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Releases

Fraser Institute working overtime to justify leaving workers in poverty

Vancouver – The Fraser Institute's recent report on the minimum wage works overtime to justify paying working people poverty wages, says the BC Federation of Labour.

"Once again, the Fraser Institute is struggling to find ways to justify paying people poverty wages," said Irene Lanzinger, President of the BC Federation of Labour. "Their most recent report is nothing more than an excuse for leaving hundreds of thousands of people in poverty.

"The facts are pretty simple. No matter how you cut the numbers – a person working full-time and earning minimum wage is living close to $6,000 below the poverty line.

"You may be young or old, living with family or on your own, or working multiple jobs to make ends meet. But the math is undisputable – minimum wage is a poverty wage," said Lanzinger.

The BC Federation of Labour has a campaign to lift the minimum wage to $15/hour, which would bring a person working full-time above the poverty line.

Currently there are more than 110,000 people who earn minimum wage in BC ($10.45/hour), and more than half a million people (one quarter of the working population of the province) who earn less than $15/hour.

“It is absurd to suggest that increasing people’s wages does not help to address growing poverty and inequality in BC,” said Lanzinger. “Paying people a fair wage - that is above the poverty line - is a critical step to reducing poverty.”

Lanzinger also noted that local economies get a boost when working people have more money in their pockets. “When people are paid a fair wage they spend that money in their communities – buying more groceries, eating at restaurants, taking their kids to the movies. That money is directly circulated back into the economy and that is good for everyone.”

“Instead of constantly trying to justifying paying poverty wages to hundreds of thousands of working people in BC, we need to take real action to end poverty – and that includes lifting the minimum wage to $15/hour.”