



WOMEN OF INSPIRATION

Offering Support, Knowledge Transfer & Education
and Outreach to Women Injured at Work

December 17, 2015

The Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

RE: Please Make CPP Fair for Ontario's Injured Workers

Women of Inspiration is a group of injured workers who meet regularly to encourage and support each other as we struggle to cope with the effects of our work-related injuries on our lives and those of our families. We have been meeting for over a decade.

Although workers' compensation is generally a provincial issue, a topic came up at our last meeting which is of federal concern. There is a gap in the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) that contributes to injured worker poverty, which we hope you will commit to fixing. We understand that our friends at the Bright Lights Injured Worker Group have already written to you about this issue, and we thought it was important for us to add our voice.

A significant number of injured workers live in poverty. Some of our friends have lost their homes, and others were forced to max out their credit in order to meet

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their basic needs. There is research that echoes our experience. For example, a recent survey of injured workers indicates that nearly one in five of those

surveyed lost their homes after injury.¹ This devastating trend of poverty follows injured workers into their senior years. In fact, there are Women of Inspiration who continue to participate in our group, despite having reached the age of 65. Although they are no longer receiving workers' compensation, they continue to feel oppressed and short-changed by the system.

This is why we are asking for your help. We need your help in making CPP fair for Ontario's injured workers. We need your help in preventing injured worker seniors from continuing to live and fall into poverty. The WSIB should be required to make contributions to the CPP on behalf of injured workers whose earnings capacity is diminished as a result of their workplace injury.

As it currently stand, many injured workers receive a significantly reduced CPP benefit when they turn 65 because their workplace injury prevented them from being able to continue making the contributions to CPP they would have otherwise made. It is not fair to punish injured workers in this way. It is also contrary to the purpose and founding principles of Ontario's workers' compensation system.

This issue is especially concerning to us as women injured workers, because we feel that financial independence is crucial to ensuring women's empowerment and equality.

In short, the WSIB should be required to continue making contributions to CPP on behalf of injured workers whose capacity to work is diminished as a result of their workplace injury. There is no excuse for this gap. In fact, in its 2015 Economic Statement, the WSIB indicated that it intends to reduce employer premiums by up to 45%, resulting in over \$2 billion dollars a year being paid to employers on the backs of injured workers.² This money should be returned to injured workers through the introduction of mandatory CPP contributions by the WSIB, and through the restoration of benefits that have been cut by the WSIB in its crusade to "improve its financial position."

We ask that you assist injured workers receive the compensation they deserve, continuing into retirement. We hope to have an opportunity to discuss further how we can stop Canada's injured workers from being short-changed now or in the future.

¹ Heath, Bonnie et. al., *Many Losses, Much Hardship: The Impact of Work Injury*. Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (Stoney Creek, ON: March 2012). Available online at: <http://injuredworkersonline.org/documents/reports-articles-and-papers/ONIWG_20120300_Injured_Workers_PovertySurvey2010_Report.pdf>

² Available online at: <<http://www.wsib.on.ca>>

We anxiously await your reply.

Sincerely,
Women of Inspiration

Blay Brown *Jequeta Black*
Janet
Mary Asoma *Dee Robinson*
Christina *Sybil Clark*
Mary Stokalla-Peterson
Heather Cheneau-Hagen
Mariam Williamson injured worker *Winstomza*

- cc. The Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
- The Hon. Kevin Flynn, Minister of Labour
- The Hon. Jennifer French, MPP for Oshawa
- The Hon. Peter Tabuns, MPP for Toronto-Danforth
- The Hon. Julie Dabrusin, MP for Toronto-Danforth
- Elizabeth Witmer, Chair of the WSIB