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Releases

Small increase in minimum wage will leave 500,000 BC workers earning poverty wages

Vancouver - The $0.40 per hour increase in BC's minimum wage that takes effect today will do little to address BC's problem of poverty and inequality, says the BC Federation of Labour.

"The small raise still means that 500,000 BC workers earn poverty wages—under $15 per hour. That's one out of every four workers in our province," says BCFED President Irene Lanzinger.

"Premier Clark has done nothing to address BC's inequality crisis," says Lanzinger. "The plight of low-wage workers just isn't on her radar. It's symbolic of what's wrong with our province. And it defines the choices voters can make in next May's election."

Lanzinger pledged that the Federation will continue its efforts to win a higher minimum wage. "We're pushing for a meaningful increase to $15 an hour because it will improve living standards for hundreds of thousands of workers and their families who are struggling to make ends meet working at low-wage jobs," she says.

"Our Fight for $15 campaign is a concrete poverty-reduction strategy to address the widening gap between rich and poor and make life more affordable for many British Columbians," Lanzinger said. "We believe that nobody working a full-time job should live in poverty."

The increase means that BC has inched out of bottom place with the lowest minimum wage for the time being, and now ranks eighth lowest amongst provinces and territories despite the fact that our cost of living is at the high end.

Most low-wage workers are women. Most work for companies with more than 20 employees. And one in seven poverty-wage earners holds a university degree.

Later today, Lanzinger will join a team of volunteers at two events to petition for support for the Federation's Fight for $15 campaign. The first event takes place at Metrotown Skytrain Station from 3:00 pm to 5:00pm. The second is at Surrey Central Skytrain station from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.