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For immediate release.

Retired workers speak out about the condition of the former St. Catharines GM plant

Members of the Retired Workers Chapter representing former GM workers issued a statement to Mayor Sendzik and Council regarding health and safety issues at the former GM components plant now owned by Bayshore Groups. Many of these members worked at the site and witnessed firsthand the amount of industrial chemicals that were used in the manufacturing and assembly work conducted on the site.

“We know that this site is highly contaminated with dozens of cancer-causing industrial chemicals including asbestos, said John Pula, former union health and safety officer on the GM site ‘until this site is cleaned up it represents a health hazard to anyone on the site and a potential danger to the communities bordering it.”

In the letter, retired GM workers warn of the dangers of asbestos exposure. Brake parts using asbestos were assembled on the site for over 40 years. Asbestos exposure even in small quantities can cause cancer. WSIB identified the site as a ‘Cancer Cluster’ due to the number of asbestos related cancers suffered by workers at this location.

Mayor Sendzik in his Public Statement reported that “during a previous site visit by MOECP and Ministry of Labour staff they did not find any evidence of obvious sources of asbestos insulation.”

“It’s a fact that asbestos insulation was used extensively in ceiling tiles and pipe insulation in the buildings.’ Says Pula, ‘unless we see evidence to the contrary, we are certain it’s still in the buildings left standing.”

The Chapter urges the City to conduct its own tests to determine what contaminants remain on the site, in the soil and ground water and what may be leaking off the site into the community.

“This is a potentially very hazardous condition in the middle of a residential community,’ remarked retired union member Bruce Allen, ‘By not taking action to protect its citizens, the City is acting in an irresponsible manner.”

GM shuttered the plant in 2010 and sold it to Bayshore Groups in 2014. In 2018 demolition stopped and the site now comprised of half demolished buildings and piles of building materials, open pits and a temporary fence breached frequently by trespassers. An Environmental assessment of the site done at the time of the sale shows that the soil on and under the site is highly contaminated with toxic chemicals and heavy metals.

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