



BC FERRY & MARINE WORKERS' UNION

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BC Ferries Layoffs May Leave Workers in the Lurch

NANAIMO – BC, April 3, 2020 – Today BC Ferries announced temporary layoffs as a result of service reductions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some workforce adjustment was expected, the sudden layoff of hundreds of BC Ferry & Marine Workers' Union (BCFMWU) members has blindsided the Union, and caused concern these layoffs may happen in violation of clear provisions of their Collective Agreement.

“A sudden layoff without notice and other provisions of severance laid out in their Collective Agreement would be devastating to these workers and their families,” says BCFMWU Provincial President Graeme Johnston. “We call on BC Ferries to honour the Collective Agreement while they adjust to service reductions.”

As laid out in the Collective Agreement, all employees must receive notice of layoff and an option of severance pay.

“We expected a workforce adjustment given the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, but in the spirit of ‘getting through this together,’ we expected more from BC Ferries. These workers and their families deserve better.”

BCFMWU has committed to take any legal action required to protect the rights of its members and remains open to working cooperatively to facilitate the workforce adjustment in the best manner possible for the employees affected.

“We have reviewed the announcement today by BC Ferries of its intention to lay off hundreds of its employees, despite the 75% wage subsidy made available by the Federal Government to prevent such actions.

In our opinion, the proposed layoffs would constitute a breach of Article 12 of the Collective Agreement and expose BC Ferries to significant liability for damages payable to its laid off employees. These actions are not justifiable under any applicable legislation.

“We have a high degree of confidence in this opinion.”

- John Rogers, Q.C., Victory Square Law Office, LLP

“The BC Federation of Labour stands in Solidarity with the Ferry Workers and urges BC Ferries, in the strongest possible terms, to negotiate with the Union in good faith and respect the existing Collective Agreement.”

- Laird Cronk, President, BC Federation of Labour

For more information contact: Graeme Johnston, BCFMWU Provincial President, at 250-668-2294 or graemejohnston@bcfmwu.com

The BCFMWU represents the 4,300 Unionized Employees of BC Ferries, across 25 Routes and 47 Ports of Call. Graeme Johnston is the Elected Provincial President of the Union.

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