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Statements

Renewed calls for Public Inquiry on the Anniversary of Babine Sawmill Explosion

Vancouver – The following is a joint statement from the United Steelworkers, the BC Federation of Labour, the First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations marking the fourth anniversary of the Babine sawmill explosion:

“It has been four long years since the tragic explosion at the Babine Forest Products Ltd. sawmill in Burns Lake, BC on January 20, 2012, that killed Carl Charlie and Robert Luggi, and seriously injured twenty others.

And still there are important questions left unanswered.

The United Steelworkers, the BC Federation of Labour, the First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations today are renewing our collective demand for Premier Christy Clark to honour her commitment to answers and accountability, and immediately establish an independent public inquiry to ensure tragedies like these never happen again.

Coroner’s inquests were held in 2015 into the explosion at the Babine sawmill, as well as the explosion that occurred three months later at the Lakeland Mills sawmill in Prince George on April 23, 2012, killing Alan Little and Glenn Roche, and seriously injuring another 21 workers. These inquests, as a strictly fact-finding process, left the families and the victims with more questions than answers.

No justice or substantive changes resulted from these inquests. It is important to note that the lay jury's recommendations, although comprehensive and well-intentioned, are only voluntary and do not have the power to ensure the necessary changes are made in order to hold the employers, the government, and other organizations such as the Workers' Compensation Board, accountable.

The Coroner's inquests were also limited to the events leading up to the incident, and not the seriously flawed investigations that followed. Questions remain unanswered, including why did the policies and practices that are supposed to protect workers fail to do so?

The surviving families, the victims, and all workers in British Columbia, deserve justice. It is time for real and meaningful changes that will protect working people and ensure that these tragedies never happen again."