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Statements

Poverty is a Human Rights Issue, and the BCFED Says it's Time to Take Action

The following is a statement from Laird Cronk and Sussanne Skidmore on December 10th International Human Rights Day

International Human Rights Day was established on December 10, 1948, the day the Universal Human Rights Declaration was declared by the United Nations.

Today on the 70th anniversary of the UN's Human Rights Day, the BC Federation of Labour is turning its attention to article number one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that all "all human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity."

Unfortunately, this has proven to not be the case for far too many of our communities. Indigenous people, people of colour, people with disabilities and LGBTQ people are disproportionately impoverished, kept out of opportunities to advance, and denied access to social services that are meant to shield people from poverty.

The BCFED has been working to make life better and raise the floor for all working people in BC for years. Recently, the Federation proposed to the Minister's Advisory Forum on Poverty Reduction a number of initiatives that would help level the playing field for workers of equity seeking groups in the province. These proposals included strengthening and enforcing employment standards, eliminating

the piece rate for farm workers, improving conditions for migrant workers, and making BC a sanctuary province.

This fall, John Horgan and the BC NDP government announced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act, setting a target of a 50% reduction in child poverty and a 25% reduction in the overall poverty rate in the next five years.

We are encouraged by this move from the provincial government, but we know that one of the best ways to ensure equity for workers in standard of living is to make it easier for workers to join unions. A collective agreement that is enforced and upheld by a union that negotiates in its members' best interests is an opportunity for a life free from the turmoil that poverty brings upon families.

As you celebrate International Human Rights Day today, we encourage you to urge your friends and family members to form unions in their workplaces, to guard our communities against poverty and inequity.