



For immediate release

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Government should strengthen new workplace hazard prevention rules

OTTAWA – Next Tuesday, February 28, is the internationally-recognized Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. On this occasion, working people are counting on the federal government to follow through with promised new regulations to prevent the scourge of workplace injuries known as RSIs (repetitive strain injuries).

One of every ten Canadian adults (more than two million people) reported RSIs serious enough to limit their normal activities, according to a Statistics Canada survey from 2000/2001. The same study found most of these injuries were caused by work-related activity.

“Canadian workers are suffering from repetitive strain injuries in epidemic proportions,” says Marie Clarke Walker, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress. “RSIs impact workers, their families and the economy. We cannot ignore such a debilitating yet preventable workplace hazard any longer,” she says.

RSI describes a range of injuries that affect the muscles, nerves and tendons. Common examples include tendinitis and carpal tunnel syndrome. Symptoms include aches, pains, tingling, swelling, loss of joint movement and strength in affected parts of the body. Unchecked, these symptoms can lead to crippling disorders that make work or even normal life impossible.

Aside from the emotional strain for affected workers and the families who see them suffer, the economic costs of these injuries are also staggering. Estimated at \$26 billion each year, much of this is paid for by taxpayers in the form of health care and income assistance and not by employers who operate unsafe workplaces.

The Canadian Labour Congress, which represents over three million workers across the country, received the commitment from the previous federal government that changes to the current federal Hazard Prevention Regulations would be introduced.

According to Clarke Walker, a working group with representatives from labour, federal employers, and the Federal Department of Labour spent almost two years working out a plan for new regulations which, if implemented, would mark a major leap forward in the prevention of workplace repetitive strain injury (RSI).

“British Columbia and Saskatchewan already have regulations. Keeping the promise to bring in new rules at the federal level will encourage other provincial and territorial governments to act so people no longer have to work and live with preventable pain and suffering,” says Clarke Walker.

The Canadian Labour Congress, the national voice of the labour movement, represents 3 million Canadian workers. The CLC brings together Canada's national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 137 district labour councils. Web site: www.canadianlabour.ca

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