



TEAMSTERS CANADA RAIL CONFERENCE

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April 23, 2020

To All Division Officers

RE: National Day of Mourning – April 28, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On April 28th, please join with us in remembering our brothers and sisters who have been killed, injured or suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents. We also honour the families and friends who have been deeply affected by these tragedies. In addition to remembrance, we must all take this opportunity to renew our commitment to health and safety and continue the fight to end these senseless tragedies.

In Canada, each year over 900 workers are killed and over 250,000 claims are filed for lost time injuries/diseases according to the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada. All accidents are preventable and the TCRC is committed to advocating for improved safety to put an end to these senseless tragedies.

The National Day of Mourning commemorates workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness due to workplace related hazards and incidents. In 1985, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) declared April 28th as an annual day of remembrance and in December 1990, parliament passed the *Workers Mourning Day Act* proclaiming April 28th an official Workers' Mourning Day.

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Since its inception, the observance has spread to over 80 countries around the world but is known in most other countries as the Workers' Memorial Day. In 2001, the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, observed this date as World Day for Safety and Health at Work. April 28th was chosen because on that date in 1914 the first Workers Compensation Act in Canada became law.

The Canadian flag on Parliament Hill will be flown at half-mast and workers around the country will observe this day by lighting candles, donning ribbons and black armbands, and observing moments of silence.

We will be requesting that the carriers acknowledge the Day of Mourning by issuing a bulletin and providing our members the opportunity to observe a moment of silence where operational duties allow. Though we can't hold in-person gatherings this year, the enduring message of Day of Mourning – ***to mourn for the dead and fight for the living*** – is more important than ever.

While we cannot gather in-person, we can show our solidarity with frontline workers and remember fallen workers by lighting a candle in our homes and posting a photo to social media with the hashtag *#WorkersDayofMourning* and *#StopthePandemicAtWork*.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way we live and work. While everyone is affected by the crisis, workers are on the front line. Many are doing critical work without the protections they need to keep themselves safe. Many workers such as yourself, have been deemed essential and go to work every day so that others can stay home as we all do everything we can to stop the pandemic.

We owe it to all workers to make sure they have the protections and supports to work safely. COVID-19 doesn't mean we weaken those rights – it means we strengthen them.

Workers know that if we wait until the science is certain before implementing protections, many workers will pay the price. That's why unions fight for the precautionary principle, which maintains that the absence of scientific certainty should not prevent prudent actions that may reduce risk.

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As the world has faced this new and unknown contagion called COVID-19, governments and employers should be outfitting workers with all available protections, until the source of transmission is determined – not the other way around.

That means we need to defend our basic rights at work that are protected in health and safety statutes in every jurisdiction in Canada. Those three basic rights are:

1. ***Right to know*** about the hazards in their workplace and receive the training they need to be able to do their jobs safely.
2. ***Right to participate*** in decisions that could affect their health and safety.
3. ***Right to refuse work*** that could endanger their health and safety or that of others. The right to refuse is not the first step to protect workers. This is a serious, sometimes necessary step that no worker takes lightly.

Although the law demands your employer provide protection from danger and hazards arising out of, linked with or occurring in the course of employment, our membership needs to ensure their personal safety is protected by considering the potential consequences in every action and decision they make both on the job and at home.

Fraternally,



Don Ashley
National Legislative Director

c.c. National Executive Board
Provincial Legislative Chairs
General Chairs