



National Day of Mourning important as ever in 2011

Since CUPE's national health and safety committee recommended its creation 27 years ago, the National Day of Mourning has become an internationally celebrated event.

Sadly, despite increasing awareness of the importance of workplace safety, 2010 saw more workplace deaths for CUPE members than any year since 1998.

Seven CUPE members died on the job last year.

CUPE national health and safety committee co-chair Rex Hillier says he's disturbed by the high number of workplace deaths this year.

"The fact that this many workers lost their lives at work – that they went to work one day and never came home – needs to be heard by our members and by employers, who can and should make our workplaces safer and healthier," said Hillier. "The fact that seven of our members died this year really underscores the importance of the date."

Ceremonies honouring the workers who died will be held in cities and regions across the country.



National health and safety committee co-chairs Rex Hillier and Dolores Douglas at CUPE's National Day of Mourning Honour Wall, Stan Little building, Ottawa.

PART OF OUR HISTORY

The day was officially recognized by the Canadian federal government in 1991, eight years after the first day of mourning was honoured by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1985 – the year after CUPE's National Health and Safety Committee recommended its creation.

Also known in many places as Workers' Memorial Day, April 28 is now celebrated in many countries around the world, and recognized by the International Labour Organization

CUPE remembers the following members who lost their lives on the job in 2010:

JACQUES TREMBLAY
CUPE 1500, Quebec

JAMES BEST
CUPE 416, Ontario

PIERRE LECLERC
CUPE 301, Quebec

GILLES LÉTOURNEAU
CUPE 4239, Quebec

BRODIE SCHWARTZ
CUPE 255, Ontario

JO-ANN FULLER
CUPE 873, British Columbia

IVAN POLIVKA
CUPE 873, British Columbia

and the International Trade Union Confederation.

CUPE national health and safety committee co-chair Dolores Douglas says she takes pride in the fact that CUPE was the original driving force behind the creation of the event, but also notes the real importance of the day. “As much as we are proud of what this day has become, it doesn’t really matter who started it,” said Douglas.

“The real importance is honouring those workers who died, and fighting hard to make sure workers everywhere get the best possible protection.”

AS IMPORTANT AS EVER

While many jurisdictions trumpet slight decreases in the number of deaths, the fact remains

that on average, over the past 10 years more than 950 Canadians have been killed at work. In Britain, where the population is double our own, there is an average of just 220 people killed per year, according to the Health and Safety Executive. Even the U.S., with *ten* times our population, has *five to six* times as many workplace fatalities.

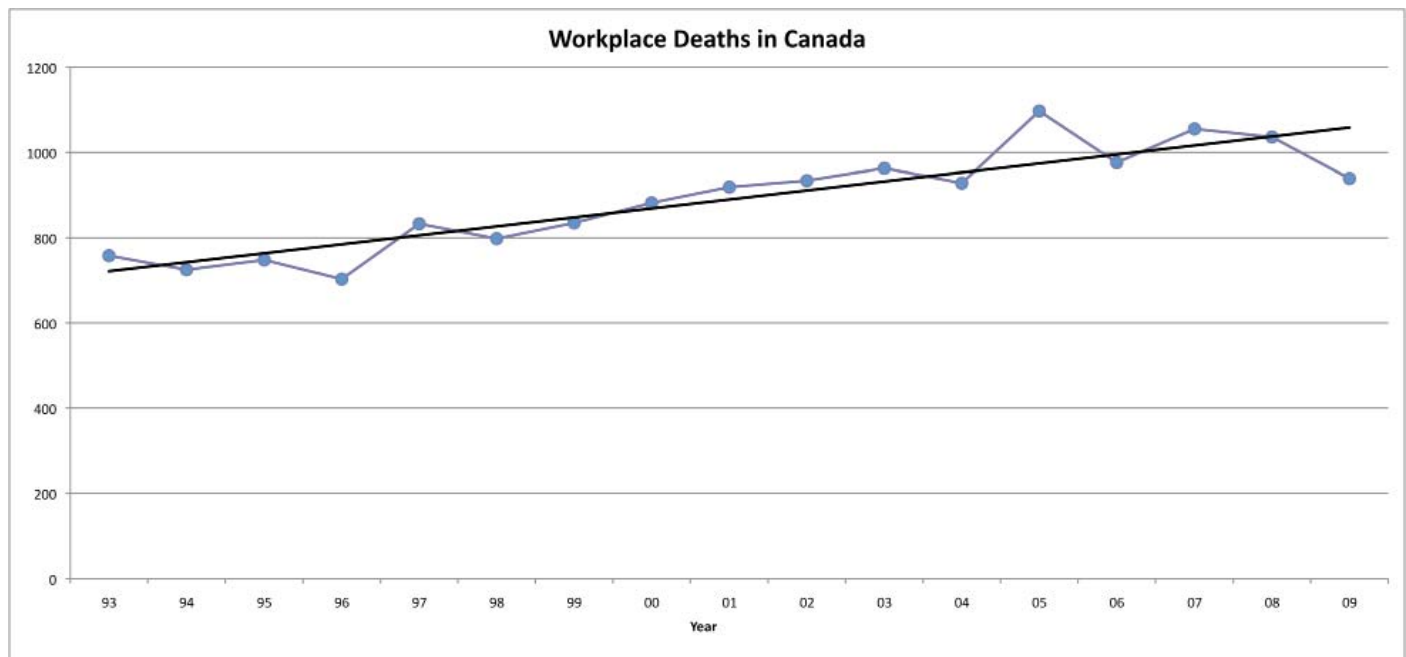
The Canadian numbers are shocking and shameful, and they’re the reason the Day of Mourning is more important than ever.

