

Gord Christie

GC: My name is Gordon Christie. From 1991 to 2008 I was employed as Executive Secretary Organizer of the Calgary and District Labour Council.

Q: How did you first get involved with the Friends of Medicare?

GC: Obviously labour was my strong suit, but I did a lot of work with the Friends of Medicare in coalition work within the Calgary community. I guess the earliest days of my involvement with the Friends of Medicare was probably back in the '80s, prior to working with the Labour Council. I would've been a delegate for the Labour Council and very much involved in my own union, Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Local 50. I was involved a lot in the community here but a little bit on the provincial level as well. In those days we were near and dear to Medicare, much as we are today, and the struggles then haven't changed. The naysayers have been trying to privatize government services for 300 years. The attacks on our private services now are no different, it's just narrowed down. The only thing left now is education and Medicare. Other than that, they pretty well privatized and are making lots of money off everything they want to now. So the main attack in the last 30 years has been on Medicare. It didn't matter whether it was an unpopular premier like Stelmach or Getty, or whether it was somebody popular like dear Ralphie, it's been the same agenda. When I was president of our local when I worked for the Alberta Liquor Control Board, at our convention that year the first resolution passed unanimously was to privatize anything and everything they possibly could. That was the mandate of the Alberta government. They sing a different song for four weeks during the election every four years, or 2-1/2 years in Don Getty's time. But it's the same agenda, it's full speed ahead, what can we privatize. The Friends of Medicare have been very successful; we were in the '80s and '90s and over the last decade as well. But you put out one fire, you win the war, but they come in the back door and they just continue. I'm often proud that there's 10 provinces in Canada, but unfortunately that's one of the ways they get in the back door. Many times Alberta is the breeding ground where the fire starts, but often times things have come here. Most recently, the Copeman Clinic, for over \$3,000 you can join tomorrow and have a foot in the door there any time you want. That came into Alberta from Vancouver. Many of the good things that came to Alberta came from Saskatchewan – many of the good people, and Medicare, and things of that nature. But many of the bad things that came to Alberta and really bloomed, and gasoline was thrown on by the Tory government over the last 30 plus years, came from other parts of Canada. In fact, what I've seen in the last 20 years, they've toured the world and brought in some of the most negative things. They always like to go back and compare us to the Americans and how wonderful the American healthcare system is and how Alberta should be like that. But seriously, they've taken some of the worst things out of the British system, some of the worst of the Australian. Go anywhere around the world and take those... bring the trial balloons and let's do some experiments. In fact, I guess the biggest problem with the Alberta government and the challenge to the Friends of Medicare has been after you win the battle and you've stopped them from either blowing up a hospital

or de-insuring a service or providing a new service or something of that nature, they'll have an election or sometimes don't even wait for an election, just the next sitting of the government, and they'll bring in the same bill and do the exact opposite of what the will of the people was and what they agreed to do the term before or the election before. It's cyclical, it's ongoing, and the sad part of it is it's our money. It's our taxpayers' money that the government uses against us. What I learned when I really got involved in privatization and working with the Friends of Medicare back in the '80s was the privatization takes many different shapes and forms. Whether it's the privatization of the Alberta Liquor Control Board, whether it's privatization of medical services in Alberta, whether it's the educational services, it's all the same agenda. It's basically at fire sale prices giving away public assets to already rich friends of the government so they can make more money off of them. It doesn't matter which service it is. In this case we're talking about Medicare services, but the same things happen – workers get screwed royally. Some of the 20 or 30 year workers get royally screwed. The clients or the consumers, whatever, they like changing terms around, but you and I as healthcare people who need to get services once in a while, we get royally screwed because those services are no longer there. What we really found, the way they can do this in piecemeal and keep going on it is when we really had our campaign to save the Calgary General Hospital, we got a lot of information and a lot of facts. What we found to be was that on any given day in Alberta, only 2% of the population is accessing the Medicare system. So on any given day, 98% of Albertans are not accessing the Medicare system. Those people, particularly young people, young people who aren't pregnant and people under the age of 55, they use the healthcare system intermittently. They think it's going to be there, they think it's going to be the way it was in the '60s and '70s and the way it was there for their parents the odd time they used it, but they don't realize in 20 and 30 years a lot of things happen. Whether it's long term care for seniors, whether it's emergency care for everybody in our city, it doesn't matter. Things have changed and the services are not the same and they're not going to be there and they're not there now. Unless of course you have the bankroll, you have the private health insurance, and you can be Don Mazankowski – one day you're an insurance company and the next day you're writing a report for the government and the next day you're making money off that report. That's the way our system has gone in the last dozen years. Coming back to the Friends of Medicare, they were there 30 years ago, they were there 25 years ago, they were there five years ago fighting the same fires. It's sad. We fight these same ones in education, we fight them in healthcare. We fought them for all government services when they contracted out the highways and the liquor stores and everything else in that fire sale of '93. It was a shame; it's a shame what's happened. I guess what people don't realize is the situation that we as Canadians were in and our parents were in and our grandparents were in before we had these public services. We set up public services, whether it was utilities, electrical or gas, or whether it was the liquor stores or healthcare. They were set up to provide public services for people. The services should be for the people and not for profit. But what has traditionally happened in the last 40 years now is that they've taken services that were created and put together because private enterprise should not, would not or could not do it. They now turn those services, flip them over to take the gravy parts of them so that private corporations, again friends of the government, can make money off specific parts of the Medicare system, specific parts of the education system. That is fine and well for the 10% of our society that can

