

Interview: Paul Ramsey (PR)

Interviewer: Patricia Wejr (PW) and Donna Sacuta (DS)

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Transcription: Pam Moodie and Jane Player

PW [00:00:04] Today is April 29th, 2022. My name is Patricia Wejr. I'm a volunteer with the B.C. Labour Heritage Centre, and we're in Victoria today and we're talking to Paul Ramsey. Paul, could we start with just a little background information on you, where you were born and when you were born? Then, if you could think about if there was anything in your family history that would have predicted that you'd become an activist both in unions and politically.

PR [00:00:33] I was actually born in the United States, 1944, and grew up there until my mid-twenties. My family background was from a professional family. My father was an engineer, and I grew up in a lovely suburb in the United States and set off to be a university academic. Was there anything in that background that led me to activism? Not as far as union or social movements. My father was probably a good New Democrat, not a [New] Democrat, a good Democrat, but I wouldn't say he was by any means an activist. However, he was elected as an alderman, as they used to call that, and served for 16 years. I used to follow him around during elections and help him pound in lawn signs and watched him talk to constituents and whatever. That probably influenced me. Though, one of the things that influenced me, Patricia, was I said to myself, 'That's hard work. I don't think I ever want to do that.' Forty years later, things changed. That's where I grew up, and I stayed there until my mid-twenties. In 1971, my family and I immigrated to Canada. We are part of the movement away from the Vietnam War. However, I did not have to dodge the draft. I'm not sure what I would have done had I been faced with that choice. I came to Canada before that became a necessity.

PW [00:02:08] Where did you come?

PR [00:02:09] I came out to Vancouver to do doctorate work at the University of British Columbia, and we stayed happily on that lovely point out there, Point Grey, at that lovely academic environment for, I think three years. Then I said, 'What do I want to do?' We'd long decided we weren't going back to the States. It didn't take us more than six months to decide that, but what are you going to do? There was a movement going on. It's hard to think of it as a movement now, but it started under the Barrett administration, and it was called the community college movement. They didn't exist. If you lived anywhere in British Columbia outside of Hope, you were hooped if you wanted to do a university education. Barrett started developing these things called community colleges and the College of New Caledonia in Prince George was one of the early ones. Those of us who got involved that early really didn't see it as a movement. We saw it as an opposition from the sort of university ivory tower approach to education. We wanted to develop education that was more community based, that looked at what the needs in the community were and tried to meet them. I said, 'Hm, there's a job in Prince George. I like this idea of a post-secondary education that's focused on community.' Off we went. That was 1975 and we stayed there until 2005.

PW [00:03:49] It was probably a little bit of culture shock, moving to Prince George.

PR [00:03:53] It was, you know, and at the time, it's hard to think of it now. Now that we have a university in Prince George and a medical school. It's hard to conceive that when I moved up there in 1975, the only opportunity for kids, well, for everybody to get a university level course was from this handful of people who are now teaching at the college. It was a very different place, and it was a lot of fun trying to build an institution.

PW [00:04:27] Yes, I can imagine. While you were there, that's when you first got involved in the time it was CIEA [College Institutes Educators Association] was it?

PR [00:04:38] Oh, way before that. There wasn't any provincial organization. In the early seventies, these little community colleges all around the province started to figure out what sort of relations they wanted between the teaching staff and the employer, though they maybe not even thought of it that way. How are we going to regularize things? I thank Barrett for the community college movement. I'll also thank him for the labour statutes of the day, and the Labour Relations Board, because we had an option. The option was keep doing what we were doing, which was a society, an informal association to thrash out things with the employer or we could unionize. We decided to unionize and that would not have been possible without the Barrett legislation. Originally, it was just little locals getting organized all over the province. College of New Caledonia, Cariboo College in Kamloops, Malaspina in Nanaimo. My favourite one was out in Northwest. The academic faculty got organized, formed a union and they called themselves the Academic Workers' Union. I always thought that was the best name and I wish we could have adopted it all over the province, but we didn't. We got organized and certified, I would guess, oh my, '74 or '75.

