



INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Justice
BC Coroners Service

Statement by the chief coroner

VICTORIA – Chief coroner Lisa Lapointe today has issued a public statement concerning the upcoming inquest into the mill explosion at Babine Forest Products sawmill in Burns Lake.

“I want to address concerns recently reported in the media that significant and important questions about the Babine Forest Products sawmill explosion will remain unanswered in light of Criminal Justice Branch’s decision not to approve charges.

“I want to assure the families of the two workers who died, the many others who were seriously injured and everyone who was impacted by the events of Jan. 20, 2012, that the Coroner’s Inquest ordered into the deaths of Mr. Luggi and Mr. Charlie will thoroughly review all aspects of this tragedy. In particular, the inquest will review policies, practices and responsibilities related to the mill operation and worker safety, and will allow an opportunity for a full and frank review of the mill’s operation and of all of the events leading to the tragedy.

“I am confident, in fact, that a Coroner’s Inquest is the best venue to address the many concerns and questions raised about how and why the explosion happened and what can be done to prevent a similar event in the future. A Coroner’s Inquest is an open, transparent, fact-finding hearing designed to thoroughly review all of the circumstances surrounding a death. Subpoenaed witnesses must testify and address all questions put to them.

“The normal rules of evidence do not apply in order to ensure a full accounting of the facts. This is true public accountability.

“The inquest jury has the opportunity to make recommendations not only to prevent future deaths under similar circumstances but also indeed about any matter arising out of the inquest. As per the authorities of the Coroners Act, efforts will be made to ensure that all or part of the jury is composed of people familiar with the type of work the deceased were doing.

“Given the profile of this tragedy and the fact that the issues to be reviewed are of significant provincial interest, I have decided to preside over this inquest. I plan to set a date and location very soon and hope it can be scheduled for this fall.

“The Coroners Service recognizes how devastating the events of Jan. 20, 2012, have been to survivors, families, and indeed the whole community. I want to assure them that the inquest into the tragic deaths of Mr. Robert Luggi and Mr. Carl Charlie will give them answers to their many questions and will be focused on how to prevent a similar tragedy.”

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