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Stories

A big step forward on tower crane safety

Today, the BC government took a big step toward safer construction workplaces by expanding skilled trades certification to cover mobile and tower crane operators.

They're reversing the disastrous 2003 move by the BC Liberals (now effectively the BC Conservatives) scrapping trades certification. Restoring the requirement for stringent safety and skills training will go a long way to addressing risks that have endangered workers ever since. And it will help prevent the kind of crane incidents that have caused injury and death in recent years.

Today, you'll see news releases, photos and footage from the announcement. Which is great.

Here's what you won't see.

You won't see the literally thousands of hours the labour movement's staff, leadership and activists have poured into making this change happen. The briefs and responses we've written. The consultation meetings, committee meetings and internal discussions we've taken part in. The calls we've made to cabinet ministers, government staff and Workers' Compensation Board and SkilledTradesBC officials. The research we've done to make our case.

That all happens behind the scenes. And the BC Building Trades and IUOE Local 115 in particular have put their all into the drive to make today's announcement happen.

Nothing we do is more important than making workplaces safer and preventing the death, injury and illness of workers. And the BCFED and our affiliated unions are putting that same effort into a wide range of safety issues every day, like workplace violence, combustible dust, psychological health and safety, PPE, heat exposure and more.

To us, success doesn't come with the ceremonial announcements and news conferences — satisfying though those can be. It comes with the events that don't happen: the crane that didn't collapse, or the worker who didn't fall, or any one of countless other possible tragedies that didn't come about because we helped make things safer.

To Ministers Jennifer Whiteside and Jessie Sunner, the BC government and SkilledTradesBC, our thanks for taking this measure. And to every union member, staffer and leader who does this work every day, our profound gratitude and our unending solidarity