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Releases

Avoidable death of a late night worker in Calgary prompts BCFED to re-new call for tougher laws

VANCOUVER – The BC Federation of Labour is renewing its call for tougher laws to protect late-night workers, in BC and across the country, following another avoidable death of a gas station attendant working alone late at night.

Maryam Rashidi, a 35-year-old Calgary resident and mother, was run over by a stolen truck while trying to stop a gas-and-dash while at work. She succumbed to her injuries on Tuesday afternoon.

“This tragic incident is all too familiar for us in BC,” said Aaron Ekman, Secretary-Treasurer for the BC Federation of Labour. “A decade ago Grant De Patie was dragged to death trying to stop a gas-and-dash. Grant’s legacy is something we keep fighting for today.”

Following Rashidi’s death, the Alberta Federation of Labour has called for pay-before-you-pump legislation, something that was mandated in BC following De Patie’s death. They are also calling for mandatory employee training and legislation that lays out the employer’s responsibility to keep late-night workers safe.

“Pay-before-you-pump laws are vital and need to be in place in every province. It is a basic law, and it saves lives,” said Ekman. “But we can’t stop there.”

The De Patie family and the BC Federation of Labour were persistent in demanding changes to protect late-night retail workers, including 24/7 pay-before-you-pump legislation.

Grant's Law initially provided strong regulations to keep late-night workers safe, including the requirement to either have a barrier in place (between the employee and the public) or at least two people on shift from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. However, in 2011 that law was watered down with the introduction of a third option allowing employers to institute weak administrative controls, such as security cameras or signs indicating there is little cash on site.

"How many more have to die before we properly protect late-night retail workers?" said Ekman. "The BCFED continues to fight to have this weak third option repealed in order to ensure the highest level of safety for late-night retail workers – in BC, Alberta and across Canada."