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Releases

Lack of charges in Babine explosion shakes worker confidence in provincial safety agencies

Vancouver, BC–BC Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair said today that significant steps must be taken to restore confidence in worker protection in British Columbia, in the wake of a damning incident investigation report into the deaths of Robert Luggi and Carl Charlie in the Babine Forest Products explosion and fire.

“Today, a detailed investigation report was released that clearly shows the incident was preventable, that risks were known and that necessary measures were not taken,” said Sinclair. “And yet, in the face of an apparent wall of evidence, the crown has chosen to not lay charges.”

Sinclair noted that the investigator recommended charges be laid, but that the Crown dismissed the recommendations. Investigators need to have confidence that when they recommend charges, charges are laid.

To restore confidence in worker safety, Sinclair called on the Premier to ensure:

1. A public review of the investigation, including the decisions to not lay charges.
2. The imposition of maximum penalties available under the Workers’ Compensation Act, with those penalties invested in forest safety training in the region.

3. All responsible Crown agencies, including the Criminal Justice Branch, the WCB and the BC Safety Authority, report within six months to British Columbians on a new process to ensure investigations into workplace incidents are conducted in a thorough, timely and effective manner, and that result in charges where warranted.

“Unless these steps are taken, and effective cooperation between agencies results, worker safety will remain compromised in our province,” said Sinclair.

Sinclair said this is a difficult time for the families and friends of the workers killed and injured on the job. “The failure of the Crown to bring charges leaves the families without much needed closure.”

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Media Contact: Michael Gardiner at 604-436-7030