

**1. Contrary to popular belief, the WSIB is not funded by the public; it is funded by employer premiums and its own investments. However, when the WSIB denies claims, injured workers are forced onto social assistance, meaning the public does end up paying for the care of injured, ill, and/or disabled workers.**

**How will you ensure that the workers' compensation system properly supports injured workers, so that the costs for work injuries are not downloaded onto the public?**

New Democrats have long advocated for fairness and justice for injured workers and after 20 years of Liberal and Conservative governments, we recognize there is a lot of damage to undo. An NDP government will ensure that the workplace insurance system can be accessed by workers when they need it. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) will pay benefits that recognize wages lost by injured workers, and we will require regular updates of workplace safety rules and WSIB rates and coverage.

**2. The WSIB routinely pays little or no attention to the medical opinions of the healthcare professionals who treat injured workers directly, meaning their recommendations around return to work, treatment, and medication are often ignored.**

**Do you agree that the WSIB should be required to prioritize and respect the medical opinions of injured workers' treating healthcare professionals?**

Yes. New Democrats have repeatedly held the Liberal government to account on the unaccountable and unfair practice requiring injured workers to use WSIB approved doctors over their own chosen physicians and specialists. We further backed calls to have the Ombudsperson of Ontario investigate this practice – a form of claims suppression. Under an NDP government, WSIB will no longer reject the medical opinions of injured workers' chosen doctors and health specialists who know them best.

**3. The WSIB cuts compensation based on what they call “pre-existing conditions,” even if the “condition” (often simply regular ageing) never affected the worker’s ability to function before their work injury.**

**Will you call for an end to cuts based on “pre-existing conditions” that never affected a worker before their injury?**

Yes. New Democrats have fought for greater recognition of workplace injuries and occupational disease. The role of the WSIB should be to facilitate the recovery of injured workers, and to ensure they receive the benefits they are entitled to, so they can return to their jobs – not to find ways to deny their claims.

**4. Almost 50% of injured workers with permanent disabilities are living at or near the poverty line, largely because of the WSIB’s practice of “deeming”. Moreover, the WSIB has made “deeming” even harsher since the minimum wage was raised, and has cut people’s benefits even further.**

**What do you think should be done about the fact that the WSIB cuts people’s benefits based on phantom jobs, rather than compensating them for actual lost earnings?**

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will end the practice of deeming. We tabled amendments to Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*, which would have stopped the practice of “deeming” injured workers to be capable of working in jobs they have never worked, for wages they have never made. Unfortunately, the Liberals and Conservatives voted against these amendments. One of our amendments would have kept benefit rates at their current levels – rather than have injured workers assessed at the higher minimum wage for phantom jobs they have never held.

The reality is that Liberals have changed WSIB so that the premiums are lower for businesses at the expense of injured workers, who expect the workplace insurance system to be there when they need it and should be able to reap its benefits. On the other hand, Doug Ford wants to “leave no stone unturned” in his quest to privatize the public services we all depend on.

**5. For the past many years, the WSIB has consistently been among the top five most complained about government agencies in Ontario. Yet there is still no proper legislative oversight or accountability.**

**Will you support the call for a public inquiry of the WSIB, and ensure that the recommendations made will lead to genuine change?**

New Democrats have committed to set up a task force to remove barriers between injured workers and the compensation they deserve. This task force will be made up of experts – including injured workers and their advocates.

**6. Ontario workers are suffering with and dying from occupational diseases, often without workers' compensation benefits. How do you plan to address this injustice?**

Andrea Horwath and the NDP have been at the forefront of the fight to recognize – and expand coverage of – occupational illness in the province. One of Andrea Horwath's first acts as an MPP was the introduction of a private member's bill to ensure that firefighters exposed to carcinogens, while fighting the toxic Plastimet fire in Hamilton in 1997, had their occupational diseases recognized as occurring on the job. This has paved the way for several cancers experienced by firefighters to be recognized as workplace illnesses.

New Democrats have also been at the forefront of advocating that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is presumed as a workplace illness for several frontline occupations, from healthcare to corrections. More recently, Cindy Forster (MPP Welland) has fought to have the claims of Peterborough General Electric workers, who are experiencing cancers, recognized by the province.

New Democrats are committed to expanding coverage and definitions of occupational illnesses – as outlined in our *Change for the Better* platform commitments.