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Releases

Workers hit with temporary layoff extension need guarantee they'll go back to work: BCFED

(Unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam territories — Vancouver, BC) — With employers gaining a newly-extended temporary layoff period, the province must now ensure those laid-off workers have the right to return to their jobs when the layoff ends, BC Federation of Labour president Laird Cronk said today.

"This economic recovery can't be at the cost of workers," he said.

"We believe there were better options than a blanket extension of the temporary layoff period. But now that the decision's been made, we need to make sure workers affected by the extension have a right to go back to their jobs."

The BC government announced this afternoon it has lengthened the temporary layoff period for up to 24 weeks, a 50-percent increase. The new provision will expire on August 30.

Cronk said the BCFED will continue its push to ensure workers subject to temporary layoff have the right of recall. Recall rights would ensure laid off workers are rehired if work becomes available before the temporary layoff period expires. It also prevents an employer from replacing them with other workers. Neither of these protections currently exist in the Employment Standards Act.

“If employers are getting more time to get their business back on its feet, it’s only fair that workers have the right to return to their jobs when that period ends,” Cronk said. “Employers argued an extension would help them bring their employees back — so let’s make sure they do.”

Not all employers are treating their workers fairly, he added. He pointed to the Four Points by Sheraton Vancouver Airport hotel, which not only fired its employees, but refused to honour its legal obligation to compensate them for layoff. He emphasized he has seen no indication the hotel is closing permanently.

“We have every level of government working to create programs to keep workers in their jobs and employees being asked to give up some rights so they can eventually get back to work. And now we have an employer firing workers without compensation.

“It’s not a great look for employers to be asking for help to keep their businesses going while you have an employer behaving like this.”

Cronk called on the provincial government to add the right of recall to the Employment Standards Act as soon as possible.