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Releases

Economic recovery for everyone means taking gender into account, says BCFED

(Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver BC) - The pandemic has affected British Columbians in very different ways depending on their gender, and an equitable economic recovery requires the provincial government to see BC through that lens, the BC Federation of Labour said today.

Among the findings of their report, titled *Rebuilding With Equity*, the BCFED points out that women have taken on much more of the additional domestic workload imposed by the economic shutdown; that they predominate in many of the front-line sectors most at risk of exposure; and that they've experienced increased domestic and workplace violence.

"COVID-19 has been a magnifying glass for all of our divisions of wealth, privilege and power," said BCFED secretary-treasurer Sussanne Skidmore. "So although it's given us a clearer picture of BC's economic and social inequities around gender, it's also made those inequities worse."

Skidmore added that inequality is often magnified along other dimensions, such as race, Indigenity, sexual and gender identity, and ability. For example, the overall pay gap for women means they must work 26 percent more to receive the same pay as men. But that figure rises to 35 percent for Indigenous women, 41 percent for Black women, 43 percent for women of colour in general, and a staggering 46 percent for women with disabilities.

Transgender women also face economic inequity, and while Canada-specific statistics won't be available until next year, one US study found that 26 percent of trans women lost their jobs after transitioning.

“That’s why our province doesn’t need just a gender lens on this recovery, but an intersectional gender lens — one that shows how these factors interact.”

The report, which the BCFED has submitted to the province’s Economic Recovery Task Force, recommends the province adopt a wide range of measures to address women’s safety, economic security and participation in BC’s civic and economic life.

The recommendations include such steps as:

- a rapid move to universal $10-a-day childcare
- pay equity legislation
- wider application of Community Benefits Agreements for infrastructure projects
- stable funding for the BC Centre for Women in the Trades
- permanent infrastructure to protect the safety of sex workers
- more protection and clearer status for migrant workers
- increases to income assistance and disability assistance rates
- stronger employment standards protection for precarious workers and gig workers.

“We like to talk about what an unprecedented time this is, but this pandemic has at least one thing in common with past crises. And that’s the fact that its impacts are greater if you’re already on the short end of BC’s many disparities,” Skidmore said.

“An intersectional gender equity lens will let us see that a lot more clearly. And it’ll also let us chart a path forward toward an economy that genuinely works for everyone.”

The full document is available at https://bcfed-d7.ddev.site/recovery-for-all/gender-equity.