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Releases

BCFED Welcomes Investigation of Foreign Worker Permits for BC Coal Mine

The BC Federation of Labour is welcoming reports that the federal government will investigate the circumstances that have allowed HD Mining to import foreign workers for mining jobs in BC.

Federation President Jim Sinclair called for the suspension of temporary work permits while the investigation is underway.

Sinclair also expressed concern that the same federal department that granted the Labour Market Opinion (LMO), Human Resource and Skills Development Canada, was also the one investigating its own action; and called for transparency. "As a first step the federal government should publicly release the LMO granted to HD Mining, Canadian Dehua, or any of its corporate entities."

"It's hard to believe that in the five years, federal and provincial government officials have been aware of this project, they were unable to hire or train locally," Sinclair stated.

Reports have also indicated Chinese nationals are being asked to pay $12,500 by recruitment agencies for the opportunity to work in Canada, and that while working in Canada they will be paid significantly less than industry standard for the same jobs in North America.

"This is less about a shortage of labour-it's more about a shortage of wages," added Sinclair. "If these companies had a fair hiring process and paid competitive wages, there are thousands of qualified

workers in Canada who would consider taking the job."

According to the Canadian Labour Congress, more than 20,000 qualified miners are currently out of work in Canada.

Officials with HD Mining say 480 out of 600 jobs at the Murray River mine site will go to temporary foreign workers (TFW) from China. The company anticipates the workers will be in BC for ten years.

Currently more than 70,000 TFWs reside in BC. More people enter Canada as TFWs than as permanent residents under traditional immigration programs.