April 28, 2023 |

Statements

Action still urgently needed to protect workers' lives and health: BCFED statement on Day of Mourning

The BCFED released the following statement on the Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace:

April 28 is a sacred day for working people: we remember those we've lost, and those who have been injured or made sick, because of their work.

Last year, 241 British Columbia workers lost their lives as a consequence of their jobs. That number is the highest it has been in a decade. And it signals that in too many workplaces in this province, the lives and safety of working people are not a priority.

Not two days go by in our province without another British Columbian dying because of their job. And that doesn't include the many workers killed by the drug poisoning crisis — at the end of a cycle of substance use that began with pain from a workplace injury.

Asbestos remains the leading workplace killer in British Columbia — an insidious killer that still strikes workers down decades after exposure.

Here, though, there has been welcome progress, with last year's announcement of employer licensing and worker certification. We've seen crucial improvements in other areas as well, including

the workers' compensation system last October.

But we still have a long way to go. We urgently need to bring all workers under WCB protection and coverage, and strengthen prevention, inspection, enforcement, investigation and penalties. Changes are long overdue to treat psychological and physical injuries with the same high standard of access, respect and dignity, and to ease the struggles injured workers face as they return to work. And as recent events remind us, we must address the epidemic of workplace violence.

These actions and more are crucial to upholding the fundamental right of every worker to come home at the end of their day as safe and healthy as when they left.

When we in the labour movement say "Mourn the dead, and fight for the living," we are expressing two faces of the same idea. Our grief and pain spur us to speak out and take action. And through our voices and through that action, we honour the memories of the people we've lost.

Today, and every day, we mourn the dead. And we fight for the living.