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-For Immediate Release-

April 28, 2015

## **Ontario Building Trades Observe National Day of Mourning**

(Toronto, ON) “Today we join our brothers and sisters in marking April 28, the National Day of Mourning to remember all those who have perished as a result of industrial disease and workplace death,” said Patrick Dillon, Business Manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. “Our Council regrets every injury and every life that is lost on the job.”

All across the province and throughout Canada, people have assembled in various ceremonies to honour the memory of fallen workers while conveying the urgency needed for the carnage to stop.

“The Day of Mourning is also a day to recognize the need to drive real change and real Prevention in the workplace,” added Dillon. “There is a whole range of tools to achieve healthier and safer workplaces; from better research on occupational disease exposure and prevention, to better protection and awareness when working at heights, to providing *bona fide* entry-level training for those who perform construction work,” said Dillon.

“An ongoing fear that workers have, of getting terminated if they speak up on safety issues in the workplace, has got to change if we want to see improvements. The achievable goal in the construction industry is zero deaths,” explained Dillon. “There is simply no room for intimidation when it comes to people’s lives.”

“Employers, governments, and unions all have a role to play in transforming the workplace culture to reflect often-declared commitments to health and safety – the measure that *really* matters is in workplace safety *outcomes*,” stressed 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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April 28, 2015

## National Day of Mourning Speech by Patrick Dillon, Business Manager

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (200 Front Street West – Toronto, ON)

Good Morning,

Thank you all for attending today's ceremony. I would like to acknowledge the following people who are joining us here this morning: The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario; The Honourable Kevin Flynn, Minister of Labour; Miss Elizabeth Witmer, Chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; David Marshall, President of the WSIB; MPP Randy Hillier, PC Labour Critic (Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington); MPP Cindy Forster, NDP Labour Critic (Welland); George Gritziotis, Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer; and finally, Rod, Patti and Trish Penny (parents and sister of Luke Penny who died in a building collapse at 26 years of age).

As we mark this National Day of Mourning, we have in our thoughts, the memories of loved ones whom we've lost to preventable workplace deaths over the years.

The pain caused by losing someone to a workplace incident is unimaginable. Unfortunately, all too often, we are made aware of a life that has been lost because of actions (or inactions) that should not have occurred.

Such news is heart-breaking.

Together, we acknowledge being joined here today by the family of Luke Penny – a young man whose life was tragically cut short in a preventable workplace incident five years ago. Rod, Patti, and Trish --- thank you for being here to honour your son and brother.

Thank you also, for channeling your grief by speaking out and sharing your story in the hope that other families do not suffer. We salute your efforts and please know that you have our support.

Apart from being a sombre occasion on which to remember the workers we have lost, April 28 serves also as a call to action.

As leaders representing workplace parties, we must challenge each other to push for better safety standards on all jobsites.

We all have a serious role to play in educating one another about workplace safety. This issue goes far beyond politics as it is people's lives that are at stake, and I hope that the labour movement, the business community, the government and the opposition are mature enough to realize that.

Over the years, I have seen governments of all stripes come and go, I have seen legislation evolve, but the one thing that stays constant throughout all time is the carnage of preventable deaths and families suffering the loss of loved ones.

Despite proclaimed best intentions in recent years, we still have workers who are killed and maimed in the workforce, and this must stop.

Coroners' inquests of every single construction workplace death have found that those incidents were absolutely Preventable, had certain protocols and/or best practices been followed.

Competent Enforcement, Education, and training are at the heart of the solution – everyone of you here today has a special role to play in bringing the change we need to stop the carnage, and end the climate of fear that prevails in the workplace, which forces workers to be silent.

We can do better. We must do better. Let's work together to make sure that in Canada, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, men and women are not harmed as a result of practices and situations that are completely Preventable.

We are all after the same thing: making sure that every Ontario worker comes home safe and sound at the end of each day.

How we get there is the real challenge. We may have our disagreements, and no **ONE** particular organization has all the answers, but if we work together, we can affect the change that we need – of this, I am absolutely certain.

In my view, a number of substantial improvements can be made if we:

- 1) Have Competent Enforcement, education, and compulsory trades training;
- 2) Ensure that workers truly have not only the Right, but the obligation to speak up when they see unsafe practices without fear of retribution;
- 3) The whole Prevention system transforms from a 'Due Diligence' system into a 'Proactive Prevention' system;

Thank you once again for inviting me, and allowing us all to share this moment to honour the fallen workers who built our province.