PW [00:06:10] That was the college [unclear]—

PR [00:06:12] College of New Caledonia, and we were just a small independent union. We had no affiliation with anybody, not other faculty unions, certainly not the Federation of Labour. It was really a ground up movement and we grabbed the ball and decided to unionize and did!

PW [00:06:29] Great.

PR [00:06:30] After we did that, we found out, there were all these like-minded instructors and other colleges that had done similar things. We started trying to figure out how we can get together. The first attempt at that was a strange thing called the College Faculties Federation, which was organized, I think '73 to '75, and it lasted for about five years. It had no certifications; it didn't do bargaining; it didn't do much of anything. It was really more of a chance for a similar-minded faculty to get together, talk their unions, figure out what their problems were in their own workplace and with their own employer, and figure out what our commonalities were and how we could work together. Then that evolved in the early eighties into what we call the CIEA, C-I-E-A, the College Institute Educators Association. That was a first real attempt at seeing if we could get union services at a provincial level to support and help all these little locals. I mean, our local up in Prince George, we had maybe 150 members. These were tiny little outfits, and we didn't have any support. CIEA started doing things like providing support with grievances and arbitrations, started helping with negotiations—though that was still all local—and helped us organize lobbying activities for governments. That was a long dry spell, the Bennett years in the eighties, hard to get your voice heard and we needed to get together to do it. That was CIEA, and by the end of the eighties I ended up as president of that organization for a couple of years.

PW [00:08:31] At that time, were presidents—you still just worked out of your home base? You didn't have to come down for those?

PR [00:08:38] At that time, we managed to get a dues structure in place and get enough resources, so able to have actually—what did we have? I was the only officer that got release time and so I actually relocated my family to Vancouver for a couple of years to become president. None of the other officers had any sort of release time. This is all pro-bono. We had, at the time, two staff reps and two support staff, and we found ourselves, you know, trying to do more than any group of five people should try to do. It was interesting times and a lot of fun.

PW [00:09:22] Yeah, I bet. The next big step was deciding to run for well for MLA, right?

PR [00:09:31] It was.

PW [00:09:32] You returned to—obviously returned to Prince George.

PR [00:09:34] Back to Prince George. That was 1989. That's where I met Donna [Sacuta], because she and her spouse were very involved in local politics at that time, and the local NDP organization, that would not be gainsaid, twisted my arm up between my shoulder blades and got me to put my name forward as a nomination. Now, 1989 in Prince George, to get an NDP nomination, you are volunteering to be the next person to throw yourself under the logging truck. This was not a cinch seat. Not even a swing seat. This was a 'maybe we'll have a chance' seat. Well, as it turned out, Bill Vander Zalm turned it into a winning seat. I got elected in 1991 and then re-elected in 1996.

PW [00:10:28] I know. That was fantastic. Really.

PR [00:10:30] It was, it was a miracle.

PW [00:10:33] I was thinking to myself when I read this that you decided not to run again, and I was thinking that was it. You probably saw the writing on the wall, but whatever [unclear] of course, maybe you would have been number three, at the time. (laughter)

PR [00:10:47] No, not a chance. The sad part of it is, is that that part of the province is still pretty stony ground for the NDP. Lois Boone was the first NDP MLA from that area in, well, since the Barrett years. There was a MLA in Barrett's administration, Alf Nunweiler, who was from Prince George. The next one was Lois Boone, who was elected in '86—yeah, she was elected. Then we ran together, got elected together twice. That's been it; there's been nothing there since 2000.

PW [00:11:31] Not only was it fabulous and a breakthrough that you were elected, but then, my goodness, you had an amazing career in government with so many top-level portfolios.

PR [00:11:41] I don't know what it was. They saw me coming and said, 'How about this?' No, I sometimes—.

