



City of Surrey

Council-in-Committee

Minutes

Council Chamber
City Hall
14245 - 56 Avenue
Surrey, B.C.
MONDAY, APRIL 28, 2008
Time: 5:07 p.m.

Present:

Mayor Watts
Councillor Villeneuve
Councillor Steele
Councillor Gill
Councillor Martin
Councillor Hepner
Councillor Bose
Councillor Hunt
Councillor Higginbotham

Absent:

Staff Present:

City Manager
City Clerk
Deputy City Clerk
General Manager, Planning & Development
City Solicitor
General Manager, Engineering
General Manager, Finance & Technology
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture
General Manager, Human Resources

A. DELEGATIONS

1. Laurie Larsen New Westminster & District Labour Council File: 2640-01; 0550-20-10

Laurie Larsen, New Westminster & District Labour Council was in attendance to make a Day of Mourning presentation, and to make a presentation on health and safety issues, new regulations and recent changes to the Workers' Compensation System.

Note: See "Day of Mourning" proclamation under Item E.1(a) of the Regular Council - Public Hearing agenda.

Comments were as follows:

- Every year, more than 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job, thousands more are permanently disabled, hundreds of thousands are injured and thousands of others die from cancer, lung disease, and other ailments caused by exposure to toxic substances at their workplaces.
- As part of the ongoing efforts to bring attention to the important issue of workplace health and safety, April 28 of each year has been chosen by the Canadian Labour Congress as a *Day of Mourning* for these victims of workplace accidents and disease. This year *Day of Mourning* was celebrated at the City of Surrey Works Yard at 7:30 am on April 28, 2008; attended by over 200 workers, the Mayor and members of Council.
- The day of remembrance is an opportunity to mourn for workers who have died while at work and to recommit the efforts to fight for better working conditions and improved protection.
- Unions have invested significant resources to develop education programs, promote and lobby for legislative change and have represented thousands of working people who have suffered a workplace injury or disease.
- 139 workers died last year in BC: 71 due to occupational disease (59 of which were asbestos related – many workers exposed to asbestos do not report their exposures as many of them contract asbestosis or

mesothelioma after they retire), 45 from traumatic injury and 23 in motor vehicle accidents.

- Asbestos related deaths are on the rise due to the latency period; workers continue to be exposed to asbestos especially in the home renovation business (although it is no longer used in building construction, it is still present in many workplaces and homes). Asbestos was even found in one of WorkSafeBC's buildings.
- Between 2002 and 2006, there were 158 serious or fatal claims approved by WorkSafeBC in the agricultural sector due to vehicle accidents alone. Yet in 2007, 3 more agricultural workers were killed and others seriously injured when the vehicle they were being transported in rolled over in a single vehicle accident. Despite the significant number of cases, amendments, which include Regulation changes to seating and seat belt requirements in vehicles transporting workers are only being introduced this Spring.
- In a report written by WorkSafeBC, the cost associated with the 158 agricultural worker claims over a 4 year period was \$2.4 million and over 21,000 lost working days.
- Investing in prevention and education is critical to reducing accidents and disease.
- *Gardens & Lawns to Die For?* More recently there is growing attention over the health risks associated with the use of toxic cosmetic garden chemicals – workers produce these chemicals and unsuspecting homeowners use them indiscriminately. Now citizens and local governments are joined by the BC Cancer Agency who is speaking out about the cancer causing affects of these chemicals, which is of concern to Parks workers.
- Last year the United Steelworkers Union campaigned to the Provincial government for an inquiry (*Stop the killing in the Forests*) into the alarming increase of forestry deaths. This lobby led to an investigation by WorkSafeBC that resulted in a number of amendments to the Forestry Regulations.
- Our Workers' Compensation system was based on a historic compromise between workers and employers to establish a system that was responsive, fair and balanced to both parties. Highlights from Public Compensation Coalition website about changes that have eroded that fairness and balance:
 - WorkSafeBC's world class rehabilitation clinic has been closed;
 - First aid services have been contracted to for-profit companies;
 - The actual number of penalties imposed against employers has decreased despite an increased number of recommended penalties and increased enforcement;
 - Since 2001, regulations have been cut by 1/3, making workplaces less safe;
 - The injury rate for young workers is more than double that of the overall population (additional fact: BC has the lowest legal working age of 12 years old).
 - Only 39 Loss of Earnings pensions were awarded in 2006, compared to 927 awarded in 2002.

- Formerly, disabled workers received a pension for life; now they receive a one-time lump sum payout of 5 % of the total benefits they received.
- Last year support of City Councils within the region was sought for amendments to the Working Alone regulations. Through the work of Grant De Patties' family and the Federation the WorkSafeBC, laws have changed making BC the leader in Working Alone regulations. Referred to as 'Grant's law', one of the changes included a pre-pay at the pump at every BC gas station. Other changes have also addressed the, often dangerous, situation faced by workers who are working alone.
- *Bill 49 – 5 years later:* Last year WorkSafeBC addressed the impact of the *Compensation Amendment Act* (Bill 49) passed by the Provincial government in 2002, which affected many aspects of the Workers' Compensation System. Since 2002, employers have enjoyed compensation premium cuts while workers, devastated by injury and disease, face the challenge of having their claim accepted and then finding out their wage replacement rates have been cut.
- The Provincial Government must ensure every reasonable effort is taken to ensure workers have compensation regulations that reflect the most current and available research.
- Further information on proposed amendments can be found at www.worksafebc.com.
- Information on the campaign to restore balance and fairness to the workers' compensation system can be found at www.publiccompensaton.ca.

It was Moved by Councillor Bose
Seconded by Councillor Villeneuve
That staff forward a report regarding the

Workers' Compensation regulations to ensure fair and comprehensive benefits to workers.

Carried

B. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

C. CORPORATE REPORTS

D. DELEGATION REQUESTS

E. COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

F. OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

G. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by Councillor Higginbotham


Seconded by Councillor Steele

That the Council-in-Committee meeting do


now adjourn.

Carried

The Council-in-Committee adjourned at 5:18 p.m.



Margaret Jones, City Clerk



Mayor Dianne Watts, Chairperson