May 13, 2021 |

Releases

Labour movement issues boycott, pulls millions of dollars in business from Hilton Metrotown and Pacific Gateway Hotels in support of workers

(Unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories — Vancouver, BC) The BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) is calling on the public to boycott the Hilton Metrotown and Pacific Gateway Hotel as UNITE HERE Local 40 workers battle draconian layoffs and wage and benefit roll backs. Representing nearly fifty affiliated unions with some 500,000 members across the province, the BCFED is asking its members and the broader public not to cross picket lines or do business with the two hotels.

“Our affiliated unions are cancelling bookings and avoiding future events worth millions of dollars a year,” said Laird Cronk, President of the BCFED. “It is shameful that these hotels are drawing on government COVID relief money and wage subsidies while they fire or refuse to call back workers and seek to undermine decades of worker gains.”

UNITE HERE Local 40 has launched the BC Unequal Women campaign to call attention to how women, especially racialized women, in the hospitality industry are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The hotel industry is using the pandemic as an excuse to get rid of long-term workers and exploit replacement workers with lower wages and fewer benefits. According to the Canada

Emergency Wage Subsidy registry, both hotel owners have drawn on this government support.

“Nearly 50,000 hotel workers lost their jobs when the pandemic hit. Hotels have been opposing giving workers, mostly racialized women, their jobs back and the government won’t require it,” said Zailda Chan, UNITE HERE Local 40 president. “This boycott sends a powerful message that the public expects hotels to return their long-term workforce to their pre-pandemic jobs when the work comes back. No one should lose their job and be replaced because of a temporary crisis."

The BC government has provided over $130 million to the hotel and hospitality sector on top of nearly $400 million in recovery grants to businesses with no requirements for workers to get their jobs back during the recovery; this despite commitments in August, 2020 to do just that. Meanwhile, the federal government continues to do business with the Pacific Gateway Hotel as a site for COVID-19 isolation, despite the labour dispute.

“I’ve cleaned rooms at Hilton Metrotown for nearly 15 years and raised my son on this job. Hilton Metrotown fired 97 of my co-workers and locked-out the rest of us,” said Jaswinder Bassi, a laid-off room attendant from Hilton Metrotown. “I’m worried I could be terminated next. We deserve the right to go back to our jobs because we’ve given so much of our lives to our hotel.”

-30-

Media contact:

Jonathan Sas
Communications Director,
BCFED
604-861-4321
media@bcfed.ca

Stephanie Fung
Communications,
UNITE HERE Local 40

604-928-7356

sfung@unitehere40.com