

Ironworkers Local 712

International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental & Reinforcing Iron Workers

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Wednesday June 3, 2009

Federation, Ironworkers sound alarm over BC Place job losses

VANCOUVER – The union representing workers in the steel fabrication industry sounded an urgent alarm today about the possible loss of 150 direct and hundreds more indirect jobs if a major contract for part of the new \$365 million retractable BC Place roof goes outside BC to companies based in Quebec or Ontario.

Ironworkers Local 712 and the B.C. Federation of Labour are warning that two of the four bidders shortlisted for the steel fabrication part of the job – building the component parts for the retractable roof – are based in Quebec and Ontario.

The provincially-owned stadium is managed by PavCo, which is slated to make a decision on bidders within three to five weeks, says Ironworkers Local 712 Business Manager Rene Watteel, who estimates the value of the fabrication and erection contract to be worth about one-third of the project's total cost.

Watteel says the BC steel fabrication industry is highly competitive but can't win if the non-BC companies are being subsidized by governments or if keeping the work in BC has no value.

"BC's steel fabrication industry can compete fairly with anyone if we have a level playing field and if the advantages of keeping work at home here in BC are considered," Watteel said. "But if the value of using public tax dollars to employ BC workers and BC companies who pay BC taxes and spend their money in this province doesn't matter, I'm very worried these jobs could all be lost."

B.C. Federation of Labour President, Jim Sinclair said he was very concerned about more unemployment after BC has suffered more than 63,000 jobs lost since the fall, including 23,000 in March alone.

"This is a time when BC has to keep every family-supporting job we have, especially jobs that are being funded by the public," Sinclair said. "I can't believe anyone would think spending over \$100 million dollars from BC taxpayers to create jobs in Quebec or Ontario makes any sense at all and it's up to the provincial government to make sure that doesn't happen."

Watteel said he understands there are four bidders on the shortlist: Burnaby-based George Third & Son; Delta-based Canron Western Constructors; Ontario-based Walters Group; and Quebec-based Canam Group.

The BC Place retractable roof job would employ about 150 shop fabricators and erectors with about two years of work, Watteel said.

Watteel says the BC steel fabrication industry has a strong record of success and that 90 percent of its work is done for the private sector, showing its competitiveness.

Highly recognizable BC steel fabrication industry projects include the Richmond speed skating oval, GM Place, the Lions Gate Bridge retrofit, the new Vancouver Convention Centre, Metrotown and Science World.

Watteel said PavCo, has indicated construction of the new retractable roof will begin immediately after the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games end and is scheduled to be completed by the spring or summer of 2011.

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