PW [00:11:47] Which one was your favourite?

PR [00:11:49] They were different. I know, I sometimes say, 'First I got to spend all the money, because I was Minister of Health, and then Minister of Education, and then I had to

figure out where to get the money, as Minister of Finance for two years. Health, I think, was the most interesting and it remains the most interesting. I look at the debates today, 2022, in the Legislature, about physician supply, how you get services where people need them. Those things have been going on for 30 years. I was Minister in '93 and some of these issues are still there. I liked it so much that after I got done with politics, I went back and taught at the University of British Columbia, in the political science program. One of the courses I taught was an advanced level graduate course in Canadian health policy. I got to use—probably the only political science teacher that ever had—that actually had administered the program he was talking about. I had a lot of fun doing that and I've always been very interested in health policy, from that. You know, I was an educator, so getting the chance to be Minister of Education for three plus years was like coming home. Did a lot of good things. Probably one of the things that I look back on with most satisfaction was the decision—I was started, when Glen Clarke was Premier—to make tuition for adult basic education students, free. We just eliminated tuition for people trying to complete a Grade 12 education who had missed it the first time around. My view was, why on earth should we charge them now for something that was free when they were a teenager? It wasn't that much of a hit to the Treasury. We got rid of it and, it's come and gone since then, but I think that policy has lasted. That's nice to look back on 25 years and say something you did has actually continued to help people in need to get that initial education done. Then, as I say, I wound up as Minister of Finance. In spite of all the talk to the contrary, those budgets, '99 and 2000, the NDP actually balanced two budgets when I was Minister of Finance. I don't see that in the history books, but it was satisfying to be able to do it, and to show that not only could we have a good head on our shoulders as far as health and education and social policy, but we could actually run a pop stand, and we did.

PW [00:14:40] One of my colleagues, when I mentioned I was going to be speaking to you, she said, 'Oh, he did such an amazing thing with HIV and AIDS.' That you were, that you basically took something on that was extremely unpopular at the time.

PR [00:14:55] Yes. It was.

PW [00:14:56] Yeah. Do you want to say a bit about that?

PR [00:14:57] Sure. I'm going to give credit to somebody who is still active in local politics. A woman named Marianne Alto. She's a councillor City of Victoria right now, but at the time she was an assistant to me in the Ministry of Health and she was sort of my lead political person on issues around HIV, AIDS and the whole gay community. This is the early '90s. You were talking, this is the time when if you went up and actually shook hands with somebody who was gay and had AIDS, you were being a brave person. It was wild. Our task in the Ministry of Health, was to turn that from that really nasty environment into something where we said, 'You got a disease, let's figure out how we deal with it. Let's empower you so your community can get through this plague and come out the other end.' We managed to do some good things. One of the things we did was snatch blood collection away from the Red Cross. This was not popular, but the Red Cross, for all that I love the name and donated blood to it many times over the years, had screwed up, very badly. We had an unsafe blood supply, and the fingers were pointing entirely at the gay community. That was an unfair rap, but they had really screwed up. After much discussion with other Ministers of Health, we created our own blood agency and took it away from them. I think it's been an improving, and now very high quality, blood service for Canada.

DS [00:16:46] I was keen to take you back a little bit to the days when you were organizing in the community college field and what were the issues that the college faculty were dealing with that caused them to decide to form unions?

