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Releases

Rent and mortgage relief, preventing evictions, needed to support workers through COVID-19 economic downturn

(Coast Salish territory; Vancouver, BC) - As rent and mortgage payments come due at the end of the month, the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) is calling on all levels of government to co-ordinate and prevent evictions and mortgage foreclosures to ensure no one is removed from their homes in BC due to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, BCFED is advocating that Canada follow the lead of other jurisdictions including France and consider rent and mortgage relief, at least until access to income supports and employment insurance can be accessed.

“People are worried about making rent or mortgage payments, about keeping their homes, the last thing we need is folks facing eviction” said BCFED President, Laird Cronk. “We have the fiscal resources and moral obligation to take these pressing economic realities off the table, and allow people to focus on social distancing during this public health emergency.”

The federal government recently announced a package of measures to ensure the economic security of workers, many of which respond to the needs outlined by BC’s labour movement. It is yet unclear whether Service Canada will get the resources they badly need to help smoothly administer access to Employment Insurance and other supports as the need grows.

BCFED is now asking the province to move quickly to fill in key gaps and ensure this crisis doesn't exacerbate existing inequities. "We are encouraged that BC will be legislating job protection for workers who take sick leave", added Laird. "BC now has the opportunity to supplement the federal programs and income supports with bold investments." The BCFED also sees an opportunity to strengthen vital public services, especially for those already experiencing poverty and homeless.

BCFED continues to call for proactive guidance from government and WorkSafeBC towards employers on their duties and obligations to perform risk assessments and keep workplaces safe during a pandemic. This includes highlighting the right of workers to refuse unsafe work, the need for exposure control plans, increasing WCB safety inspections, and allowing workers to work from home as much as possible.

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