take their kids out of one school and move them to another private school tomorrow, or take them to another private medical clinic tomorrow. But the other 90% of us that wait in those long lineups at the emergencies and at the hospitals and on the waiting lists and everything else, that isn't acceptable. I guess the one thing, although I was a young child at the time when Medicare came in, when I think back on it the one thing that was wrong and the one thing I think Tommy Douglas didn't go far enough on was doctors should've been civil servants. They need to be and are highly trained and highly skilled and they should be highly compensated, but they should be civil servants and they should be salaried employees. They should not be on fee for service. One of the biggest problems with our Medicare system the last 30 years has been this fee for service. You combine that with coming back to the most anti-worker, anti-union government in North America out of the Klein regime and the current regime, but who do they have the best relationship with? The closed shop Alberta Medical Association. You can cut a deal with them, you can try and screw the nurses every day of the week. But you can cut these wonderful deals with the medical association and some of the highest raises and the best paying positions in Canada, but that's fine. But when it comes to the laundry workers, when it comes to hospital workers, nurses, it's another set of rules. It's sad the way they do the divide and conquer. It didn't matter which attack it was in the last 30 years, the Friends of Medicare were there and they were there front and centre. When we did things it wasn't just, rah rah we're going to do a rally, it was always the public education. We did leaflets, we did programs, we did educationals. Then sure enough we did the rallies at the Legislature and at McDougall Centre in Calgary and at the medical centres. There's probably not a hospital or medical facility in Calgary we haven't been to with the Friends of Medicare on a rally or demonstration. But it's the other things that are important too. They did the community building and continue to do the community building to get people involved, to get the healthcare experts involved, to get the seniors involved, to get the youth involved, to get labour involved and women's groups and everybody. That's the way we can protect our Medicare and go forward. Truly, we can go forward and make Medicare and Canada a much better place. But we've regressed since 1975, when I really saw the regression. When I started into the workforce in the '70s, I've really seen it pretty well from the Trudeau election, with the wage and price controls. We defeated Stanfield and then before the ballots were really dry, they implemented wage and price control. So I have seen since 1975 the public services in our country federally really drastically disappear and disintegrate -- whether it was the Canada Pension Plan, whether it was Unemployment Insurance, whether it was any of our programs. When I was young and going through education and training, it was free. When I left university I had maybe a \$7,000 debt after four years of university. But now people are leaving university with \$50,000 like an average, and many have bigger debts than that. These are young people, they get together and have a \$100,000 debt before they even start their first permanent job. Those are the decisions that have been made by our prime ministers, our premiers, our finance ministers. And these are the people, well Ralph didn't quite go that far, he kind of stopped half way, but those people who had the gravy train in the '60s and '70s. We went through public education at a very reasonable rate, we had full Medicare, we had all those public services. We had unemployment insurance; if you happened to have a hard time in your economy for awhile. Those were the services that we as Canadians were brought up on and we're proud of. It's taken a lot of time and it's piecemeal, one

government after another. But it was really, it started with the Trudeau era, but Mulroney put a whole lot of gasoline on it, and Chrétien really quietly did it. It was really when Paul Martin was the minister of finance and Jean Chrétien was our prime minister, and them standing up in the House of Commons in '95 saying, we're putting the lowest amount of money into public services in 40 years. They were so damn proud of it. I was ready to get sick that day. That was the theory for three majority governments of Chrétien and Paul Martin, was cut, cut, cut. In Alberta it was the same thing here. I ran in the election against Jim Dinning and the wonderful chap, the treasurer. He did a lot of illegal things so I guess he was the right person for the job. But I won't get into all that today. But it goes around and around and around.