PR [00:17:08] There was an interesting debate, and I'm not quite sure where it came from. I think part of it came from the community college movement itself. I mean, it was the '70s, we were all bright, bushy tailed idealists. We wanted to be part of the community, not be academics preaching to the community, and part of that, seemed to us, to be rooted in it. Part of that, particularly in a place like Prince George was, 'Hey, these guys are unions, and we should be, too.' That was part of it. The other thing was, even in the early days, there was pushback. I mean, Barrett, alas, left, in '75. Bennett came in. He had a Minister of Education named Pat McGeer. He had a Deputy Minister named [Walter] Hardwick. The two of them didn't think that unions ought to exist at colleges. In fact, they drafted the first Colleges Act that explicitly said, here's your options. We'll provide you a legislated association for your faculty, but it's not a union. Almost, I think, to a unit, all the little faculty associations—and all independent around the province—said, 'No, we're going to stay union. Thank you very much.' We really had a fight to retain union status only a few years after we'd achieved it. I think that sort of hardened, particularly activists around the province, in their view that this was a good organization. Maybe it's a little unusual, particularly in a place like Prince George where most of the unions are either trade or health workers, or whatever, that you got a bunch of PhDs forming a union. It served us well and I think people—well, they stuck with it, I know, and here we are.

DS [00:19:09] It was the issue of our professional workers?

PR [00:19:14] It was. That was where the government of the day, McGeer and Hardwick, wanted to draw the line. 'You're professionals. You can't be in a union.' 'Well,' we said, 'Well, actually we can. And we prefer it.' There's a corollary to that. You may remember in the late '80s, Bill Vander Zalm was Premier. He did his darndest to try to decertify the BCTF, using exactly the same arguments. 'You're professionals. You don't need to be in a union. We'll set up an association for you.' I, and others from the college movement were recruited by the BCTF to go around and talk to their locals and say, 'Look, not only can you be a union and a professional, it will serve you well.' They fought back that, and I was happy to be able to be part of that fight back.

DS [00:20:13] That was important that you were able to talk to teachers kind of on the same level?

PR [00:20:17] On the same level and say, 'I'm a professional. Here's all my bloody academic credentials. Here's what I do. I'm a professor. Oh, and by the way, I'm also the president of a union, and it works well for me.'

DS [00:20:29] What was the reaction of the traditional industrial labour movement to faculty members wanting to join a union?

PR [00:20:37] It probably took a while for them become totally comfortable with us. One of the things that really served us well in Prince George, though, was that the union we formed at the college had actually absorbed some of the BCGEU [British Columbia General Employees' Union] people who were teaching at the vocational school. When the college was established, it took on the vocational school plus university level courses and so we formed a union. Those guys who were GEU members said, 'Actually, we want to be

part of your union,' so they did. That served us well as a union and having an entree into more traditional workers organizations in Prince George.

DS [00:21:25] They embraced you, but they—

PR [00:21:27] They were still a little wary. I do like to say that our union included everybody from guys who taught welding to guys who taught philosophy—in one union. That was a good thing.

DS [00:21:39] At what point did CIEA, or whatever organization it was, affiliate to the larger labour bodies?

PR [00:21:47] Quite a while later. See, I was president of CIEA from '87 to '89 and we were working to get affiliation going, but I had not achieved that by the time I left. My successor, Ed Lavalle from Cap College [Capilano College], really was the push behind getting that part of the labour movement affiliated with the broader house of labour through a Fed [BC Federation of Labour] affiliation. That took a while. That wasn't until the early '90s.

DS [00:22:24] Was that hesitancy among the college faculty or the greater labour movement?

PR [00:22:30] I think, mostly among the college faculty. Remember, the BCTF wasn't part of the house of labour then either. I think both of us were sort of going 'Okay. We like a lot of the things the BC Fed is doing, particularly support for workers and against their employers.' There were probably two sticking points. One was, you know, some of those organizations were a little more rigid than what we were being good academic faculty and all. The second one was we had a strong part of our membership that didn't want to get partisan. Heck, why would you join the Fed if you didn't want to get a little partisan and fight for your issues in the political arena? Eventually, people came to terms with that, and the college faculty joined the Fed and I think have been a good part of it ever since.

DS [00:23:28] What was the relationship between the college faculty and the university professors?

