



NOTES OF MEETING

Event: Powell River Town Hall Meeting on Asbestos
Location: Powell River Town Centre Hotel
Date: October 5, 2010
Organizer: CanSAV - Bob Katzko and Sheryl Thompson, Co-Founders
Sponsor: CEP, Local 76 - Mike Verdiel, President Local 76

Event Purpose: Through a panel discussion, let people know that there is help for victims of asbestos-related diseases and their families, and provide people with an opportunity to ask the panel questions.

Speakers: AREA Fund - Tracy Ford, Co-Founder
CanSAV - Bob Katzko, Co-Founder
Powell River Physician - Dr. Stephen Burns, MD, Continuing Medical Education
Powell River Community Health - Kerry Jones, Program Coordinator Home & Community Care
The David Law Firm - Ralph Carnovale, Paralegal
United Steelworkers Union - Doug Jones, President Local 480
WorkSafeBC - Lloyd Hikida, Senior Manager Occupational Disease Services

Mike - Welcomed attendees and introduced the meeting.

Doug - Played a condensed version of the 2008 documentary, The Silent Killer, created by Steelworker's Union, Local 480, and told a couple of heart-wrenching stories of asbestos victims.
Explained why they made the video and how hard asbestos-diseases are hitting their community.

Tracy - Introduced the Asbestos-related Research, Education and Advocacy Fund (AREA Fund) and explained that it was created in memory of her Dad who died of mesothelioma.
Noted that asbestos-related diseases are the number one occupational killer in Canada and they created the fund when they learned that no fund existed to support work being done.
Mentioned the AREA Fund website and asked people who have been touched by an asbestos disease to go to the Your Stories page of the AREA Fund website and send their story in.

Bob - Introduced the Canadian Society for Asbestos Victims (CanSAV) organization and explained that it was created in memory of his Dad who died of mesothelioma.
Explained some of the specific difficulties they encountered while trying to care for his Dad as his condition worsened, and how Home Care Nurses provided amazing support services.

Kerry - Spoke of some of the services that they can provide, including home support, respite for caregivers, counselling, home oxygen program, help with equipment, physiotherapy, nutrition advice, etc.
Brought some pamphlets the describe services offer.

Bob - Explained that in the 1940's his Dad worked for a couple of years for the Canadian Navy, so he contacted Veteran Affairs who were very helpful.

Ralph - Noted that the first stop for Canadians, with respect to compensation, should be their local Work Safe organization (here WorkSafeBC), and explained that hiring a lawyer to go after the US Trust Funds is typically the option for those who have had their claim denied (by Work Safe), or those who were exposed to asbestos in a non-work related way and became ill.
Stated that if you have mesothelioma it's relatively simply to get money from the US Trust Funds - you need medical confirmation and information regarding work history.

Explained the process of product investigators, interviews of co-workers, family members, etc.
Noted that lawyers only get paid if they are successful in obtaining a settlement for the victim; they take a percentage of the settlement.

Bob - Assured people that although mesothelioma is a painful, terminal cancer caused by asbestos, it is relatively rare, and just because you've been exposed it doesn't mean that you will become ill.

Dr. Burns - Noted that there is no known safe exposure limit; you can get an asbestos-related disease with very minimal exposure.

Explained that asbestos-related diseases typically take decades to show up; common symptoms are cough and shortness of breath.

Stated that a healthy lifestyle is the best approach, whether you've been exposed or not.

Lloyd - Explained his role at WorkSafeBC - Senior Manager Occupational Disease Services.

Stated that mesothelioma is registered at the BC Cancer Agency, and when the number of cases is compared to the number of WorkSafeBC claims there is a huge discrepancy - far more people with mesothelioma than there are WorkSafe Claims.

Spoke about the Letter Campaign to doctors which informed them that mesothelioma is often a compensable disease and that they should inform their patients of this. The percentage of mesothelioma patients who made a WorkSafeBC claim increased after the letter campaign.

Told people that WorkSafeBC will do an Asbestos Awareness Campaign the November. They'll be working with Cities, will have a hotline for reporting renovations where asbestos is suspected, etc.

Noted that an Exposure Registry will be rolled out next spring. A personal registration of information, so that any exposure that an individual has can be recorded.

Spoke about a WorkSafeBC website update this fall and a call line that will make it easier to apply for compensation and get compensation questions answered.

Noted that the expectation is that there will be a peak in asbestos-related disease cases in about 15 years.

Responded to a question regarding mesothelioma claims for people over 65 years old. These claims will receive no wage loss compensation. Depending on the circumstances of the specific case, there may be caregiver allowance and survivor benefits paid out.

Bob - Responded to a question regarding how to find a reputable law firm. Ask a lot of questions - what other work do they do, how many clients do they have, where are these clients located, etc. - and ask for referrals.

Notes were taken by Tracy Ford, AREA Fund Co-Founder. Notes are intended to be representative of the information provided by speakers at the meeting; however, are not a verbatim record of the meeting. If you feel any information has been misrepresented, please contact Tracy at admin@areafund.ca.