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- Sports
- Business
- Sci-Tech
- Health
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- Weather

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Home : Canada : Service to honour Canadian killed in Mexico blast

Service to honour Canadian killed in Mexico blast



Malcolm Johnson, of Nanaimo, B.C., 33, a realtor with Coast Realty, is shown in undated handout photo. Johnson was among five Canadians killed Sunday in a powerful explosion at a hotel on Mexico's Caribbean coast that was hosting hundreds of Canadian tourists. (HO / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

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The Canadian Press
Date: Monday Nov. 22, 2010 6:25 AM ET

NANAIMO, B.C. — The family of a B.C. man killed in an explosion that rocked a Mexican resort last week is thanking those who've helped them through the tragedy.

Malcolm Johnson's family says they've been "devastated" ever since the Nanaimo man died in a gas blast at the Grand Riviera Princess Resort in Playa Del Carmen November 14.

Thirty-three-old Johnson was married in Mexico just days before the explosion and died on his one-year-old daughter's birthday.

Johnson's brother-in-law Layne Pynten says the family wants to thank everyone who has reached out to them since the explosion shattered their world.

Pynten says the family also extends their condolences to others who lost loved ones in the blast. Four other Canadians and two Mexicans were also killed.

A public celebration of Johnson's life will be held in Nanaimo on Monday following a private funeral.

"Malcolm truly was a loving husband, a doting father, wonderful brother-in-law, great friend," said Pynten. "He was just a fantastic person."

Pynten said the support Johnson's wife Heather and daughter Audrey have received has been unbelievable.

"It's just unwavering support, this whole community has been behind Heather and Audrey. It's unreal," said Pynten.

The family also acknowledged the "tremendous support" they received from West Jet, staff at the Canadian Consulate in Playa Del Carmen and Johnson's workplace.

The family has also set up a special fund which is receiving donations that will go toward supporting Johnson's wife and daughter.

Though still raw from the loss, the family says it's pulling together.

"It's a true tragedy that one person never should have to deal with in their life," said a

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sombre Pynten. "Everyone is doing as well as could be expected."

Last week's explosion blew out windows in the hotel's lounge area and left behind a metre-deep crater, littering the lawn with concrete and metal debris and shards of glass. One guest had said the blast was so powerful it sucked the air out of the thatched-roofed buildings and tossed around guests in nearby rooms and hallways.

The other Canadians killed in the blast include Chris Charmont of Drumheller, Alta., and his nine-year-old son, John; Darlene Ferguson, 51, of Edmonton; and Elgin Barron of Guelph, Ont. Reports said a hotel bartender and a guard were also killed.

The 676-room hotel has since been closed so authorities can better conduct their investigation into what caused the blast.

Authorities initially said swamp gases produced by rotting vegetable matter trapped beneath the hotel might have triggered last Sunday's blast, and later suggested an accumulation of sewage gases may have been a contributing factor.

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