PR [00:23:38] This was always fraught. On the one hand, those of us who were teaching university level courses around the province did our damndest to make sure that the students we were teaching, at a first or second year, when they went off to university, UVic [University of Victoria] or Simon Fraser, whatever, their credentials would be equivalent to any student that had started at those institutions. We had a high incentive to make sure quality was at a par, and eventually our colleagues at universities realized that we were doing that. There's no shortage of snobbism in academia. I'm sure there are people to this day in universities that will look down at college faculty and consider it a, quote, second rate sort of institution. On an individual level, we're people, we get along. Sometimes snobbery does work its way in.

PW [00:24:37] We were wondering, what is the relationship between the provincial ones and the Canadian Association of University Teachers [CAUT]? Do provincial ones affiliate to that or are they separate?

PR [00:24:48] I think FPSE [Federation of Post-Secondary Educators], which is the current union for college faculty, is affiliated with CAUT. So yeah, they work very closely together.

Actually, you know, that organization, FPSE, now has members who are both universities and colleges. College of New Caledonia is in there, but so is Vancouver Island University. So is Kwantlen Polytechnic University. So, is you know, whatever. That thing has evolved too, from something that originally was designed just to represent college faculty. Well, the institutions have evolved and so has that organization. Some of those barriers are getting broken down. We now have colleges around the province who are offering not only degrees but advanced degrees. Some of that snobbism is starting to go away, but you'll still find people out at Point Grey that think the world ends at Arbutus Street. (laughter)

DS [00:25:49] When you were early on in the years of the CNC [College of New Caledonia] Faculty Union Association, what kind of bread-and-butter issues were you bargaining for and what did you achieve?

PR [00:26:04] Boy, Donna, there was a long list, and we were starting from ground zero. We had at the time, probably eight or ten different unions who had bargained different contracts. We were trying to figure out what the commonalities were that you could bargain, even locally—just set a target and try to bargain locally. Some of them were the standard bread and butter issues, you know, representation, the right to be represented if you have a grievance, grievance processes. One of the issues that was there in the 1980s, and is still there now, is what we called back then, quote, regularization. I don't know what they call it now. The issue is this: colleges originally were just hiring full time faculty. A matter of fact, part time faculty didn't even exist in the legislation that set us up. Increasingly, institutions were saying, 'Well, those full time guys are expensive. Why don't we hire two- or three-part timers to do that job?' One of the issues that developed in the late '80s, and remains an issue to this day, is how you stop employers from breaking up work into little bits and pieces, and disadvantages employees, who are trying to do it. It was sort of an advance warning of what the gig economy has become in post-secondary education. It's gotten worse, not better, but the fight against it started back in the '80s.

DS [00:27:40] I seem to recall too, at CNC, that the support staff, did they unionize later than the faculty?

PR [00:27:48] Hmm. Probably about the same time. They had a sort of a fraught relationship. Eventually they organized, PPWC [Public Private Workers of Canada] organized them. I think they've moved over to CUPE now, are the CUPW [Canadian Union of Postal Workers] now?

DS [00:28:08] Well, I think they were AUCE [Association of College Employees] for a time, which has now become CUPE.

PR [00:28:15] OK, yeah. It was interesting. They were sort of, I don't know, off to the side of what—I mean, let's face it, they were pulp workers. This was a sideline for them, largely because they had a strong local organizer and got it. The longest strike the college there ever experienced was one led by support staff.

DS [00:28:41] It would be when they were—

PR [00:28:42] PPWC—and faculty, it was a real test of whether you meant what you said when you signed your union card as a faculty member.

DS [00:28:51] How did that play out?

PR [00:28:53] We stayed out for six weeks, and there was no strike pay—none. This was before a strike—we didn't have any strike funds. Some of the other faculty unions around the province chipped in and helped us with a hundred dollars here, a hundred dollars there. The majority, I would say two-thirds, stayed out. A third just couldn't handle it financially. They had to, you know, go in. It took a while for that to die down.

DS [00:29:21] Was there a split at all between the ex-trades teachers versus academic faculty?