Probably one of the things that has made me most proud of the Friends of Medicare over the last three decades and being able to do a little bit of volunteer work to help them, has been the way they, as I have for many years, believe that it's grass root province-wide involvement that will challenge the government and make them listen and make some changes. When I think back 30 years ago and 20 years ago and over the last decade, it was just that. Friends of Medicare, I don't know how many nights we met in dark union halls and some church halls and everything in between, having educationals and planning public meetings and things of that nature. But from the start and as it continues, Friends of Medicare want the grass roots. They don't want just the rich and famous and a spokesperson who everybody can recognize to be part of it. It's a grass roots thing, it's healthcare, it's people. That's what we are and what we stand for. The other thing that made me proud, spending my work life in Calgary, is so many of the groups that I was involved in throughout the '80s and '90s were based in Edmonton and consequently focused in Edmonton. They get in that syndrome. But what I've seen from day one and over the last three decades is how the Friends of Medicare try to reach out to all the major cities in Alberta but also to the rural areas as well, to touch base with the people needing the Medicare services throughout our wonderful province, in all the places – not just in Edmonton and Calgary where most of the medical services are now centralized and have moved to, but to take care of the needs of all the Albertan citizens. That's something that has made me truly proud of the Friends of Medicare, is they are a province-wide organization, and that's hard to do. It's easy to say and really hard to do. To get grassroots people from border to border to border to get involved in an organization and to continue to do that over decades is a really hard thing to do. I have spent my lifetime working in coalitions both in the labour movement and outside the labour movement. The hardest thing to do is to continue a coalition after a set period of time. Oftentimes it's much like an election campaign – you can get people rallied for a two month period or maybe a six month period or for a long campaign like a year, but people are drawn in so many different angles these days with their families and their work and everything else, to stay in a coalition beyond six months to a year is an incredible thing. The Friends of Medicare is in fact a coalition of people or citizens of Alberta. That's the other thing that has been really fascinating, that they've been able to do that work over that period of time. I was involved with the free trade coalitions and human rights coalitions and children's rights coalitions and workers' rights, but it's usually for a small period of time for a specific thing. I guess part of that solution was the Alberta government, in their relentless attacks on the public healthcare system for decade after decade after decade. I'm sure some of the people working with Friends of Medicare now are the grandchildren of some of the

people that were working on it a generation and a half ago. It continues the fight and it will continue. We'll challenge the Alberta government one day longer than they're around.

Q: Let's go back to 1995 when the laundry workers walked out. What was the larger context of what was happening in those days? What caused the wildcat strike?

GC: I'd actually like to go back just a little bit further than that, because I think you have to realize, put it into perspective. First of all you have Alberta, which is a government that seems to go on 30 years at a time, then they have another one for 30 years a little further to the right. But when you look at the early '90s, the '70s was a boom. When I and many people moved here, things were booming. We kind of crashed in '81, '82. But come back into the '90s, business was booming and business was doing pretty good through the '90s. But workers were getting attacked. In fact, we went through a period from '92, '93, '94, we went 2-1/2 years when there wasn't a single day where workers in Calgary weren't locked out. That included everything from the secretaries in the union I belonged to to the NHL players' association to you name it. It was projectionists, it was cement workers. It was about a three year period where every collective agreement that came up, whether it was in the public sector or private sector, those workers were under attack and taking massive rollbacks. A vast majority of the workers wouldn't say boo to their boss, whether they were in the public sector or the private sector. They took wage rollbacks, they took massive concessions. Tens of thousands of them lost their employment totally and wouldn't say boo. So it was under that presence that we head into 1995, in fact the end of 1995, because '95 wasn't a great year for workers either. Probably the last time the workers had a good year was in the early '80s. But when you look at the rollbacks to the building trades in the early '80s and then the attack on the public sector throughout, it was a bad 15 years. But particularly from '92 to '95 was not a great time for workers. You had the Ralph's team election in '93... But coming back to 1995, it wasn't a great year for workers in the city of Calgary. But coming back to November of '95, what we want to spend a little bit of time talking about is the laundry workers' strike. But let's remember, those same workers had faced rollbacks, some of them had lost their jobs, had taken major concessions, and in fact some of them had taken concessions two and three times over the prior two or three years. Basically they were at the end. When they decided they were sick and tired and had enough of the health authority, they thought they might have to do a little bit of a job action there to show them that enough is enough and we're not going to take any more. They had already taken major, some of them had taken 50% wage rollbacks and concessions in other areas in the collective agreement. Then they were told, that's it, out the door; nothing can be done, there's no alternatives. It was only when you're in the corner and nowhere to go that they very proudly and very strongly stood up and said... And I suggest to you the first group that had the guts to say to Ralph Klein, we're not going to take this crap and we're going to stand up to you and see what we can do. Let's remember, he took over at Christmas of '92 from Don Getty and won a massive majority under our electoral system in June of '93, then it was full speed ahead. After he got through attacking people on social assistance it was like full speed ahead on the education system and the healthcare system. So come '95 there had been major attacks on the healthcare system. They already announced the closure of the Calgary General Hospital, which was totally closed down in '97 and subsequently blown up in

