



Workplace deaths and injuries continue to plague BC workers and families

April 28, 2009

April 28th, 2009 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Day of Mourning. Held in 100 countries around the world, it is a day to reflect on the terrible toll of workers killed and injured on the job.

Last year, 160 workers in BC were killed or died as the result of an occupational disease. Since 2002, workplace fatalities and serious injuries have continued to increase.

"The Gordon Campbell government has done nothing to reverse the number of workers that are killed or injured on the job," says B.C. Federation of Labour President, Jim Sinclair. "The government needs to seriously commit to worker safety through training, workplace safety inspections and by prosecuting employers who wilfully ignore worker safety and play fast and loose with worker's lives."

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) recently postponed the implementation of Working Alone Regulations that would have provided more safeguards for late-night retail workers. These regulations were implemented as a result of the death of Grant De Patie in a gas station gas-and-dash in 2005.

In the case of farmworkers, where six workers have died and many more seriously injured in the past two years, the government has consistently ignored the safety and employment standards of these workers and continues to refuse to hold a public inquiry into working conditions on farms.

A report recently completed by three Vancouver lawyers shows about \$1 billion has been cut from compensation paid out to injured workers and returned to employers through reduced employer contributions to the Workers Compensation system.

"Injured workers continue to suffer twice. First, through workplace injuries or death that are all too often entirely preventable. Secondly, through drastically reduced compensation and rehabilitation benefits that are causing real financial hardship on injured workers and their families," Sinclair added.

The Federation is calling on the government to restore WCB compensation to pre-2002 levels.

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