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Releases

BC Federation of Labour welcomes consultation on paid domestic and sexual violence leave

Vancouver-Today, the BC NDP government announced a consultation on paid domestic and sexual violence leave. “The BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) welcomes the consultation and will use the opportunity to strongly advocate for employers to provide at least 10 days paid leave to their workers,” said Sussanne Skidmore, BCFED secretary treasurer. “Domestic, intimate partner and sexual violence reaches beyond the home and into the workplace and providing this support will ensure effected individuals have financial and job security.”

Paid leave can mean the difference between someone staying in a violent situation to pay the bills or having the protections in place financially that they need to leave their abuser. “Those who have experienced violence need to be able to access supports and services, like medical attention, attending counselling or finding a new home, without worrying about a disruption in pay,” said Skidmore.

“Advocates have told us that when people start a new job, or experience a disruption in pay, that’s often when the violence gets worse,” said Skidmore. Pay disruptions can trigger violent events because abusers may closely monitor and control the finances and schedule of the people they abuse. For this reason, the BCFED maintains that workers need immediate access to paid leave

without a qualification period, and that it should be a standalone leave, not combined with other types of leave such as sick days.

BC needs to catch up to the curve on paid leave for survivors of violence. Most other Canadian provinces already require paid leave. The federal government and provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island all provide paid leave.

Providing paid leave is also an important step on the road to achieving gender equity. A shocking one-in-three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Women in BC still take home smaller paycheques than men with comparable education and training, and more than 50% of single mothers in our province live in poverty. “It’s time for BC to eliminate the barriers that are preventing us from achieving full gender equity in our province,” said Skidmore. “This is a good start but there’s more we must do.”

In addition to advocating for paid leave, the BCFED is working with our affiliated unions to ensure changes to the prevention of violence regulation will include a requirement for all employers to provide supports for workers experiencing domestic and intimate partner violence.