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Releases

BCFED encouraged by province’s 10-day paid sick leave option, questions remain on who pays and who’s covered

(Unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories — Vancouver, BC) British Columbia could be on the verge of a breakthrough in protecting workplace and community health if the provincial government proceeds with its 10-day option for paid sick leave, BCFED President Laird Cronk said today.

Responding to the BC government’s announcement today of three options for the paid sick leave plan it will introduce this January, Cronk emphasized that the benefits go beyond protecting workplaces from infectious disease and containing outbreaks. “Right now, the lack of paid sick leave is putting strain on the healthcare system and amplifying inequalities between workers,” he said. “Over half of BC workers, and nearly 90 percent of low-wage workers —disproportionately women and racialized workers — don’t have paid sick leave.”

In August, the BCFED released a report that looked at the success jurisdictions around the world have had with paid sick leave, as well as recent research into its impacts. The report recommends the province guarantee employer-paid sick leave that is seamless, applies to all workers, replaces a workers’ full wages and ensures sick workers can’t be fired for staying home.

As part of the report, BCFED commissioned new public opinion research by Research Co. that found 86 percent of British Columbians surveyed support the 10-day BCFED plan, which sees workers start with three days at the outset of the year and up to seven more accrued depending on hours worked.

“At least 10 days of employer-paid sick leave is the norm throughout the OECD,” Cronk said. “The federal government is poised to introduce 10 days of paid sick leave in workplaces it regulates. And it’s a modest amount when you consider the contagion period of the flu and other illnesses, not to mention self-isolation for COVID.”

He said workers are still waiting to hear details on who the BC government’s plan will cover and how it will be paid. And he strongly suggested the government scrap its planned 90-day waiting period. “Infectious diseases don’t have 90-day waiting periods, and neither should paid sick leave,” he said.

Cronk said whatever paid sick leave program the province chooses should meet one simple test: “Does it mean a worker who wakes up feeling sick can stay home without worrying about paying the bills, so they don’t put colleagues and their families at risk? That’s what really counts.” He encouraged workers to speak out through the provincial government’s online survey at engage.gov.bc.ca/paidsickleave.

Background:

- Read An Equitable Recovery: The Case for Paid Sick Leave as a Right of Employment in BC here.
- Read Research Co.’s polling factum here.
- Tell the BC government you support 10 days of paid sick leave here.