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Releases

BC budget helps working families close the gap by lowering costs. Let’s help raise wages, too: BCFED

Today’s provincial budget will provide welcome relief for working families struggling with rising costs, the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) said today.

BCFED president Sussanne Skidmore said the budget continues to invest in critical services like health care, education and seniors supports, demonstrating that the government has been listening closely to what the public needs. “Now is not the time for cuts and belt-tightening. We’re happy to see this government is investing in people,” said Skidmore.

The new BC Builds program will quickly create new homes targeted to working people, she said. “BC ?Builds is a good start for creating more affordable homes so workers can stay in their communities,” said Skidmore.

While measures like the temporary increase to the BC Family Benefit and the new one-time BC Electricity Affordability Credit will help, the BCFED said working people need more long-term relief. “The government is on the right track by tackling affordability, as working people struggle with rising costs for necessities like groceries and housing. BC’s lowest-paid workers need to see real wage increases and a reduction in their household costs,” said Skidmore.

The government can take steps to immediately improve affordability for families, said BCFED secretary-treasurer Hermender Singh Kailley. “We need to close the gap between the minimum wage and the living wage. We can start by implementing a pay equity strategy to end pay discrimination, which will boost earnings for many of BC’s lowest-paid workers.”

The budget includes a modest increase in funding for the Employment Standards Branch. “We think the government should seize an opportunity to reimagine the Employment Standards Branch and the way it delivers services to working people,” said Skidmore. “Complaints need to be addressed faster to get owed wages back into workers’ pockets, and the branch must engage in proactive strategies that prevent violations in the first place.”

“We are pleased to see continued investments to build required capital infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing communities,” said Skidmore. She pointed to the public transit plan released last Friday by the BCFED and the BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives as another opportunity for capital investment that would help businesses and workers. “Building great public transit provides an economic boost while saving families a lot of money, and creating thousands of great, well-paying jobs,” she said.