Irving media unsurprisingly blames CUPE workers for strike

By NB MEDIA CO-OP EDITORIAL BOARD

We know whose land it is, and who does government

By LUKE BERNE

On October 14, a memo was sent to all Government of New Brunswick employees by Ted Flemming, New Brunswick’s Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Public Safety, ordering employees not to “make or issue territorial or title land acknowledgments.”

Wolastoqewiyik Kí Sákon spaoqapit possonom (Ron Tremblay, the Wolastoq Grand Chief morningstar burning) issued a strong response, identifying the memo as a continuation of genocide, reiterating that “we Wolastoqewiyik have never surrendered one speck of Earth, one drop of Water or one breath of Air.”

Flemming’s memo states that his order is in relation to “a number of legal actions which have been initiated by certain First Nations against the province, including a claim to ownership and title to over 60% of the province.” It also states that “while territorial and title acknowledgments may not be issued by GNB, there may be some situations where it is desirable to issue an ancestral land acknowledgement.”

In these rare cases, employees are ordered not to deviate from an approved acknowledgement attached to the memo, which emphasizes the absence of “terms such as ‘unceded’ or ‘unreserved’.”

Land acknowledgements have already been criticized as hypocritical when they are not accompanied by meaningful steps to recognize Indigenous sovereignty. With this memo, the Government of New Brunswick removes even the symbolic significance of these statements. It, instead, uses the acknowledgement to reinforce the state’s secure use of Indigenous land.

The GNB’s approved acknowledgement states that “We respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Wolastoqey, Mi’kmaq, and Peskotomshicati peoples.” This is carefully worded to ensure that the speaker does not signify that territories referred to are still Indigenous lands. Restricting recognition to the existence of “ancestral homelands” presents Indigenous sovereignty as nothing more than a claim.

The legal action referred to is likely a lawsuit filed by the Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick seeking recognition of title rights. The six chiefs of the Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick issued a response to Flemming’s memo, which notes that “We were forced to file a title claim because our rights continue to be ignored by GNB. Now, in response to this provocation, we are telling you that we will uphold our rights and erase us from the history of this province.”

The lands claimed by the Government of New Brunswick were purchased in the deed (Section 25(a) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees rights recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763, which guarantees that all land is considered Aboriginal land until ceded by a treaty. This is enshrined in Canada’s constitution and serves as one of the fundamental pillars of its claim to legitimacy.

Flemming’s memo accelerates dispossession by attempting to prevent even rhetorical recognition of the legitimacy of Indigenous sovereignty on these lands. The fact that this was sparked by a legal case brought forth by the Wolastoqey Nation is evidence of the fact even playing by the government’s rules and participating in its legal system is not enough to afford recognition and respect.

In their response, the six chiefs state that “The Wolastoqey Nation is not seeking the return of all of the land in its traditional territory through the title claim. We made it very clear when giving the crown notice of our claim in October 2020 that we were not looking to displace homeowners in

CUPE members on the picket line denounced Premier Blaine Higgs for refusing to accept living wages and decent pensions for front-line workers. Photo from the CUPE NB Facebook page.

In case it’s not clear, the NB Media Co-op supports the nearly 22,000 CUPE front-line workers without a contract, many of whom were recently striking for decent wages. The Irving media does not.

Should we expect the newspapers owned by J.D. Irving Ltd. to support striking workers? The simple answer is no.

Since CUPE NB began its 100-day campaign for fair wages in May, the editorial board of the Telegraph-Journal has been bombarding readers with anti-CUPE rants in a brazen attempt to sway public opinion against school bus drivers, educational support staff, custodians, mechanics, healthcare workers, transportation and infrastructure workers, and community college workers.

In late October, after 10 different CUPE NB locals voted overwhelmingly (83-98 per cent) in favour of strike action, the Telegraph-Journal titled its editorial: “CUPE strike must not go ahead,” claiming a strike would be “irresponsible and out of touch.”

A generous reading of the news coverage and editorials by the Telegraph-Journal, Times & Transcript and The Daily Gleaner would say that their editorial boards have a broken thermometer, unable to take an accurate temperature of workers’ situations and sympathies. However, Irving’s Brunswick News corporation has always had a vested interest in breaking our collective thermometer to prevent us from seeing what is actually happening.

The former Brunswick News editor and current pundit Norbert Cunningham told us in his Telegraph-Journal column on October 29 that students and parents are suffering the most from CUPE’s strike. He claimed CUPE is out to “shut down our schools, cutting public places or providing care in our hospitals is underserving of a wage increase to pay their bills.”

The government of New Brunswick prefers to keep workers’ wages the lowest in the country in favour of spending public money on corporate handouts. The government also spent money on a full page ad in Irving newspapers and L’Acadie Nouvelle telling us that CUPE workers do not deserve what they are asking.

A popular tweet by Aditya Rao pointed out that Premier Higgs is saying there is not enough money to pay workers while it gives away $100 million in subsidies to six pulp and paper mills, including J.D. Irving’s mill in Saint John, lets J.D. Irving and other forestry companies off the hook for $200 million in timber royalties that should have been paid to the province, gives a half a million property tax discount to Irving’s headquarters in Saint John, and spends $250,000 on a yacht club.

New Brunswick is home to not one but two billionnaire Livings, two men made super rich off the backs of workers and by not paying their fair share of taxes.

New Brunswick’s Premier Blaine Higgs made a career out of making Irving Oil rich. He was an executive for the company during a long strike at the Irving Oil Refinery from 1994 to 1996.

Today, Premier Higgs clearly forgets who he is working for, as he celebrates surpluses and rejects federal funds to supplement health care wages and transportation infrastructure during a pandemic.

When New Brunswick runs a surplus of $408.5 million in the middle of a pandemic, we should question the government’s priorities.

And when an Irving-owned media outlet tells us not to support striking workers, we should remember that Irving fired 11 writers and editors with The Daily Gleaner without notice in 1977. The workers believed they were fired when
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Rent strike wont go away: Bigger landlords are controlling the housing market and tenants need protections

By Matthew Hayes

The Canadian state, including the Government of New Brunswick, is pulling out all the stops to protect private landlords and their market power.

New Brunswick, so strongly resists recognition of historical facts because the legitimacy of its existence depends entirely on the denial of the rights of Indigenous peoples and the repudiation of any kind of Indigenous title or right even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

To understand this, we have to go back to the late 19th century and the political struggle in which the Mi'kmaw were fighting for recognition of their right to hunt and fish on unceded land. At that time, the Canadian state was engaged in a policy of land assimilation, which sought to eliminate Indigenous peoples and their cultures. This was achieved through a variety of means, including the use of force, the use of land policies, and the forced relocation of Indigenous peoples to reserves. In this context, the Canadian state sought to undermine the legitimacy of Mi'kmaw rights to use the land by denying their existence as a distinct community. This was achieved through a variety of means, including the use of legal arguments and the use of force. In this context, the Canadian state sought to undermine the legitimacy of Mi'kmaw rights to use the land by denying their existence as a distinct community. This was achieved through a variety of means, including the use of legal arguments and the use of force.

Throughout the 20th century, the Canadian state continued to deny the legitimacy of Mi'kmaw rights, and to use force to undermine their use of the land. This was achieved through a variety of means, including the use of legal arguments and the use of force. In this context, the Canadian state sought to undermine the legitimacy of Mi'kmaw rights to use the land by denying their existence as a distinct community. This was achieved through a variety of means, including the use of legal arguments and the use of force.

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