

Bill 6 Is About Workers

“Debate over workplace law neglects those at the heart of the issue”

Edmonton — “This debate should be about a group of workers who have been denied their basic rights for far too long,” Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan said at a press event on Monday. “This Bill is about workers who have been forgotten.”

The event, held at the Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre, brought together workers from across the province and from a wide variety of professions to speak about the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. This bill will end the exclusion of agricultural employees from the Occupational Health and Safety act, the Labour Code, and the Workers’ Compensation Act.

At the event, representatives from member unions of the Alberta Federation of Labour discarded 112 pairs of work gloves. One pair for each person who has died in a workplace accident on an Alberta Farm since 2009.

In his 2009 fatality inquiry report on the 2006 death of farm worker Kevan Chandler, provincial justice Peter Barley took exception with the exclusion of agricultural workers from Alberta’s workplace laws.

“No logical explanation was given as to why paid employees on a farm are not covered by the same workplace legislation as non-farm employees,” Barley wrote in his report.

Barley recommended that paid farm workers, excluding family members, should be included in legislation governing workplace safety.

“Each of these pairs of gloves represents someone whose life could have been saved if previous governments had the courage to end their exclusion from workplace laws,” McGowan said. “The Alberta Federation of Labour is a group that stands up for the rights of workers. Of course we’re going to support Bill 6. And the group that has been forgotten in this debate is workers. The workers who go to work on feedlots and who can be fired if they refuse unsafe work. The workers who put in long hours at greenhouses and aren’t entitled to overtime. The workers who get injured on factory farms and who have no recourse. This debate should be about them.”

- 30 -

MEDIA CONTACT:

Olav Rokne, Communications Director, Alberta Federation of Labour at 780.218.4351 (cell) or via e-mail orokne@afl.org