In a recent letter to regions and locals, CUPE National President Paul Moist and National Secretary-treasurer Claude G n reux offered suggestions for the celebrations and emphasized their importance.

“Putting up the [Day of Mourning] posters, lowering flags to half-mast and reading the workers’ statement at Day of Mourning gatherings in your workplace or community are ways to promote awareness of CUPE’s role in fighting for health and safety improvements in the workplace,” said Moist and G n reux.

“We hope that on April 28th, you will join with workers around the world to renew our resolve to demand healthier and safety workplaces.”

CUPE encourages all members to participate in Day of Mourning events. To find out more about what’s happening in your local area, contact your local or regional CUPE office.



Data from National Work Injuries Statistics Program showing the number of workers killed at work since 1993. Despite the decrease in 2009, the upward trend is clear (shown as solid dark line). Data from 2010 was not yet available.



Protestors rally in the early morning hours outside Toronto Hydro, Feb. 4, 2011.

Toronto Hydro brass caught in coverup for surveillance of H&S rep

At rallies and demonstrations, CUPE 1 is calling for new leadership at Toronto Hydro after documents obtained through a freedom of information request proved that top management lied about hiring private investigators to tail Joe Pessoa, the union's health and safety representative.

In June 2010, union officials received a tip about the surveillance and sent a letter to Anthony Haines, CEO of Toronto Hydro, asking him to confirm or deny the information. The employer's response stated that the allegations were "completely untrue" and that "there is no such surveillance investigation underway."

However, internal Toronto Hydro documents received by CUPE

1 on January 21, 2011, confirmed that Toronto Hydro had conducted extensive surveillance on Pessoa. The surveillance was conducted by teams of up to three private investigators working as many as 13 hours a day.

"Toronto Hydro is committing a serious breach of labour relations, a violation of the union's rights under the law and a violation of the rights of members to be represented by union officials who are not subject to intimidation by the employer," said John Camilleri, president of CUPE 1.

CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn has called on Ontario's Minister of Labour Charles Sousa to investigate the incident.

"This government talks

about making Ontario a safer place for workers but how safe is it if employers feel free to covertly harass and secretly follow the very people who ensure workers' safety?" asked Hahn.

"Covert surveillance of union officers by employers is almost unheard of in Canada," added Camilleri. "This is just the latest in a long list of tactics designed to silence worker opposition to unsafe cost-cutting measures by the employer."

CUPE 1 has filed a complaint under section 96 of the *Ontario Labour Relations Act* with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

We'll continue to monitor this story and provide updates on any major developments. Check out CUPE.ca for the latest news.



Support for Canadian asbestos industry weakens

Support for the export and use of asbestos appears to be weakening, following the federal government's recent cuts to funding for the industrial asbestos lobby group, the Chrysotile Institute.

The cuts were revealed in the government's 2011-12 spending estimates, recently tabled in the House of Commons.

The Chrysotile Institute is a registered lobby group that promotes the mining, use and exportation of the chrysotile form of asbestos, claiming that with proper regulations it can be safe to use. However, most domestic and international health agencies and experts agree that chrysotile asbestos is a confirmed cancer-causing substance that is too deadly to mine and use.

Meanwhile, in Quebec, the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN), which represents 300,000 workers, announced it is withdrawing support for the asbestos industry.

In a statement reported in Montreal newspaper *The Gazette*, CSN president Claudette Carbonneau said that the organization was changing its position, and that no worker's life should be sacrificed for a job.

CSN recently passed a resolution calling on the Quebec Liberal government to cancel a \$58 million loan to investors planning to open a new mine which would provide an additional 25 year supply of asbestos.

The governments of Quebec and Canada have continued to actively support the only remaining asbestos mine in Canada.

While little asbestos is used in Canada, tonnes are sent to developing countries. It is estimated that asbestos kills approximately 110,000 people a year world-wide. Asbestos-related diseases continue to be the biggest industrial killer in Canada. All of the major political parties in Quebec still support the industry.

While many unions across Canada have called for a total ban on the mining, use and export of asbestos, several unions in Quebec have been more resistant in making this call, either by directly supporting the mining operations, or making no statement at all.

CUPE and Ban Asbestos Canada (a non-profit, volunteer-run, coalition of labour, public health, environmental and human

rights groups, academic and scientific experts, and above all concerned citizens, victims, and their families), have called for the complete shutdown of asbestos mining operations in Canada and just transition measures for the approximately 400 affected workers and their communities.

Anthony Pizzino, director of Health and Safety and Research of CUPE and BAC member, spoke on the issue: "This is great news, and a major step forward. We hope this will be the first in a series of union voices that will end their tacit support for this toxic industry. At the same time, we should remain diligent, to make sure federal funding for the Chrysotile Institute is not re-instated once the lobbying heats up."

Pizzino continued, "But while these events show we are slowly moving the issue, there is more that can be done. CUPE and BAC continue to call for the Canadian and Quebec government to stop all funding of the mining industry in Quebec, and find appropriate transitional measures for the people affected by the closing."

We'll continue to monitor this story as it develops. Check out CUPE.ca for the latest news on the asbestos industry in Canada. You can also check out Ban Asbestos Canada's website at www.bacanada.org.

Health and Safety Update is published four times a year by the CUPE National Health and Safety Branch. If there is H&S news in your region or local, let us know and your story could be featured in an upcoming update.

Health and Safety Branch
1375 St. Laurent Blvd., Ottawa, ON K1G 0Z7
Phone: 613-237-1590, Fax: 613-237-5508
E-mail: health_safety@cupe.ca