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-For Immediate Release-

June 1, 2015

Building Trades Applaud Amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act

(Toronto, ON) “The Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario applauds the government’s introduction of amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act,” announced Patrick Dillon, Business Manager.

When a worker passes away, there are survivor’s benefits for the spouse or other dependents. The WSIB’s traditional practice was to base the survivor’s benefit rate on the average earnings of a comparably placed worker today. A few years ago, the employer lobby began to aggressively challenge the Board’s approach. As a result, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, in a series of decisions, sided with the employers and determined that if the worker was not working at the time of diagnosis and/or death, the law required the survivor’s benefit rate to be based on the minimum statutory amount. The Tribunal decisions resulted in many widows and other surviving family members of the victims of occupational diseases receiving significantly reduced benefits, compared to real earnings.

“The new amendments will reinstate the survivor benefits that were reduced as a result of previous decisions, and will ease the financial hardships that survivors have faced,” added Dillon.

Building Trades Council President James Hogarth echoed Dillon’s remarks by saying that “under the previous system, numerous widows had their survivor benefits slashed. If employers would spend as much time and money on preventing occupational injury and disease as they have in going after survivors and injured workers, Ontario workplaces would be a lot safer,” said Hogarth.

Dillon added that the amendments will also “prohibit employers from trying to prevent workers from reporting a work injury by ensuring that they are protected from retribution. Employers routinely intimidate injured workers to not report an injury. The new increase to the maximum corporate penalty which is \$500,000 for a conviction under the Act, will hopefully go a long way in stopping worker intimidation so that safe workplace practices prevail,” noted Dillon.

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The Provincial Building & Construction Trades Council of Ontario is an organization that represents 150,000 construction workers. For more information, please contact Patrick Dillon:

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