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Releases

Universal, single-payer pharmacare plan the best solution to ensure all Canadians can afford prescription drugs, BCFED tells Ottawa’s advisory council

Vancouver - With millions of Canadians unable to afford to pay for vital prescription drugs to keep them alive and healthy, the BC Federation of Labour says it’s time for concerted national action through the cooperation of all federal, provincial and territorial governments to address a growing crisis.

“Canada is the only developed country in the world with a universal health care program that doesn’t include universal prescription drug coverage,” says BCFED President Irene Lanzinger. “And everyone here knows someone who isn’t able to afford to take their medication as prescribed.

“The facts are clear about the magnitude of the problem,” says Lanzinger. “About one out of three working British Columbians—close to 800,000 people—lack employer-funded prescription drug coverage.

“BC also has the highest percentage of precarious, low-paying part-time workers of the major provinces. The inequality gap here between the rich and the poor is staggering, and it puts the high cost of many prescription drugs beyond the financial reach of hundreds of thousands more workers.”

Lanzinger says the BC labour movement believes one option stands out as the best path for change. “A single-payer, universal prescription drug plan would ensure that no matter where Canadians live and work, everyone with a health card would have coverage for their prescription medications’” she says.

This evening a special federal advisory council chaired by Dr. Eric Hoskins, will hold a community consultation on a national prescription drug plan in downtown Vancouver, which Lanzinger will be attending. The Federation outlined its recommendations in a letter sent to the council today.