December 13, 2021 |

Releases

“Injured workers deserve better”: BCFED launches campaign to fix Workers’ Compensation Board

(Unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories — Vancouver, BC) A major new campaign by BC’s labour movement aims to ensure urgently-needed changes at the province’s Workers’ Compensation Board.

“It’s been more than two years since the BC government received Janet Patterson’s report detailing major problems throughout workers’ compensation,” BCFED President Laird Cronk said. “It exposed a system that too often acts like a for-profit insurance company, instead of an ally in an injured worker’s recovery.”

The campaign website, at www.WorkersDeserveBetter.ca, will highlight injured workers’ stories of unjust, hurtful and even dangerous treatment by the WCB — stories Cronk said are all too common. And it will provide a way for supporters to call on the provincial government to take immediate action, including:

- creating a Fair Practices Commission independent of the WCB to deal with complaints and implement solutions
- removing binding policy provisions so decisions can be made on the merits of each case

- ensuring an equal balance of worker and employer representatives on the WCB Board of Directors
- mandating vocational rehabilitation to get workers back to real and sustainable jobs
- ending discriminatory barriers to compensation for psychological injury and chronic pain
- paying interest to workers when the WCB wrongly denies them benefits, resulting in a lengthy delay
- ensuring the WCB makes the changes set out in the Patterson report to create a worker-centered approach.

Patterson's report, drawing on input from more than 1,000 workers and their families, found that the WCB uses a cookie-cutter approach to injured workers, often ignoring medical advice and rushing them back to work before they're ready.

"The report also confirmed what we've been hearing for years: that the WCB treats many injured workers as adversaries, with a troubling lack of personal or cultural respect," said Secretary-Treasurer Sussanne Skidmore.

Skidmore said unions are encouraged by recent signals from the government that changes are coming, including a December 8 statement by Labour Minister Harry Bains. "We're looking forward to hearing more. But we want to be sure those changes reflect the fact that the BC Liberals slashed workers' compensation in 2002. And for nearly 20 years, employers have been enjoying artificially-low premiums at the expense of injured workers."

"The BC NDP government has made some welcome changes. But we're long overdue for the kind of reform that restores balance to the WCB, and puts injured workers where they belong: at the heart of workers' compensation," Cronk said.

-30-

Background:

- Report of the Workers' Compensation System Review led by Janet Patterson
- Injured Workers Deserve Better, the BCFED's recommendations for WCB changes