



PIPELINE PROTEST Supporters of the Dogwood Initiative protest near MP John Weston's West Vancouver office in opposition to a proposed crude oil pipeline in northern B.C. and liquefied natural gas plant near Squamish. The non-partisan citizen group's mission is to work toward greater democratic control over resource decisions. PHOTO **PAUL MCGRATH**

WorkSafeBC to close North Van claims centre

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WorkSafeBC is closing its North Vancouver claims centre and moving about a hundred staff to a new office in the Tri-Cities area by the end of next year.

Staff who mostly work in claims and injury prevention have been working for the past nine years out of an office building at 224 West Esplanade, where WorkSafeBC's lease will expire by December

2016 with no plans by the provincial health and safety agency to renew it. Reasons for the move are related to cost savings and the location, according to WorkSafeBC spokesman Scott McCloy, who said it's hard to recruit

staff to the Esplanade office, but couldn't elaborate on why. "This is ... simply a business decision because we think we can deliver better service," said McCloy.

As for the claimants themselves, McCloy said they would not be impacted by the move as WorkSafeBC, which handles on-the-job injury claims, deals with those cases mainly by phone or email.

Also, the Esplanade location, for the most part, doesn't deal with geographically centric cases as much as it deals with a set of industries — meaning their clients aren't necessarily located on the North Shore, explained McCloy. Mostly construction-related claims that come in from across

B.C. are handled through the North Vancouver office.

"Nobody is going to have their employment affected. And it really, from an injured worker's point of view, will be a seamless process," said McCloy, who anticipates the new office will open in late 2016.

The Esplanade WorkSafeBC employees were told last week about the office change, said Susan Epp, business manager for the Compensation Employees' Union, which represents the workers.

"So, very early days. We will certainly be meeting with the employer to find out further details," said Epp, adding that she was told the new office will be located in Coquitlam.