



STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
2014JAG0103-000482
April 14, 2014

Ministry of Justice
BC Coroners Service

Statement by the chief coroner

VICTORIA – Chief coroner Lisa Lapointe today has issued a public statement concerning the announcement that Minister of Justice and Attorney General Suzanne Anton has ordered an inquest into the deaths of two workers following an explosion at Lakeland Mills in Prince George:

“I want to assure the families of Mr. Allan Little and Mr. Glenn Roche, who died as a result of this explosion, as well as those injured and the entire community of Prince George, that the Coroner’s Inquest to be undertaken will thoroughly review the causes and contributing factors of this tragic incident. It will look at how and why the explosion happened; the roles and responsibilities of those involved in mill safety, and their policies and practices; and what steps can and should be taken to prevent this type of event from happening again.

“I remain confident that a Coroner’s Inquest is the best venue to address the many important questions and concerns raised about the explosion and resulting deaths, and I appreciate the government’s acknowledgement of the value of this process. For several hundred years, an inquest has been the community’s response to unexpected death, and it is a valued and trusted means of carefully reviewing all related circumstances and concerns.

“A Coroner’s Inquest is an open, transparent, fact-finding hearing designed to 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.

“The inquest jury has the opportunity to make recommendations not only to prevent future deaths in similar circumstances but also about any matter arising out of the inquest. We expect to ensure that all or part of the jury is composed of people familiar with the type of work the deceased were doing, which is a normal part of any inquest into a workplace death.

“I have already announced that I will be presiding personally over the inquest into the death of the two workers in the previous explosion at the Babine Forest Products sawmill in Burns Lake. I will also preside over the inquest into the Lakeland explosion.

“The BC Coroners Service is considering whether the two inquests should be combined into one, or held separately. A decision on this issue will be made after a review of the WorkSafeBC Report into the Lakeland incident to determine the commonality of issues between the two incidents. A date for the inquest is expected to be announced before the end of April.”

Media Contact:

Barb McLintock
Coroner, Strategic Programs
BC Coroners Service
250 356-9253 or 250 213-5020

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: www.gov.bc.ca/connect