PR [00:29:30] The ex-trades faculty knew what this was about. They'd been GEU. They understood this—even before GEU, they'd been involved in the construction trade. They understood all this stuff. Went on strike, 'Of course, we're out here. You get the fire barrel, I'll get the wood,' and away we went. The academic faculty, I think they had a good example in some of those people and helped us understand, yeah, this is tough, but this is how the movement works.

DS [00:30:05] Very educational, all around.

PR [00:30:06] It was indeed. (laughter)

DS [00:30:09] Were you involved at all during 1983 and Operation Solidarity?

PR [00:30:14] Sure. Yeah. I was—oh, I can't remember what role I was playing at that time, in the local faculty union up there. Yeah, we went out.

DS [00:30:27] Do you have any memories from Prince George?

PR [00:30:29] Not really. No. We were pretty much a sideline to it. I don't even remember any large rallies in Prince George.

DS [00:30:37] There were, but—

PR [00:30:38] Yeah, they were off to one side. It wasn't a big disruptor of the college. Let's be clear here, just a few days.

DS [00:30:48] It was summertime,

PR [00:30:50] Yeah. No, I think it dragged into fall for a while, didn't it Donna?

DS [00:30:55] It did. Yeah.

PR [00:30:56] I remember going out of class and, you know.

DS [00:30:58] October 15th was the Kelowna Accord.

PR [00:31:04] Oh, yes, ah, Jack, I remember you fondly. (laughter) I wasn't directly involved in that. No.

DS [00:31:14] I know we've seen in some of the Solidarity photos that we've collected, we've seen banners, but not in Prince George ones. Cap College—

PR [00:31:23] Yes.

DS [00:31:24] And some of the faculty there.

PR [00:31:27] Yeah. I think probably some of the locals in the Lower Mainland got more involved.

DS [00:31:32] I'm sure Ed Lavalle got more involved.

PR [00:31:34] Oh, hell, yeah. Oh, yes, absolutely.

DS [00:31:39] What was the transition then to FPSE? How did that—

PR [00:31:42] Oh, I wasn't actually involved in it. I just watched from the outside. I was in government by then. It was a movement, as I understand it, to try to get more centralized and coordinated stuff going, particularly in the bargaining area. I'm not sure it's got entirely accomplished. Post-secondary systems still bargained this weird mixture of central table and individual table, and at times the two don't necessarily coordinate very well, but I think that was the big movement. The other movement, I think, was a desire among the activists in that union to get more socially involved. I think everybody was pretty satisfied that they were getting the nuts and bolts of what they expected from a union organization, but they wanted a higher profile on things like gender issues, (unclear), Indigenous issues, whatever. FPSE has now developed, I would say, far more in line with other mainstream labour organizations.

PW [00:32:55] Okay. Well, the one thing that I'd just like to know what message you would give to young people today, either about entering politics, which is a dangerous sport, or becoming more active in the union, and accepting unions.

PR [00:33:13] As far as the politics go, I mentioned earlier in that my original response to my father's involvement was, no way. He's always been dragged away from the dinner table to deal with a constituent, 'And I want to talk to him.' It took me 40 years to get over that, but I did. What I discovered in provincial politics is there really were two varieties of MLA there, and I'm going to talk in a non-partisan way here. There were people who never wanted to do anything but politics. They'd run the NDP, or Liberal, or Conservative student association, and whatever. When they graduated, gone on and worked on somebody's campaign, and then become a staffer in some, whatever. That was their life. Then there's a whole 'nother group of MLAs who'd done many, many other interesting things. They've been nurses. They've run businesses. They've been teachers. My favourite is always Corky Evans, bloody horse logger, (laughter)— you know, all sorts of different things that they brought to the table, largely through activism at the community level, not necessarily partisan activism, but it made them want to get involved in making decisions for their community. There was almost like there are two groups here. Yeah, you had the parties, but you also had this divide within parties between those who saw politics as a life and those who saw politics as a temporary calling. I got to say, the public needs both— the ones who have been in it forever, know how things work, but you need the others that are rooted in community. For young people, I'd say, be active, get involved in your community. Don't think you have to be a minister. Do good at whatever level you find, and if it leads into elected office, that's great too. As far as the union movement and young people, boy, I keep seeing signs that maybe, just maybe, as the millennials turn into whatever is going to succeed them, that there's some realization that what their elders established in the union movement, the idea of collective representation, rather than just trying to do your own thing, has some value, real value, as they get abused and battered from this gig job to

