



# NUPGE calls for special prosecutors to protect workers

April 28, 2009

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is calling on the Canadian government to appoint special prosecutors to step up enforcement of laws to protect workers on the job.

In conjunction with observances marking the 25th National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job in Canada, NUPGE president **James Clancy** has written to Rob Nicholson, the country's justice minister and attorney general, calling for new measures to improve safety for workers.

Observances are held across Canada and around the world each year on April 28. In Canada, the occasion pays tribute to more than 1,000 workers who are killed and the thousands more who are injured each year due to causes directly related to the workplace.

"Despite our various improvements in the legislative and regulatory field, deaths from preventable workplace accident causes continue to rise in Canada," Clancy writes.

"These working men and women deserve more than just empty legislation and toothless regulations. The enforcement of existing laws must be improved."

Clancy says Canadian courts were given "a means to act" when the *Criminal Code* was amended following the Westray mine disaster in Nova Scotia.

"This change provides a means to charge those who, through wilful actions or negligence, cause serious injury or death in the workplace," he notes.



However, it has been "all but ignored" in the six years since it was passed, Clancy adds.

"For improvement in occupational health and safety, employers need to understand that they will be held fully accountable for failing to adhere to legislation and regulation," he argues.

"The National Union is calling for Special Prosecutors to investigate workplace deaths and serious injury. These Special Prosecutors must be trained in the field of workplace health and safety and the existing laws and regulations. This will demonstrate to employers that the government is prepared to take the deaths of workers seriously and will hold those responsible accountable."

NUPGE will be joining other labour organizations across the country Tuesday to commemorate the National Day of Mourning. A national ceremony takes place each year at Vincent Massey Park in Ottawa, the site of a national monument honouring workers killed and injured on the job. This is the 25th year that national observances have been held.

## NUPGE

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is one of Canada's largest labour organizations with over 340,000 members. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families and to build a stronger Canada by ensuring our common wealth is used for the common good. *NUPGE*

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