

National Day of Mourning

April 28, 2016

On Thursday April 28, we mark the National Day of Mourning as we stop to remember all those lost to workplace injury or illness and honour the memory of our seven fallen Unifor brothers who died on the job since the last Day of Mourning in 2015.

Willie Craig, L1309, Sussex, New Brunswick, February 29, 2016

Richard Pigeau, L598, Sudbury, Ontario, October 20, 2015

Ronnie Warren, L5080, Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, September 23, 2015

Sarvandas "Sarva" Kanagaratham, L112, Woodbridge, Ontario, September 2, 2015

Larry Loveman, FFAW, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, June 16, 2015

David Wareham, FFAW, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, June 16, 2015

Kenneth Hickey, FFAW, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, June 16, 2015

In 2014, the last year statistics were released from the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada, 919 workplace deaths were recorded in Canada, up from 902 the previous year. This represents more than 2.5 deaths every single day.

Parents, sons and daughters, siblings, dear friends and colleagues, their numbers tell the story.

In the 20 years from 1995 to 2014, 18,039 people lost their lives due to work-related causes (an average of 918 deaths per year).

It has been 25 years since Canada officially recognized the National Day of Mourning. Sadly, the need for this day is just as great now as it was a quarter century ago. As we look back to remember we also look forward as the work to prevent deaths, injuries and illness continues.

This year, Canadian unions are calling for a comprehensive national ban on asbestos. Asbestos is the number one cause of occupational death in Canada. Exposure to asbestos is a known cause of lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma, with exposure claiming the lives of more than 2,000 Canadians each year. Death from mesothelioma alone increased 60 per cent between 2000 and 2012.

Some progress has been made – as of April 1 construction materials that contain asbestos were banned by Public Services and Procurement Canada for use in government projects. But overall import of items that contain asbestos, such as brake pads and cement pipes, are on the rise.

We urgently need the federal government to completely outlaw the use, exportation and import of this known killer.

On April 28, pay tribute to our fallen workers by participating in local Day of Mourning commemorations. On April 28 remind your MP that safe work is a right, not a privilege, and call on all politicians to implement a comprehensive ban on asbestos so we can all breathe easier.