April 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

This April 28th, the National Day of Mourning, our union will reflect on the toll workplaces have taken on our members who have been killed, injured, or made sick by their work.

We have lost members over the last year and, across Canada, the death toll is still between 900 and 1,000 fatalities in all industries.

There is one note of victory however. In Ontario in 2018, there were no fatalities in the mining sector. Our “fight for the living”, through our insistence on the Mine Safety Review process and strong representation on the tripartite Mining Legislation Review Committee, are a source of pride and accomplishment -- and the 2018 statistics show it.

Of course that is not enough. And the statistics do not count the men and women who die of diseases caused by on-the-job exposures, whether in mining, manufacturing or other industrial settings. We have a long way to go.

Our campaign to Stop the Killing, Enforce the Law, also continues, and we will not stop until we are certain – beyond a shadow of a doubt – that those responsible for the death and injury of workers are held criminally accountable. We must no longer settle for fines and deals made between lawyers behind closed doors. Killing workers must stop being a cost of doing business.

We are working across the country to create protocols between law enforcement and regulators on how to treat workplace fatalities and injuries. We are asking attorneys-general to train Crown prosecutors and the police to ensure that these incidents are viewed as crime scenes from the start.

It has been five years since federal, provincial and territorial justice ministers committed to working together with stakeholders to ensure better enforcement of the Westray Law. We will continue to remind them, regardless of who is in power, of that commitment.

And remember that you, as Steelworkers, must press your provincial politicians to become a voice for workers in provincial legislatures. Regardless of their political views, ask what they are doing to make sure that Westray law is enforced.
As always, we want to recognize the work that is being done every day by our health and safety activists who are constantly striving to prevent incidents from happening – by demanding increased training, better ergonomics, stopping workplace violence and stress caused by cutbacks and unsafe working conditions.

Thank you for your tireless efforts to protect workers. Please take part in Day of Mourning activities in your local area.

In Solidarity,

Ken Neumann
National Director

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