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Releases

Glaring omission in Christy Clark’s climate change plan: What happens to workers?

The BC Federation of Labour says there’s a big hole in the climate change measures announced by Premier Clark today because they fail to address the central question of what happens to workers affected by changes in the economy and job market as the province moves to a low carbon economy.

“Premier Clark really let working people down by offering no concrete action about the impacts that a changing economy will have for them,” says Federation President Irene Lanzinger, whose organization represents more than 500,000 union members in the province.

“There wasn’t even an assurance that the shifts in the economy and its impact on workers are issues the BC government is even thinking about.”

Lanzinger says most British Columbians understand that over time there will be changes and economic restructuring as we transition to a low carbon economy and reduce the impacts of climate change.

“We believe it is crucial to ensure that any costs of BC’s shift to a low carbon economy are not unduly borne by working men and women, their families and communities,” says Lanzinger.

“There’s also a huge potential for economic growth if we strategically pursue opportunities in the new green economy,” she says. “But this requires concrete government action and leadership in a

transition and opportunities strategy to address the needs of workers."

Such a strategy would include measures like employment transition, retraining, relocation assistance, early retirement and pension bridging measures, along with income security.

Lanzinger says she's disappointed that the Premier didn't act on the proposal the Federation made to her in July to begin stakeholder discussions with unions whose members are or will be most affected by climate change policies, or play a central role in the transition to a green economy.

"Our offer still stands, we're ready at any moment to talk around a table with government and other important groups who should also be part of this important discussion."

Lanzinger joined other groups and experts in criticizing Victoria for back tracking on carbon reduction targets. "This is bad public policy and disastrous for the environment. We can do both: set aggressive carbon emission reduction targets and have a vibrant economy," she said.