October of 1998. So these people had suffered. These were some of the most dedicated workers in the healthcare system. Many of them were long-term employees, mostly immigrant women. Many of them had English as a second language. They didn't have many other skills to go out onto the street and find another job tomorrow. They were proudly working at the laundry for the health authority, were proud of the work they were doing, but were just being treated like crap. When this happened it was like, we're out of here and we're not going to take this crap. It was like wildfire. When they proudly, with the help of their union, CUPE, and the union leaders from the General Hospital, and their staff reps, decided that ya, we're going to go ahead and do this, it was a wonderful thing in the city of Calgary. You have to realize at the time workers were being crapped on by the government, always crapped on by the Calgary media like it's just a dispensable group of people that we can get rid of whenever we want. The doctors took crap, the nurses didn't stand up to them, the healthcare workers didn't stand up to them as well. Then all of a sudden it was some of the lowest paid, the lowest skilled, lowest trained workers in the healthcare system that said, we're going to show you how to lead. And they did it.

The first day, under the leadership of CUPE, the workers at the Calgary General Hospital, which the Health Authority used to call the Bow Valley site, but the Calgary General Hospital in Bridgeland, where it had been for close to 100 years, those workers walked out of the laundry site. They decided that that was the thing to do. It was amazing. Usually in the last couple decades in Calgary prior to that when workers went on strike, the citizens crucified them, the media crucified them, the politicians had a heyday. The first couple of hours were like that, but it quickly changed. As things evolved, for whatever reasons, many people in the general public, many people who had never supported unions or workers' rights in their lives, came out very much in support of the laundry workers and those proud women that led the way for all Calgarians and all healthcare users. It wasn't very long after that that another proud group of workers, very similar workers, the same backgrounds and skills, working at the same jobs but at a different hospital, the Foothills Provincial Hospital in the northwest, and they would've belonged to a different union... The first group would've been the Canadian Union of Public Employees at the General Hospital. The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, Local 55 workers, in their hospital at the Foothills in the laundry, they did a similar action and joined the workers at the Bow Valley. The first couple of days you had some great solidarity from two unions that didn't hate each other but didn't work as closely together as they could've through the '80s and '90s. Here all of a sudden some of their members, many of them who had never been to a union meeting in their lives, many of them had never held union positions in their lives, were showing unions how to act, how to challenge the employer, how to challenge the media, how to challenge the government, and how to act together and work together and accomplish things. It was absolutely amazing.

Q: You were there on the picket line. Can you describe what it was like?

GC: Well, you know, I can indeed. My involvement, it was kind of an odd situation. I believe the strike walkout started on Tuesday morning. But regardless, the night before, that evening we had our regular executive meeting of the Calgary and District Labour

