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Releases

BCFED in Victoria to highlight occupational health and safety concerns

Vancouver – The BC Federation of Labour's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committee is in Victoria today meeting with Ministers and MLAs on important workplace health and safety issues.

"The labour movement puts a strong focus on workplace health and safety. In 2015, 182 workers died, and thousands more were injured or became ill," said Aaron Ekman, Secretary-Treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour. "With the National Day of Mourning coming up on April 28, we thought it was an important time to highlight these critical issues with our elected representatives."

18 members of the BCFED OHS Committee, along with one representative from the Hazardous Material Association of BC, are attending several meetings today, including meetings with Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour, Shirley Bond, and the Opposition Spokesperson for Labour, Shane Simpson.

The three topics being raised are (background documents attached):

- Asbestos abatement licensing and steps towards a full ban;
- Workplace violence, domestic violence, bullying and harassment and the need to recognize these hazards in legislation; and
- Raising the profile of the National Day of Mourning.

“Asbestos is the number one workplace killer. It is estimated that more than 145,000 Canadian workers are exposed to asbestos at their workplaces each year, and tragically over 2,000 are diagnosed with often fatal asbestos cancers and other diseases,” said Ekman. “One of our key recommendations to government is to convene a provincial roundtable to develop a comprehensive strategy to eliminate asbestos exposures in the workplace.”

Ekman also noted that there has been a 67 per cent increase in time-loss claims related to acts of violence in the workplace from 1,226 claims in 2005 to 2,068 claims in 2015.

“We must be working together to turn this trend around, and that includes broadening the definition of violence so that workers are able to get the support they need to do their job free from violence, including domestic violence, bullying and harassment.”