



PROTECT THE FUTURE OF YOUNG WORKERS



PROTÉGER L'AVENIR DES JEUNES AU TRAVAIL

NEWS RELEASE

Father of deceased young worker unveils unique Canadian memorial

Toronto, Ontario (February 6, 2002) – Rob Ellis, father of 18-year old David killed in a workplace incident in 1999, will be on hand Wednesday, February 6, 2002, 9:30 a.m. at Toronto's Marc Garneau Collegiate (135 Overlea Blvd) to officially launch an important national initiative aimed at raising awareness of the need to protect the health and safety of young workers. Known as the LifeQuilt, this initiative will be a unique and permanent memorial dedicated to the thousands of young, Canadian women and men (between the ages of 15 and 24) who have been seriously or fatally injured on the job.

In the last two years in Canada 120,000 young workers have been injured seriously enough to require time off work and over 100 young people have been killed as a result of hazardous working conditions.

Although a work in progress, the focal image for the LifeQuilt will be officially unveiled to the public for the first time at the launch. This event will also include a powerful presentation by Rob Ellis to 100 Co-Op students, families who have lost a child to a workplace incident, and other special guests.

The focal image showcases a figure holding its hands to the heavens. It will eventually be overlaid with thousands of organza ribbons imprinted with the name, age and type of injury suffered by a young worker. One hundred commemorative quilt blocks will surround this image, each conveying the life story of the victim of a fatal workplace injury. The finished quilt will measure nine feet by 18 feet.

Toronto visual artist, Laurie Swim, first conceived of the project. She and a group of volunteers drawn from the public and private sector have formed a partnership as unique as the quilt itself. They call themselves the Friends of the LifeQuilt. This group is united in their belief that injuries in the workplace are unacceptable and completely preventable.

Rob Ellis is the honorary chair of the Friends of the LifeQuilt. He has made it his life's work to speak to anyone who will listen about the issue of young worker health and safety. The story of Rob's son, David, is featured on one of the LifeQuilt's commemorative blocks.

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Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety / Centre canadien d'hygiène et de sécurité au travail
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Office of the Worker Advisor / Bureau des conseillers des travailleurs
Ontario Ministry of Labour / Ministère du travail de l'Ontario
Ontario Teachers' Federation / Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario
Workers Health and Safety Centre / Centre de santé et sécurité des travailleurs et travailleuses
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board / Commission de la sécurité professionnelle et de l'assurance contre les accidents du travail
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Once completed the LifeQuilt will be taken on a national community awareness tour. But much work will be required to achieve this goal. The Friends of the LifeQuilt are asking the public, both individuals and organizations, for their help in building this extraordinary memorial. This project is relying on volunteer support plus financial and in-kind donations. Further, affected young workers and their families are invited to participate in the quilt, either by offering their own name and injury for inclusion in the focal piece, or by honouring the life of a loved one in one of the commemorative blocks.

The LifeQuilt reminds all Canadians that we share the responsibility, and have the capacity, to protect the future of our young workers. Those wishing to learn more about this remarkable project and how to support it can refer to the LifeQuilt web site at www.youngworkerquilt.ca or call 1-800-669-4939, ext. 458.

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