

Missing women probe becomes sad spectacle: Penny-pinching provincial government has left its most vulnerable citizens out in the cold

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By Ian Mulgrew

The drumming from dozens of protesters blocking Georgia and Granville was reduced to a dull thump in the federal courtroom eight floors above as the Missing Women's Inquiry got underway.

On its first day of evidentiary hearings, former attorney-general Wally Oppal's one-man commission into the disappearance of the women who became victims of convicted serial killer ... is mired in controversy.

The Assembly of First Nations pulled out Tuesday, with National Grand Chief Shawn Atleo denouncing it from the middle of the road: "We are no longer confident the inquiry will bring justice for the families of missing and murdered women in Canada."

He wasn't alone.

David Eby, executive director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, stood nodding — his organization withdrew a week ago, saying the government had stacked the deck by lavishing resources on police and bureaucrats while restricting support for non-governmental groups and victims' families.

"This inquiry has unravelled to the point it is nothing more than a whitewash," B.C. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip intoned before leading a chant for Oppal to "resign."...

The "missing" have become the groups — most of whom Oppal thought deserved funding for lawyers in order to fully participate in the commission, but who were out on the rainy streets chanting, "Justice Denied."

It was a sad spectacle....