



August 16, 2019

**VIA EMAIL:** [harry.bains.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:harry.bains.MLA@leg.bc.ca)

The Honourable Harry Bains  
Minister of Labour  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister,

**Re Paid leave for survivors of domestic violence**

The BCGEU represents more than 79,000 workers in various sectors and occupations in communities throughout British Columbia. Our incredibly diverse membership includes direct government employees, workers in the community social services sector that support people who experience domestic violence at workplaces including women's shelters, emergency housing, counselling centres, etc.

Domestic violence affects too many British Columbians. Statistics Canada reports that domestic violence – offences that take place between spouses, common-law partners, or people who are in intimate relationships – accounts for 30 per cent of all police-related violent crime in Canada, with women being the victim eight times out of 10.

The Canadian Labour Congress, in partnership with Western University, recently conducted a national research project on the effects of domestic violence on Canadian workers and their workplaces. They found that one in three workers have been impacted by domestic violence, with higher reporting numbers for women, gender diverse individuals, Indigenous peoples and people reporting a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

The study also found that workers' ability to return to their workplace and perform their duties while feeling safe was also compromised as harassing phone calls and stalking may continue when a worker returns to the workplace.<sup>1</sup>

This important research illustrates that domestic violence, including harassment and abuse, is not only a personal issue but rather has broader implications for our workplaces and our communities. With this in mind, it is essential that we find policy tools to eliminate complications for those fleeing violent relationships.

We encourage your government to amend British Columbia's *Employment Standards Act*, to include paid leave for people who experience domestic violence and the right to request flexible working arrangements without jeopardizing their employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Wathen, C. N., MacGregor, J. C. D., MacQuarrie, B. J. with the Canadian Labour Congress. (2014). *Can Work be Safe, When Home Isn't? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace*. London, ON: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

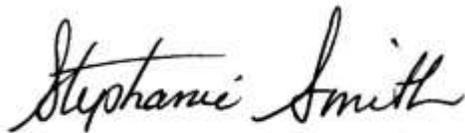
Legislating paid leave for people who experience domestic violence will provide economic security and stability in a vulnerable time in a person's life when they likely cannot afford to be missing work. Paid domestic violence leave will mean that people will have the time needed to deal with the effects of violence, seek help and take steps to keep themselves and their children safe, including leaving a violent situation.

Momentum for paid leave for survivors of domestic violence is growing across other jurisdictions in Canada as other provinces and the federal government have introduced various forms of paid domestic violence leave. Manitoba was the first province in Canada to introduce paid domestic violence leave in 2016, with other provinces following suit shortly thereafter.

We encourage British Columbia to become a leader on this important issue and amend the *Employment Standards Act* to include provisions for paid domestic violence leave that are in line with those established in New Zealand which allows all workers affected 10 days of paid leave and the right to request flexible working arrangements.

If you or your staff have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. We welcome an opportunity to work collaboratively with your government on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Smith  
President, BCGEU

Sh/pt  
MoveUP  
Paid Domestic Leave letter

Cc: Honourable David Eby, Attorney General  
Mitzi Dean, Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity  
Trevor Hughes, Deputy Minister of Labour

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