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Releases

WCB should cover workers who contract COVID-19 at work, British Columbians say in survey

(Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver BC) British Columbians support stronger workplace health and safety protection and Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) coverage for workers who contract COVID-19 by a wide margin, according to a survey conducted by polling firm Stratcom for the BC Federation of Labour.

Asked if the WCB should provide coverage for workers infected with the virus on the job, four out of every five respondents agreed. And 76.4 percent supported better compensation for workers who are injured or get sick on the job. The survey of 2,003 British Columbians was conducted from May 14 to 25.

"There's a new awareness of the critical importance of workplace health and safety coming out of this pandemic," said BCFED president Laird Cronk. "British Columbians overwhelmingly want to know they'll be safe at work, and see workers properly compensated if they contract COVID-19. They also want to see workers' compensation improved overall."

The results come as the WCB is consulting on adding COVID-19 to its list of occupational diseases. That measure acknowledges that workers are at a high risk of contracting the disease in their workplaces, and workers can count on what WCB calls "presumptive coverage" to support their

illness claim, unless the evidence proves otherwise.

“We have to do right by these workers,” said Cronk. “Right now, the onus is on sick workers to prove workplace exposure while they are battling the symptoms of COVID-19, even if they work in essential economic sectors, which can be difficult at best.”

“Presumptive coverage means we aren’t forcing sick workers to jump through unnecessary hoops to receive worker’s compensation at a time when they need to devote their full attention to their health.”

COVID-19 is already covered as a workplace illness by WCB and presumptive coverage itself does not lead to additional costs for employers.

“Now is the time for employers to double down on safety in the workplace, per WCB requirements and guidance,” adds Cronk. Asked if their employers were doing enough to protect them from COVID-19, fewer than half of employees who responded reported their employer was doing everything they needed to protect them at work.

“Working together to improve workplace safety is the solution to keeping workers healthy and holding this virus at bay,” Cronk said. “And workers need to know that if they do get sick because of their job, the WCB will have their backs.”

These questions were part of a larger poll on a range of topics for the BC Federation of Labour. This online poll by Stratcom has a balanced sample of 2,003 BC adults, statistically weighted to match the gender, age, region and proportion of Chinese mother tongue in BC as per the 2016 Census. While online polls don’t report margin of error, a similar sized probability sample would have a margin of error of +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20.

Strategic Communications Inc. (Stratcom) is an award-winning consulting firm that has been designing and implementing strategic research, communications and message development since 1991 for not-for-profit organizations, charities, unions, professional associations, regulatory agencies, governments and government agencies.

Questions from Stratcom survey conducted May 14–25, 2020