

Protecting the jobs of workers fleeing violence

In 2016 domestic violence leave was enacted in both Manitoba and Ontario. But here in BC, the situation for women, girls and LGBTQ community members is dire. Currently there are no provisions in place to protect these workers from losing their jobs if they are required to deal with moving themselves out of an unsafe situation, or deal with physical consequences of intimate partner violence (formerly known as domestic violence) during working hours. The BC Federation of Labour recommends that similar legislation be enacted in BC to level the playing field for these workers.

BACKGROUND

The BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel report published in November of 2016 found that between January of 2010 and December of 2015 roughly 13,000 people per year sought police intervention to stop physical or emotional violence at the hands of an intimate partner (current or former). The report also showed that during this time 12 people dies on average each year due to reported intimate partner violence. Eighty percent of these victims died in their own home.

It should be noted that this report includes only the instances that were reported to police, and that according to Statistics Canada only thirty percent of women who had experienced spousal violence reported the incident to police. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>

THE WAY FORWARD FOR BC

The BC Government is in a position now to enact legislation to take action on the structural difficulties that are faced by women, girls, and trans individuals who are trying to remove themselves from dangerous situations.



Manitoba led the way with legislation effective as of 2016 defining persons who are eligible to receive intimate partner violence leave as someone who:

- lives or has lived with him or her in a spousal, conjugal or intimate relationship;
- has or had a family relationship with him or her, in which they have lived together;
- has, or previously had, a family relationship with him or her, in which they have not lived together;
- has or had a dating relationship with him or her, whether or not they have ever lived together;
- is the other biological or adoptive parent of his or her child, regardless of their marital status or whether they have ever lived together.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The BC Federation of Labour recommends that the BC government:

1. That the province enact legislation to support people experiencing intimate partner violence using the best practices from both the Manitoba and Ontario Legislations, and consultations with community organizations doing work in this area.
2. That the legislation include sexual assault, and that special consideration and consultation with Indigenous communities, LGBTQ communities, and low wage communities be included in the making of the legislation, with an understanding that a lack of pay equity for these workers can be a factor that causes them to stay in unsafe living situations.
3. That no less than 10 days paid leave per year be included, with at least 17 weeks total leave time.
4. That the BC legislation not discriminate against the length of service of an employee in a workplace, making intimate partner violence leave available to any employee.



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The British Columbia Federation of Labour represents over 500,000 members working in every corner of the province, and in every sector of the economy.

The BCFED has a long and proud history of fighting for the rights of all working people.

The goals of the BCFED are best exemplified by its slogan:
“What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.”

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