Council. One of our executive members, who always attended and if not always let me know, was sister Clancy Teslenko. Anyway, we had our meeting and it went on forever. We adjourned and I went home. Sure enough, I get a call at home from sister Teslenko. She had been meeting with sister Keeley and the laundry workers and the question was, what are you doing at 5 o'clock tomorrow morning? I only lived a few blocks from the hospital and sure enough, 4:30 in the morning we were down there. It was cold and dark and sure enough, 5 o'clock, those workers were out and we were on strike. It was the beginning of a wonderful 10 or 12 days in the City of Calgary. It was amazing. From the start, it was the usual response. Police came and told us, can't do this, can't walk there, can't do this. If you put a picket sign on you were like a criminal. But it sweetened up and I'd suggest probably the first two or three hours was kind of normal. But after that it was the exact opposite. We had the most wonderful support, as I mentioned before, from the public, from people that never supported unions. But the other thing that was most important was support from other workers on the work sites. Often when there's a group of workers going out on a work site, the other workers that remain there for whatever reason, whether it's their beliefs or provincial laws or whatever, don't support the workers who are out. But in this case it was fabulous. You couldn't find a person that worked in the healthcare system that wasn't supporting the laundry workers. If you'd gone back a week before that you probably couldn't find a person in the healthcare system that was in support of the laundry workers. That's how it flipped in such a short period of time. You couldn't have planned it, you couldn't have written it in script. But it evolved and it was like day after day. It was probably the one time in my life, excuse me, for about a two week period where the question I was asked was, 'when's the next union meeting'? It was phenomenal. AUPE and CUPE had joint union meetings. They allowed myself as a representative of the Labour Council, they allowed the general public. You had people who never belonged to a union were in at the union meetings and involved in the debate. Obviously they couldn't vote on the contracts and vote on the things, but it was amazing when people from the general public and people from other unions wanted to. Honestly the question was, 'when's the next union meeting'? It's not the experience I've seen in the last 30 years, having spent my life attending union meetings. But everything from that. We had to rent community halls; we didn't have spaces big enough. You couldn't have a meeting in the union hall because the union wasn't big enough. So we had community centres in the east for the Bridgeland and the General Hospital workers, and had community halls in the northwest for the AUPE and the Foothills workers. It was amazing. Other groups of workers supported them, other groups of workers walked out. In a city that I would say has probably the most right-wing police and the most right-wing media in all of Canada, when you start getting support from the most unlikely people... You always expect it from some of the stronger unions and some of the stronger activists and the people who have gone through struggles. But when people who have never been involved in struggles and people who have spent their lives crapping on unions start coming out and supporting you, that was a tremendous thing in the City of Calgary. It went from there. After two or three days I had so many friends in the labour movement from all over Alberta, but most of my friends in Calgary I never met them or never saw them. But all of a sudden we had people from the Edmonton Labour Council, the Alberta Federation of Labour, the labour councils throughout Alberta, various CUPE locals all throughout the province, and AUPE members from all throughout the province. We're

going to go to Calgary to a union event. I'm going, this is crazy, this is what I dreamed of for 20 years. All of a sudden people in Alberta wanted to go to Calgary for a union event, because we're going to show the government something. It was amazing. It really was an amazing event.

Q: What was the Labour Council able to do to support them?

GC: Quite honestly, it was a dream come true. As a labour council, what we truly try to do is get labour involved in the community and the community involved in labour. As much as you can try and struggle to do that for a lifetime, it takes a ? event. And it happened. As much as we always tried to get 30 unions in the same room working together on the same agenda, which is a struggle, here we had two very large unions working together on the exact same agenda and every other union in the province willing to help out, every citizen in the province willing to help out. It was like, let's go forward and let's build on this. It was just phenomenal. The Labour Council, what we dreamed of and what we were trying to do, it's unfortunate that it didn't continue after that, but for that two weeks it was amazing. It was like the talk of the town. People walking down the streets were talking about the laundry workers' strike. It wasn't the Flames or the Stampeders or some politician thrown in jail. It was, what are the laundry workers doing today? That was the talk of the town. It was incredible, from kids to seniors to everybody in between. It didn't matter whether you were professional or whether you were an unskilled worker, it seemed like everybody was supporting the laundry workers.

Q: What did the employer try to do to end the strike?

