

Willy Noiles - President
Janet Paterson - Treasurer
Jeannie Howe - Secretary



1-412 Louth Street
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2S 3R7
www.injuredworkersonline.org

of
INJURED WORKERS GROUPS
'IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH'

12 December 2016

Kathleen Wynne, Premier
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A2

Dear Premier Wynne:

Re: We request your action to make workers' compensation fair again

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups, which, as you know, is the main representative group of injured workers across the province. Many of our members have suffered serious, long-term injuries that require ongoing support. We are the very people the compensation system was designed to protect.

Unfortunately, we are encountering a WSIB that is more concerned with its own bottom line than with caring for injured workers. This is the effect of the same austerity agenda that is dismantling social support systems all across Ontario.

We have four main areas of concern that we would like to bring to your attention:

WSIB continues to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The WSIB continues to apply legislative provisions and policy that have been found by the WSIAT to be discriminatory against individuals with mental health disabilities, and in violation of section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The violation of our Charter rights has grim consequences on our lives. We need your government to change the legislation, and the WSIB to change its policy, to be in line with the Charter.

The WSIB's systematically ignores our treating doctors

We are fighting hard to draw the government and the general public's attention to the way in which the WSIB systematically ignores our treating medical practitioners for the purpose of rejecting and limiting otherwise legitimate injury compensation. As you are aware, in November 2015, a group of concerned healthcare professionals, injured workers and labour groups released a report entitled *Prescription Overruled* at a press conference at Queen's Park. In January 2016, injured workers and advocates from across

Ontario submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman and requested comprehensive investigation into this issue. A year has gone by, and we are disheartened that nothing has changed.

Denying our entitlement for time to heal

The WSIB's Return to Work policies and practices wrongly equate the workplace – the very same place in which we got injured – with a rehabilitation centre. No matter how serious our injuries are, and no matter what our doctors say, we are forced back to work. We are not allowed time for our bodies to recuperate from the injury and are denied time to heal. The WSIB's strategy of early return to work and working in pain causes the deterioration on our physical and mental health.

Restricting coverage

We are extremely disappointed that only about two thirds of Ontario's workplaces are covered by WSIB. We are hoping that you recognise the need for universal coverage for workers' compensation and a system that can support us when we most need it.

When the WSIB unfairly withholds rightful compensation from injured workers, it has profound personal, financial, and professional effects on our lives, as well as our mental and physical health. We face the risk of losing our homes, our livelihoods, our families, and our peace of mind. When medical opinions are ignored and our Charter rights are violated, but no action is taken, we are left behind in the province that you promised to lead in a manner that is fair and just for all.

We hope that you and your government will take action to rein in the out of control WSIB, and that you will break the unjust austerity agenda that we face.

Sincerely,



Willy Noiles
President, Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups

cc: Tom Teahen, WSIB President
Kevin Flynn, Minister of Labour
Cindy Forster, NDP Labour Critic