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Releases

WorkSafeBC Review takes first step towards improved enforcement, but needs to go further

Vancouver – The WorkSafeBC Review opens the door to increased enforcement and prosecution, but doesn't go far enough says the B.C. Federation of Labour.

"Increased enforcement and prosecution of negligent employers is fundamental to improving worker safety and compliance with the law," said Irene Lanzinger, B.C. Federation of Labour Secretary Treasurer. "While we are encouraged that the Report takes initial steps in that direction, it fails to take the bold steps necessary to make substantial change."

The B.C. Federation of Labour provided recommendations to government that would ensure that negligent employers were held accountable for workplace serious injuries and deaths.

The Macatee Report incorporates some of the BCFED's recommendations, including providing the WCB with stronger and more effective enforcement tools, and putting systems in place to make it possible for the prosecution of negligent employers.

However, the Report is missing key measures recommended by the BCFED that are required to achieve the successful prosecution of negligent employers, such as a dedicated Crown Prosecutor, a Crown charge assessment policy specific to workplace death, and education for prosecutors, police services and WCB investigative officers around criminal negligence from a workplace health and

safety perspective.

“We urge the government to turn their attention to these outstanding demands,” said Lanzinger. “To really make a meaningful impact, prevention, enforcement and accountability must work hand in hand.”

Despite advances on the enforcement side, the Macatee Report takes a big step backwards with the introduction of worker ticketing.

“The BCFED is vehemently opposed to the recommendation regarding on-site ticketing of workers,” said Lanzinger. “It is the employer who has the power and legal responsibility to create and enforce a safe workplace. All this does is shift the blame and responsibility from the employer to the worker.

“This recommendation is an insult to the seriously injured workers of Babine & Lakeland Mills, and the families of those workers who were killed.”

The BCFED would like to thank the families and injured workers for their courage and persistence in demanding a public inquiry.