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Releases

BCFED eager to work with new NDP government to improve worker safety after recent succession of tragic accidents

Vancouver-With a week left before the swearing-in of Premier John Horgan and a new cabinet, the BC Federation of Labour says it's gearing up to work with the new government to address workplace health and safety issues, where urgent action is required.

"While BC has been gripped with the change in government over the past four weeks, there have been a succession of tragic workplace accidents where workers have been killed or seriously injured," says Irene Lanzinger, president of the labour federation.

"With a new government committed to improving safety to protect workers, we're optimistic that we can make headway," Lanzinger says. "There are significant opportunities for government, the Workers' Compensation Board, the labour movement, and employers to work together to ensure that everyone goes home safely at the end of the work day."

In the last 45 days, tragic accidents that have resulted in the death or serious injury of workers include:

• three deaths including a Kamloops mill worker, an agricultural worker in the North Okanagan, and a transport worker who was run over at a Richmond cargo handling facility;

• high profile injuries sustained by two traffic flaggers who were run down by a speeding motorist at a Burnaby road construction site;
• a roofer who was seriously injured in a three-story fall from a Victoria construction site where a safety harness was not used nor were guard rails in place; and
• two workers who were hurt in an explosion at a natural gas facility outside Fort St. John.

In the same time frame, details emerged about the paltry fines levied on employers who are found to be at fault for on-the-job deaths or injuries. In one circumstance, a Revelstoke logging company was fined $13,800 for an accident that killed an employee. No penalty was imposed on a Chilliwack construction company after an accident caused by faulty equipment killed one worker and seriously injured another.

“Clearly more needs to be done to keep workers safe on the job and fairly compensate those who are killed or injured,” Lanzinger says.