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Releases

City of Vancouver joins call for mandatory certification and licensing of asbestos contractors

Vancouver – The BC Building Trades Council and the BC Federation of Labour congratulate Vancouver City Council for passing a critical resolution calling on the province to implement mandatory certification and licensing of asbestos and hazardous material removal contractors.

“Many believe that asbestos exposure only happens in the workplace, but that’s just not true,” said Lee Loftus, president of the BC Building Trades Council. “Asbestos has been installed in our schools, community centres, shopping malls, libraries and homes for more than a half century. When it is disturbed, workers and the public are being exposed unwillingly.”

The City of Vancouver motion calls on the provincial government to require mandatory licensing, certification and enforceable compliance in safely handling asbestos and other hazardous material for all demolition, renovation and environmental remediation contractors.

Vancouver is the third municipality in the Lower Mainland to lend its voice to the issue, following the City of Port Coquitlam and the City of Burnaby which passed similar resolutions earlier in June.

Current provincial legislation does not provide the protections required to eliminate exposures when unscrupulous contractors disturb asbestos containing materials and transport or dump them in public

areas such as parks, laneways and waste bins.

“The continued risk to the community, the environment and workers is unacceptable. I want to congratulate the cities of Vancouver, Port Coquitlam and Burnaby for adding their voices to this complex and important issue,” said Irene Lanzinger, president of the BC Federation of Labour.

“The BC Federation of Labour has asked the province to convene a provincial roundtable that would bring together all levels of government, regulatory bodies, industry and labour to develop a multifaceted approach to eliminating asbestos exposures in BC workplaces, including mandatory licensing and certification.”

It is estimated that every year more than 145,000 Canadian workers are exposed to asbestos at their workplaces, and over 2,000 are diagnosed with fatal asbestos cancers and other diseases. In BC, asbestos remains the single largest cause of workplace deaths.

Full text of the resolution can be found at: http://council.vancouver.ca/20160628/documents/motionb6.pdf.