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Statements

Remembering the fallen workers of the Bentall Tower tragedy

Vancouver – The following is a statement from BC Federation of Labour President, Irene Lanzinger, marking the 35th anniversary of the Bentall Tower tragedy:

“The BC Federation of Labour has a long history of advocating for healthier and safer workplaces for all workers in BC. Today we stand in solidarity as we remember a sobering event in our province’s history when four workers fell to their death during the construction of the Bentall IV Tower.

On January 7, 1981, Gunther Couvreux, 49; Brian Stevenson, 21; Donald Davis, 34; and Yrijo Mitrunen, 46 fell when the fly-form they'd been working on collapsed, tumbling 36 floors to the street below.

We mark this tragic event to remind ourselves that the safety of workers can never be compromised. And that, although there has been a lot of progress in health and safety since this tragic incident, we have much more work to do.

Construction is still a high risk industry. In British Columbia construction workers are three times more likely to die from workplace injuries than workers in the rest of Canada.

Over the last decade, an average of 32 general construction workers died each year from fatal accidents or occupational disease. Since January 7, 1981, more than 1000 construction workers have

died.

These statistics are simply unacceptable.

Every worker has the right to return home safe and healthy from work.

We need to ensure that workers, supervisors, owners, contractors and employers know and understand their occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities.

We need to ensure that the Workers Compensation Board is properly funded to provide more resources for prevention and enforcement activities.

And we need to ensure that negligent employers that expose their workers to serious disease, injury or death – especially those that blatantly oppose the health and safety laws of this province – are brought to justice.

Today we remember and mourn these fallen workers and we express our compassion for the families that continue to grieve all these years later.”