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Releases

Budget 2016 - Big talk by the Premier, little relief for working people

Victoria – Budget 2016 offers no relief for working British Columbians already struggling under rising user fees and taxes, declining services, and lack of job opportunities, says the BC Federation of Labour.

“Once again, Christy Clark is big on talk and yet fails to support the very people who keep our province moving forward everyday,” said Aaron Ekman, Secretary Treasurer for the BC Federation of Labour.

“The Premier is cherry-picking her numbers and ignoring the impact on real people,” said Ekman. “Working people aren’t living on the Premier’s “Island of Prosperity” – they are paying more taxes, higher fees and increased fares every time they walk out the door.”

Ekman questioned the Premier’s priorities in this budget. “Instead of funding school band programs, the Premier paid $15 million for a photo op with Michael Buble.

“Instead of investing today in people, jobs and training, and vital public services, the Premier is diverting $100 million to create a fantasy future fund, based on fantasy LNG revenue,” said Ekman. “It just doesn’t make any sense when people are struggling to make ends meet right now.

“This government needs to help British Columbian workers today – with real investment in job training and apprenticeships, heath care, education, and raising the minimum wage so workers are not living in poverty,” said Ekman. “We don’t need talk – we need real action.”

The budget has an aggressive capital infrastructure plan, but absolutely no commitment to hiring British Columbians first. “We were hoping to see government commit today to putting a 25 percent quota of apprenticeships on all public projects so we are training the next generation of skilled workers.”

Despite Premier Clark’s rhetoric, job creation has been largely in part-time positions in low-wage sectors. BC has the lowest average wage in the country for new vacancies. “Hardly the kind of stable, secure, well-paying jobs the Premier promised.”

The BC Federation of Labour continues to call on the government to increase the minimum wage to $15 an hour.

“The government talks about GDP and AAA ratings, but the only economic indicator that matters to working people is the wage they take home everyday,” said Ekman. “Currently, over half a million British Columbians – one quarter of the workforce - earn less than $15/hr. That is bad for families, bad for communities and bad for the long-term health of our economy.”