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Releases

BCFED calls on province to put working people and jobs first in tariff response

BC budget rejects austerity, holds the line on services families need

(Victoria) With Donald Trump implementing across-the-board tariffs on Canadian exports, it's more important than ever to protect working people and their jobs, the BCFED said today.

"Working people are already facing tough times, and these tariffs threaten to make them a lot harder. So it's good to see the BC budget reject austerity, and continue to build on our strengths," said BCFED President Sussanne Skidmore.

"The way to build economic strength in response to this threat is to invest in working people and good jobs. That's the backbone of BC's economy."

BCFED Secretary-Treasurer Hermender Singh Kailley highlighted the budget's provisions for fast-tracking major resource projects and building transit, transportation, health and education infrastructure. "These are welcome steps. And they should be backed by more funding for skills training, so we have the workforce to meet our economy's needs," he said. He added that BC's public post-secondary institutions are in urgent need of support, as they face particular challenges due to federal international student caps.

“As the government moves to shape and implement its tariff response measures, we’ll be making it clear that the priority must be to protect workers and defend jobs. And any support for business must be explicitly tied to preserving employment,” Skidmore said.

She noted the government has refused to slash the services that support strong communities and BC families. “We know there’s real fiscal pressure on the government. But British Columbians made it clear in the last election they want government to do more, not less, to help them right now,” she said. “And in times of uncertainty, people rely on these services more than ever.”

As part of the province’s tariff response, Kailley urged the government to take another look at the budgets for the Employment Standards Branch and the Labour Relations Board.

“The employer-employee relationship is the most important relationship in our economy, and these two agencies are vital to keeping that relationship healthy for both union and non-union workplaces. Yet they’re both drastically underfunded, with outrageous wait times.

“By budget standards, a significant increase in funding for each board would cost very little. But it would have a major impact on strengthening workplace stability and certainty —and certainty is something our economy badly needs right now,” he said.

“Times like these require tough choices, and we’re glad the government isn’t choosing to add to the precarity so many workers face,” Skidmore said. “We’re going to keep pushing them to do more to strengthen the foundation of prosperity in our province: BC workers in good jobs.”