that gig job. I have a daughter who is in the food industry. When she first got into it, I had to bite my tongue because she was not really a big fan of unions. She'd worked in union shops, and she worked independent. She was not happy with some of the union stuff. That's changed, as the twenties change into the thirties. Now in her early forties, she sees real advantages to having that sort of representation and being able to take collective action on issues that are affecting what you bring home from your job, and how you're treated on your job. I hope young people will increasingly become aware of that. It's a tough one because, God knows, the public discourse around unions is not particularly friendly right now, even though people's experience of them is very positive.

DS [00:36:49] Anything else that you thought that you wanted to talk about?

PR [00:36:52] Don't get me going, ten years in politics Donna! I'll tell you. How can I do this? You can sometimes tell what has stuck, by what people hang in their offices. I've lost track of how many different bills on it and got passed through the legislature, but I only ever hung two of them on my wall. One of them was the Access to Abortion Services Act, the so-called bubble zone legislation. I was Minister of Health when Gary Romalis, an abortion provider, was shot while he was having breakfast in his home. I, and some of the other Ministers, Penny Priddy, Colin Gabelmann said, 'This cannot stand.' We organized and got the Access to Abortion Services Act introduced, passed. It got appealed all the way up to the Supreme Court of Canada and is the law today. That helped tamp down some of that violence around abortion services. The other one is called the Medicare Protection Act and, I got to say, it's just as essential now as it was back in 1994 when we passed it. Those are two things. There is one that you may know from being from Prince George. When you're doing land use, I advocated for including in the park, a piece of land that nobody's ever been to; it's the trail that Alexander Mackenzie took when he was going to the Pacific. He went from the Peace River watersheds to the Fraser watershed, and he went through a series of little, small lakes called Arctic, Portage, and Pacific Lakes. They're up down a (unclear) valley. It's a hell of a job to get there. I went up there with my daughter and camped for three days one time, and that's now a provincial park. I have a picture of that on my wall. Some north stuff, some health stuff—some of the things I remember.

DS [00:39:02] How have you survived COVID?

PR [00:39:04] I don't know how I've survived it until I come out of it. I think it's taken things away. I mean, let's be clear. I'm 77 now. This whole thing started when I was 75. Hazel and I had a pretty long list of things we sort of would like to do, or whatever, and all that ground to a screeching halt. We're only now starting to say, 'What did we miss?'—because some of it we'll never get back—and 'What are we going to do from here?' Yeah, we got through it. I mean, I'm still married, I don't know how, and we still have our two-and-a-half acres in the country. That gave us lots of stuff to do even if we were locked down; but we missed stuff and we're not going to get it back.

DS [00:39:57] How do you feel that this NDP government has handled the COVID?

PR [00:40:02] As well as can be done. No, I really do. I remember in the early days of this, Bonnie Henry became my hero almost instantly, though I don't understand her taste in shoes. I just I don't get it. I think I'm the wrong gender. (laughter) I thought she just handled it brilliantly and I thought that John Horgan did exactly the right thing. Not trying to be the face of the government and saying, 'Here's my Health Minister, here's the Public Health Officer, they're handling it.' They'll talk to you and I, as Premier, will step in when I

need to, but don't be the everyday target of COVID. I thought they did that very well and their decisions, I think, have been, by and large, excellent.