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Statements

Remembering the fallen workers of the Bentall Tower tragedy

Vancouver – The following is a statement from BC Federation of Labour President Irene Lanzinger marking the 37th anniversary of the Bentall Tower tragedy:

“The BC Federation of Labour has a long history of advocating for healthier and safer workplaces for all workers in BC. Today we stand in solidarity as we remember a sobering event in our province’s history when four workers fell to their deaths during the construction of the Bentall IV Tower.

On January 7, 1981, Gunther Couvreux, 49; Brian Stevenson, 21; Donald Davis, 34; and Yrijo Mitrunen, 43; died tragically. They fell 36 floors to the street below when a fly-form used for pouring concrete broke away from the top of the Bentall Centre’s Tower IV.

We mark this tragic event to remind ourselves that the safety of workers can never be compromised. And that, although there has been a lot of progress in health and safety since this tragic incident, we have much more work to do.
Construction is still a high-risk industry in British Columbia with more work-related deaths each year than any other sector.

Over the last decade in BC, around 30 construction workers died each year from fatal traumatic incidents or occupational disease.

Every worker has the right to return home safe and healthy from work. We need to ensure that workers, supervisors, owners, contractors and employers know and understand their occupational health and safety rights and responsibilities.

We need to ensure that the Workers Compensation Board is properly funded to provide more resources for prevention and enforcement activities.

And we need to ensure that negligent employers who expose their workers to serious disease, injury or death – especially those who blatantly oppose the health and safety laws of this province – are brought to justice.

Today we remember and mourn these fallen workers and we express our compassion for the families that continue to grieve all these years later.”