

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL DECEMBER 12, 2006

Attention News/Health Editors

Five Deaths a Day: Workplace Fatalities in Canada, 1993-2005

OTTAWA, Dec.12 – Increasing numbers of Canadian workers are dying from accidents on the job and from occupational diseases. The number of workplace fatalities in 2005 was the highest ever - 1,097 deaths, an increase of 18% from 2004 when 928 deaths were reported. That means that on average for every work day in 2005, around five Canadians died from work-related causes.

A new report from the Ottawa-based **Centre for the Study of Living Standards** examines the subject of workplace fatalities, using statistics compiled by the Association of Workers Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC) from 1993-2005.

Dr. Andrew Sharpe, executive director of the Centre, concluded that Canada can do better for its workers. “The numbers – and rates - of workplace fatalities are troubling,” said Dr. Sharpe. “Other countries are making progress in this area and we are not.”

Highlights of the report:

► **Workers in certain industries are at greater risk of dying from workplace causes.**

Fishing and trapping are the most dangerous industries, followed by mining, quarrying, and oil wells, logging and forestry, and construction.

► **Fatality rates vary across the country.** In 2005, Newfoundland had an average of 11.7 deaths per 100,000 workers; the national average was 6.8 deaths per 100,000 workers. Ontario had the highest number of deaths, 412, followed by Quebec with 223 deaths, and B.C. with 189 deaths.

► **The incidence of workplace fatalities from accidents and occupational diseases increased from 5.2 deaths per 100,000 workers in 1996 to 6.8 deaths per 100,000 workers in 2005.** This is in contrast to almost every other OECD country where the incidence of workplace fatalities is declining.

► **Deaths from occupational illnesses have shown a dramatic increase.** Cancers, asbestos-related diseases and other illnesses count for **half** of all fatalities. Asbestos is a particular concern because Canada continues to mine and export the mineral. Many OECD countries have banned it. Given how asbestos-related diseases develop slowly over time, fatalities are expected to continue to rise.

The **Centre for the Study of Living Standards** is a non-profit, national, independent organization that seeks to contribute to a better understanding of trends in and determinants of productivity, living standards and economic and social well-being through research.

To arrange an interview with Dr. Sharpe, contact Martha Plaine, 613-728-4754 (phone) or mlplaine@yahoo.ca To read the report, Five Deaths a Day: Workplace Fatalities in Canada, 1993-2005, go to <http://csls.ca/>