November 23, 2017 |

Releases

BCFED urges Fair Wages Commission to reach $15/hour by January 2019 and eliminate exemptions

Vancouver – The BC Federation of Labour is urging the Fair Wages Commission to set a swift timeline for reaching a $15/hour minimum wage and to eliminate discriminatory exemptions.

“Now is the time to be bold and to do the right thing for workers in BC,” said Irene Lanzinger, president of the BC Federation of Labour. “Low-wage workers cannot wait. The cost the living keeps going up, and workers and their families are falling further and further behind.”

The BCFED put forward three main recommendations for the Commission to consider:

• Reach a $15 per hour minimum wage by January 2019.
• Eliminate all exemptions to minimum wage laws.
• Make the Fair Wages Commission a permanent body to oversee the transition to a living wage and provide ongoing monitoring of wage levels and employment standards in BC.

“We need to get to a $15 per hour wage quickly, and we need to eliminate all exemptions to the minimum wage,” said Lanzinger. “The existence of exemptions opens the door to exploitation and abuse of vulnerable workers. The minimum wage must be just that - the minimum wage a person can be paid for any kind of work in the province of British Columbia.”

The BCFED submission outlines three categories where the minimum wage does not apply to employees: liquor servers, farmworkers, and caregivers.

The BCFED also recommends that the Fair Wages Commission be made into a permanent body with an expanded mandate to oversee the transition to a living wage, provide an annual review of wage rates, and be empowered to make recommendations on employment standards gaps.

“The former BC Liberal government gutted employment standards and undermined enforcement in BC,” said Lanzinger. “Workers are not only subject to poverty wages, but also to weak employment standards law and lack of enforcement leaving them with little recourse when wronged by their employer.”

Lanzinger noted more than 400,000 British Columbians earn less than $15 per hour – or almost one quarter of the provincial workforce.

“Our economy is strong, but we must ensure that all British Columbians benefit from this growth. That is what it means to have an economy that truly works for everyone.”

Lanzinger will present the full submission of the BC Federation of Labour to the Fair Wages Commission this afternoon at 2:30 pm in Vancouver.

Read full submission.