full-time jobs will have a negative impact on the provincial economy. For the province’s smallest hospitals, the loss of even one or two jobs will mean less local economic and social capacity in rural regions. If staff wages and benefits are kept low in future to maximize profits, cleaners and food services staff, already among the lowest paid in hospitals, will fall closer to the poverty line. The added stress will have a negative effect on their families and communities.

The New Brunswick Health Coalition believes not only that the quality of services and overall patient health will be reduced but also that patients and health advocates will have no clear channel to voice concerns. When a multinational corporation is responsible for managing hospital services, where is the local ownership and control?

Green Party leader David Coon believes that hospital services should be run by hospitals and be the source of good local jobs. “Privatization is not the answer,” he says. The New Brunswick Medical Society has stated it is disappointed at the job losses and will be monitoring the transition to see the impact on patient health. The Conservatives, the opposition party, believes the move is premature and has called for more consultation with CUPE to discuss other options.

Indeed the previous Alward government rejected privatization of common hospital services in 2014 after reviewing a study on the topic. In 2015, CUPE presented a report to the new Gallant government when it announced its plans to move forward with privatized hospital services. The CUPE report contained a comprehensive history of significant problems with privatization in hospitals across Canada, the US and the UK. In Canada, problems with

cleanliness, sanitation and infection surveillance were found in hospitals with privatized cleaning services in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. In the UK, Sodexo was linked to unsatisfactory levels of cleanliness in hospitals in Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester and London. The UK in particular has an extensive history of privatization of hospital services and numerous reports from that country have recommended against privatization.

The CUPE report found that “there is little room for innovation (...) when it comes to cleaning, there is very little new under the sun.” The main source of profits in privatized hospital services is “to cut costs, namely wages, person hours, training, cleaning protocols and prevention schedules, and cleaning supplies. Layoffs is the first and main tactic.” To prepare for the privatization of hospital services in BC, the provincial government passed Bill 29 to allow them to override collective agreements. Soon after the privatization, CUPE’s health care division in the province took legal action against the government for passing Bill 29. In 2008, the Supreme Court of Canada sided with the union who then negotiated \$68 million in compensation from the provincial government for lost wages for the 7,000 union members who had been let go.

More recently, in 2016, in-house cleaners at the London Health Sciences Centre in Ontario were replaced by Sodexo workers. The in-house cleaners are unionized and make \$22 an hour, while the Sodexo workers make \$17 an hour. Also in 2016, shortages and bad “rethermalized” Sodexo food were reported at long-term care homes in Powell River, BC under Vancouver Coastal Health. In media reports, seniors said the food was bordering “on elder abuse.” An investigation found that “in its cost-cutting pursuit of profits,” Sodexo does not leave the food services workers enough time to serve the food and clean up.

Sodexo has a small army of public relations staff producing good news stories about itself. Almost every day, in a media outlet somewhere in the world, a story is published about Sodexo’s award-winning corporate social responsibility programs, its commitment to diversity and women employees, or its focus on innovation. What will the New Brunswick story be? The most positive possible future scenario is that the transition will be a good news story for the quality of hospital services and hospital workers. However, the track record of hospital privatization experiments elsewhere suggests a different story might unfold in New Brunswick.

Susan O'Donnell is a Fredericton-based researcher and a group executive member of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) union.

In Brief

NB’s 2017-2018 budget silent on pay equity. The NB Coalition for Pay Equity is frustrated by NB’s 2017-2018 budget, released on Feb. 7, that contained no updates on pay equity. The Gallant government has acknowledged that pay equity is fundamental to women’s equality, and necessary for the quality of services that are mainly delivered by women in child care, home support, group homes and transition homes. However, the provincial government’s approach to calculating pay equity for workers in child care, home support, group homes and transition homes is fundamentally flawed, leading to “scandalously low” wages for workers in these areas.

According to the government, pay equity is somewhere between \$12-14 per hour for those jobs. According to independent economist Ruth Rose, those jobs deserve between \$19-23 per hour.

Trudeau put on the spot about obligations to indigenous peoples at Fredericton stop. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stopped in Fredericton as part of his cross-Canada tour on Jan. 17, 2017. Ron Tremblay, Wolastoq Grand Council Chief, asked Trudeau why his government was backing away from the promise to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), referring to a previous statement by Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould that UNDRIP was not workable and could not be integrated into Canadian Law. In response, while remaining vague on implementation and how this will

be done, Trudeau promised that his government was committed to the UNDRIP principles. The Council of Canadians argues that Trudeau’s statements come on the heels of his government’s approval of Kinder Morgan’s Trans Mountain and Enbridge’s Line 3 pipelines. The Trudeau government earlier approved the Woodfibre and Pacific North West LNG terminals and permits for the Site C dam. All projects have faced substantial criticism and opposition from Indigenous communities across the country. The UNDRIP includes a recognition of the principles of Free Prior and Informed Consent. In the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Canada’s 150th anniversary, the Council of Canadians argues that we need to recognize the role that resource extraction has played in erasing the language, culture and livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

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Community Calendar

To list your community event, email info@nbmediacoop.org. For an updated listing of events, check nbmediacoop.org.

Fighting Fake News: Tips for Aspiring Truth Detectives. Saturday, March 25 at 11:00 am at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton. The session will be led by Mount Allison University Sociology Professor Erin Steuter and colleague Jeff Lilburn, a librarian specializing in media literacy. The Fredericton event is hosted by the NB Media Co-op and is free and open to the public. It will cover current examples of fake news, why fake news is on the rise, and the political consequences. The session will also give participants tools they can use to identify and debunk fake news. Contact: info@nbmediacoop.org.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire and provoke social change. This winter, Cinema Politica Fredericton will screen films on climate change, indigenous movements to protect the land from Amazonia to Athabasca, prisons and Syrian refugees on Wednesday nights at St. Thomas University, Brian Mulroney Hall, Room 103, at 6:00pm and every second Friday night at Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton, at 7:00pm. View the film schedule at: cinemapolitica.org/fredericton.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaking at a Fredericton townhall session hosted by the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce and Fredericton/Oromocto MP Matt DeCoursey on Jan. 17, 2017. Photo by Lynaya Astephen.