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Releases

BCFED welcomes new investments in health care, caring services, and infrastructure; undaunted in continued fight for paid sick leave

(Unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories — Vancouver, BC)- Today's provincial budget makes important investments in health care, childcare, affordable housing and infrastructure, the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) said today. The budget, however, fails to ensure paid sick days and remove the untenable decision for workers between staying home sick and paying the bills during a pandemic.

"In this time of deadly variants and rising cases, ensuring worker safety with paid sick leave is imperative," BCFED President Laird Cronk said. "Paid sick leave saves lives. We will continue to advocate for the over half of BC workers, and nearly 90% of low-wage workers, that don't have paid leave and are at higher risk of exposure."

Lower-income workers are being hit hardest by COVID-19. These workers are predominantly women and racialized and are least likely to have financial resources to miss work.

Budget 2021 includes key investments that will drive job growth with significant capital spending on health and physical infrastructure, but also significant new resources for public programs and services

in mental health, childcare, and free transit for children under twelve. While the government continues to provide supports for businesses to weather the pandemic, how that funding will benefit workers remains unclear.

“The investments in the budget position BC for the post-pandemic recovery,” Cronk added. “For that recovery to be equitable, for it to be meaningful to working people, requires supports and re-hiring guarantees for workers, not just business.”

There remains much to do to address long-existing gaps and inequities in BC exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. BC’s strong fiscal position and billions in unspent contingencies leave leeway to deliver on paid sick days, employment standards enforcement, and other key priorities for workers.

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