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Releases

Ensuring WCB coverage for essential workers is critical: BCFED

(Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver BC) — “You don’t leave your wounded soldiers on the battlefield,” BCFED president Laird Cronk said today, adding “Essential workers who become symptomatic with COVID-19 deserve WCB coverage.”

The provincial government has designated a broad range of industries — from healthcare and first responders, to food production, transportation and retail sales, to manufacturing and construction and more — as essential to the functioning of the province's supply chains.

“Workers in these sectors continue bravely doing their jobs, to ensure the rest of us can stay home and defeat this pandemic,” said Cronk. The BC government must in return ensure that essential workers who become ill with COVID-19 receive WCB coverage during their illness, he said. This measure, called presumptive coverage, would recognize that essential workers are considered at high risk for exposure while at their workplaces.

Almost exactly one year ago, the province added presumptive coverage for emergency dispatchers, nurses and health-care aids who experience post-traumatic stress disorder, ensuring they can receive WCB compensation without having to prove their condition was caused by their work. “It’s time to extend the same respect to essential workers as they risk their safety for all of us during this pandemic,” said Cronk.

As of April 15, WCB has approved 43 COVID-19 related claims filed by workers, with another 163 still pending, according to the agency's statistics. Many more will certainly come, Cronk said. "Workers need the confidence of knowing they will get the compensation they deserve without jumping through burdensome hoops to prove workplace exposure while they are ill."

The BCFED wrote to the provincial government on April 8, urging them to act quickly during this provincial state of emergency and enact presumptive WCB coverage for essential workers. "The province is asking essential workers to have all of our backs during this crisis and in return we must have their backs by ensuring workplace safety and, when needed, WCB coverage during their time of crisis," said Cronk.