

Vancouver & District Labour Council



Media Advisory

April 23, 2020

Vancouver, BC

VDLC Raising Concerns Ahead of April 24 DTES Announcement

The Vancouver and District Labour Council is sounding the alarm ahead of an expected announcement by Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Hon. Shane Simpson, about the COVID-19 response in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Letters were sent to government by the Council on March 25 and April 8 calling for urgent actions to ensure health and safety for workers and residents, fair treatment for frontline workers, and inclusion in decision making processes. To date no responses have been received.

“We are hopeful that this announcement will address the concerns being raised by frontline workers,” said VDLC President Stephen von Sychowski. “But we are deeply concerned, and disappointed, that frontline workers continue to be left out of the decision-making process.”

The Council has assembled a Joint Union Committee representing affiliated unions in Community Health and Community Social Services in the Downtown Eastside. That committee is ensuring that the Labour Council is informed directly from the frontlines in its demands.

The VDLC is calling on the Minister to schedule an emergency meeting with representatives of frontline workers in advance of tomorrow’s announcement and to ensure their inclusion in future decision making.

“If government isn’t hearing the voices of those who are doing this critical frontline work, they will have an incomplete picture of the situation on the ground, and resultantly run the risk of missteps in its response. In the context of a pandemic like this, we cannot take that risk,” von Sychowski said.

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