GC: Well they do all their regular things. First of all, in their back pocket is the Alberta Labour Relations Board. They're always their ace in the hole. Of course they start doing that right at the start. It was kind of funny, because there were so many media there, that the employers aren't always as stupid as I hoped they were. Sometimes they are, but the reality of it is there were so many reporters from Calgary and from around the country and around the province that were there, that people were actually posing. So the Labour Board, in their wisdom, hired photographers and videographers and camera people to go up to the Foothills Hospital and to the General Hospital and, sure enough, people were in the strike for two or three days and were real proud of what they're doing. So they all posed and they got just wonderful photos. Sure enough, next morning Labour Board, here's the photos of the people that aren't supposed to be off work. That sometimes worked for the government, but legislation usually doesn't work for the government; in real true struggles it doesn't. So they did that, they did their usual, they started serving injunctions. As I mentioned earlier, a lot of these people were recent immigrants into Canada; they weren't Canadian citizens. Although this strike would've been legal in a lot of provinces and a lot of jurisdictions around the world, it was illegal in Alberta labour laws. Even to talk about a strike in a lot of the healthcare sectors was illegal in Alberta at that time. So this was a fabulous thing. But again, because of the public support, it didn't work for the government. You can go there and you can do injunctions, but quite honestly, when people are already out on the street and the strike is getting popular and is expanding, you can have all the injunctions in the world but it doesn't mean a thing.

You're just going to pay those lawyers more money and have more hearings and things like that. It did little but it made a lot of people paranoid. They never did force the injunctions in court, although a lot of people did have the knocks on the door. A lot of people get paranoid; all of a sudden somebody's at the door with court documents. Like I said, in a lot of these cases, people would be deported out of the country – not just lose their jobs, they'd get on the blacklist and it was like gonzo. So they were very proud, but that didn't work as well. They continued to turn up their heat. The workers weren't going to back down, the unions weren't going to back down. It really came around to the premier, the minister of labour, doing things that they never like to do – actually talk to unions and union leaders, and maybe you have to talk to some of those members. Heavens. But it was a real different thing. When was the last time that the premier asked a union leader to come and meet, other than Dan who wanted to come and kiss? But you know what I'm saying. It's really when did the workers have power and control? The one thing I've learned in negotiations over the last 30 years, you can only negotiate from a position of strength. It doesn't matter who you are, what union you belong to – if you're not in a position of strength with the membership straight behind you, you're not going to negotiate anything. The employer knows that better than anybody. I negotiated against the Alberta government for 20 years and it was crap. I'm just saying the Alberta government changed their tune. I negotiated against the Liquor Control Board, which made lots and lots of money. Their tune was the exact same as all through the healthcare and education. It wasn't negotiations, it was bull. It was absolutely. But all of a sudden in 1995 in November, things changed. All of a sudden the premier wants to be involved and the minister of labour wants to be involved and we want to have some talks about healthcare. Oh baby, we can even make agreements with City Council to keep the laundry workers working for another 10 years. These are things that were never heard of before. We had members of the city come. As a rule, Calgary City Council isn't what you call a left-leaning organization and not what you'd exactly call a worker-friendly group of electorate. But even some of them, and some of those people had been working, particularly a couple of them, who actually were kind of on our side from time to time, were working on the Save the General Hospital Committee, were front and centre. We had been working with them for a couple of years prior to that. They knew the healthcare issues, they knew the hospital issues. Some of them had sat on the General Hospital board over the years. We had a couple of people, 15 people on City Council, we did have two or three that were very supportive. So when the strike started, all of a sudden they were up to date on the issues, they had been involved with the board, they knew a lot of the workers or some of the workers. So it wasn't like this politician just total disconnect with the workers. So all of a sudden, and they weren't all in love with Ralph in Edmonton in the legislature there. A lot of them knew him when he was mayor just prior to that. So we had a couple of people on City Council who would bring forward these motions saying, well maybe we have to look at other alternatives, whether it was public or private, but to maintain those jobs in the city. That was one thing that, even ? today, why should we send Calgary's dirty laundry to Edmonton? That's a line I don't think I'll ever forget. It's like, I don't think anybody in the province, in Edmonton or Calgary, wanted the other end of that dirty laundry. But you know, it was a once in a lifetime kind of event in Calgary for those workers. As we were talking about earlier, how many times you're involved in a struggle, whether it's a lockout or a strike or privatization or another issue,

the true natural leaders come forward. Sometimes our elected leaders aren't really always the best natural leaders, and sometimes they are. But what I found in times of struggles, the real natural leaders came forward. When this came to that, it absolutely was. The leaders were the laundry workers. Some of the people within the laundry workers had never been to a union meeting, never held positions within the union. They were the strongest leaders, both at the Foothills location with AUPE and with CUPE at the Bow Valley or the General Hospital. It was fabulous how those people came forward and said, we're going to do it and we're so proud we're going to make it happen.

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