

# Employees killed on job remembered at service

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On the day Christine Connor learned that a 17-year-old employee of a Mississauga Metro had died on the job, she quickly called her son at work to make sure he was OK.

"It can happen in a grocery store; it can happen anywhere," Connor, president of CAW Local 414, told a crowd gathered for a yearly service to remember those who've died in workplace accidents.

Thursday marked the Canadian Labour Congress's National Day of Mourning.

A group of union representatives, health and safety personnel and individuals who have been affected by workplace accidents or death congregated at Chris Hadfield Park for a memorial service.

"Every time a worker dies, I can't see a good reason it happens," said Roger Falconer, a manager at the Workers Health and Safety Centre. "Employers have a responsibility not to let that happen."

While addressing the 25 or so individuals who gathered for the event, Falconer reminded them of occupational disease and its presence in many work environments.

"Some are exposed to danger every day, and sometimes they don't know that. Ontario law says they have the right to know. We had to fight for those laws."

Falconer said 491 workers in Ontario died last year



MICHAEL IVANIN / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Donald Sparks conducts a ritual ceremony during Milton's annual Day of Mourning event Thursday at Chris Hadfield Park. The day remembers employees lost in workplace accidents.

while on the job and close to 250,000 suffered from a workplace, injury, illness or disease.

"Behind every single one, there is a family affected by these deaths and it must stop."

Organizer and union activist Alma Gildea — who lost her parents to lung cancer, which she says was caused by exposure to toxins from their work at a steel factory — thanked those who work in health and safety.

She then began a ceremonial blessing at the park's monument that honours those who have died or fallen ill at their workplace.

"With workplace injuries and deaths, if it doesn't affect someone directly, they tend to not think about it. We want to remind people that you could go to work and your family may never see you again, and it shouldn't be like that," said Connor, adding that the Day of Mourning also brings to light the importance of educating employees so they know their rights at the workplace.

CAW Local 414 is based out of Milton and includes 14,000 members.

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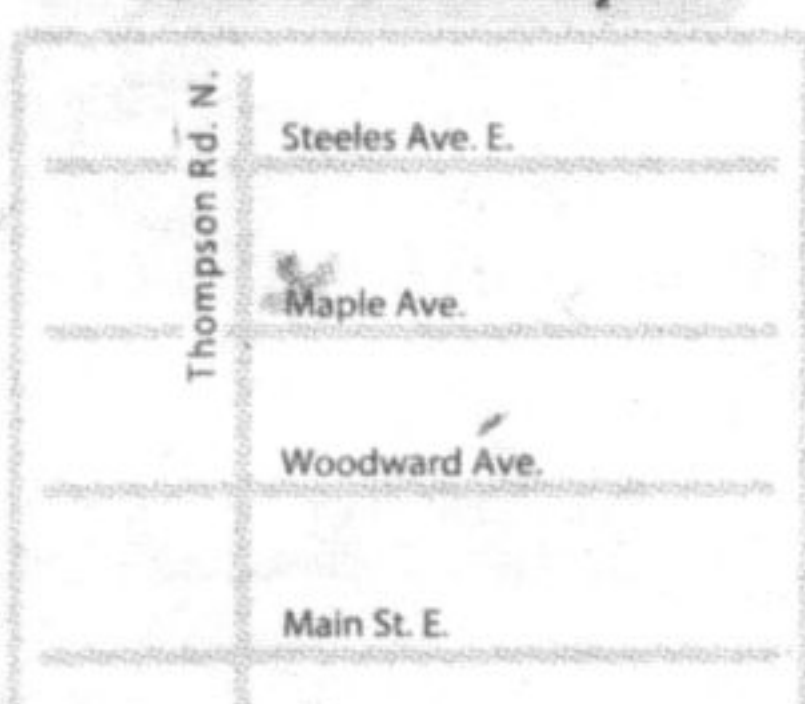
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