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PRESS RELEASE

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INJURED WORKERS DEMAND McGUINTY LIVE UP TO HIS PROMISE TO PROTECT WORKER BENEFITS FROM INFLATION

(TORONTO) - Winners and Losers. That's the state of the workers' compensation system in Ontario. The clear winners are the employers who have received a windfall benefit of a 24.7% rollback in their cost for workers' compensation coverage in the last ten years

The losers have been injured workers who have seen the cost of living rise 23.1% in the last ten years. Injured workers have only received an increase of 2.8% in compensation in that time. The value of their benefits has been decreased in purchasing power by more than 20%. Only injured workers have been expected to tighten their belts and get by with less.

"Employers are getting a bargain paying 1984 prices while the workers who are injured are forced to live in poverty because their compensation is not adjusted for inflation," says the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG).

"While employers are still protected from being sued, workers are being denied or thrown off compensation in an increasingly adversarial system. Welfare, food banks, depression and family breakdown are hallmarks of a system gone wrong."

Injured workers are calling for the full restoration of cost-of-living protection. "It's simple, it's viable. It's what fairness demands," injured workers say.

At a news conference today at Queen's Park the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups and the Ontario Federation of Labour called on Premier Dalton McGuinty to live up to his election campaign promise. He stated in a letter dated April 4, 2003 to OFL President Wayne Samuelson: "... Injured workers and their dependents should not have to rely on their pensions being topped up by welfare payments We are also studying an approach to introduce a fair inflation factor to protect worker benefits from inflation."

Injured workers say the time is now. No more excuses. Injured workers demand new legislation now.

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