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Releases

BCFED welcomes WCB decision on presumption, calls for faster implementation and more complete coverage

(Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver BC) – BC's labour movement is pleased with the recent Workers Compensation Board (WCB) announcement that COVID-19 will be added to Schedule 1 of the *Workers Compensation Act*, BCFED president Laird Cronk said today.

"It's an important step," he said, "and putting this into place is critical."

The measure, known as presumptive coverage, will mean "workers who contract this disease won't need to jump through unnecessary hoops to prove their work-related illness," Cronk said.

The board expects to finalize presumptive coverage within six months instead of the more typical 18 to 24 months – but Cronk says workers need it now.

"We're glad to hear they're expediting presumptive coverage. We realize the board is moving quickly, and six months is fast compared to the usual process. But for workers currently fighting this disease this is critical today," he said. As of April 29, there are 317 COVID-19-related claims, with health care, social services, manufacturing, retail and education services accounting for most of them.

"These essential workers shouldn't have to go to the effort of proving their infection is work-related, at a time when they should be focusing on their health and their families while recovering from this

terrible disease.

“The BC government’s emergency powers give it the authority to swiftly act to protect workers – both the essential workers we’ve asked to show up throughout this pandemic, and those who return to work as we enter the next phase,” he said. “It’s time to use those powers.”
That also includes closing the gap in coverage for workers who stay home and self-isolate because of symptoms, as government has asked them to, Cronk noted.

Cronk said BCFED will continue working with the government and the WCB to ensure presumptive coverage as quickly as possible. And he encourages workers to exercise their right to file claims for COVID-19.