

# WORKERS' COMP IS A RIGHT

## **2018 ONTARIO ELECTION TOOLKIT for INJURED WORKERS and ALLIES**

1. No cuts based on phantom jobs!
2. Listen to injured workers' treating healthcare professionals!
3. Stop cutting benefits based on "pre-existing conditions"!

\*Adapted from the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) 2018 Toolkit:  
["Making Poverty an Election Issue"](#) available at [incomesecurity.org](http://incomesecurity.org)



The Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) is a provincial voice for workers who have been injured or made ill on the job. We have first-hand experience of the WCB/WSIB system, know it needs improvement and take united action to make this happen. A democratically governed organization, ONIWG has been representing workers since 1991.

Our 22 member groups have strong community roots, working closely with other agencies and organizations to advance the interests of injured workers. These include labour unions, legal clinics and our Members of Provincial Parliament.

In the fall of 2017, ONIWG launched the province-wide *Workers' Comp Is A Right Campaign*. This document is a guide on how to bring the message of our campaign into the 2018 Ontario Provincial election, and build momentum to keep the issues alive no matter who forms government.

To connect with an injured workers' group in your area, visit:

<http://injuredworkersonline.org/injured-workers-community/ontario-network-of-injured-workers-groups-oniwg/oniwg-directory/>

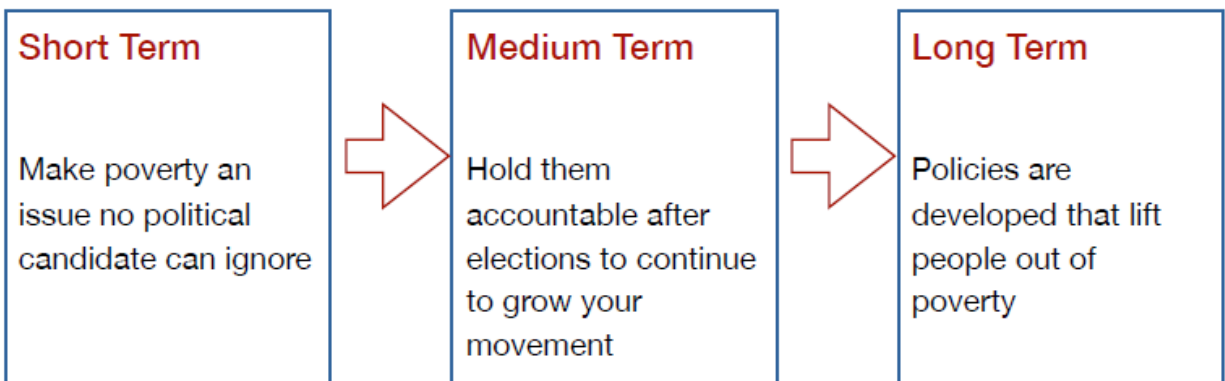
In Solidarity

Willy Noiles  
President, ONWIG

## IT'S ELECTION TIME

An election period is an exciting time. It provides opportunities for the political candidates to hear from you, and for the general public who are not normally engaged in politics to hear about the issues and join your cause. This is key! Political parties have decided their party platforms long before an election, but getting enough of their MPPs elected to form government is the only way for them to turn those positions into government policy. So, election time is a good time to put pressure on all of the candidates and all of the parties to make our issues their issues, and our positions their positions.

Here is how the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) describes the goals of their election strategizing around issues of poverty:



It's exactly the same thing for worker's compensation and WSIB issues. We must show political parties the strength of our movement, and shift the public conversation, both during election period and after it.

**June 7th is election day in Ontario**, and the parties are already campaigning.

This toolkit will help you:

- Build a pro-injured worker election plan that works for you
- Choose the right tactic for your local organizing
- Refine your messaging for social and traditional media

*Remember, it really only takes a couple of dedicated people to make workers' compensation and WSIB an election issue in their communities.*

## DEMANDS

In 2017 ONIWG groups all over the province joined together to formulate a unified set of demands under the banner of *Workers' Comp Is A Right*. These were:

### NO CUTS BASED ON PHANTOM JOBS

Countless injured workers have their benefits reduced by the WSIB when they are “deemed” to have a phantom job that doesn’t actually exist. The WSIB must stop pretending injured workers are employed when they are not, and provide full compensation for lost wages.

### LISTEN TO INJURED WORKERS' DOCTORS

The WSIB must stop its many practices of systematically ignoring the advice of the health care providers who know workers best: Soliciting opinions from insurance-industry medical consultants, or “paper doctors” who never meet the worker; Selectively ignoring medical reports that are favourable to the worker; Disregarding medical opinions that an injured worker is not ready to return to work. The WSIB must give priority to injured workers’ treating healthcare team.

### DON'T CUT BENEFITS BASED ON 'PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS'

When an injured worker is approved for compensation benefits in Ontario, they often have their benefits reduced or eliminated because of what the WSIB calls a “pre-existing condition,” even if that condition has never caused any work disruptions in the past. For example, a construction worker who hurts his back at work will see a reduction in their benefits because medical imaging shows very normal signs of “degeneration” caused by a lifetime of hard work. WSIB must not use conditions that did not cause work disruptions in the past to deny compensation.

**Much more in depth explanations of each of the demands and the campaign in general can be found at:**

<http://injuredworkersonline.org/workers-comp-is-a-right-campaign/>.

## MAKE LOCAL CANDIDATES ANSWER TO YOU

Our goal during the election campaign is to raise workers' comp related issues forcefully - enough that all candidates will have to tell you where they and their parties stand.

Our objective is to get commitments from all the candidates on how they will address our demands, and/or how they will respond to our questions.

Maximum Influence	Minimum Influence
Potential voters - who live in their ridings	People outside of their riding
Large groups of constituents taking action (mass emailing, mass phone-calls, in-person group meetings, event invitations)	Random tweets, no effort letters, Facebook post with no focus
Local press, op-eds on targeted issues that are their responsibility	Federal or municipal issues (which are not their responsibility)
Endorsements from interest groups (e.g. faith groups, professionals, community groups, and organizations, in their community)	Endorsements from interest groups <b>outside</b> of their community
Concrete action-oriented demands	Unfocused ideas or complaints

Remember to seize the moment. During an election campaign your local candidates are in full-on election-mode, which means:

- They do not want bad press
- They do not want to make public promises that can be used against them in the future
- They want to show you they care so they can be elected

Your focus from now until election day should be to:

- Draw attention to the urgent need to improve workers' compensation.
- Pressure political candidates to commit to taking action on our demands.
- Build a strong core of people focused on holding your political candidates accountable.

Your role at election time:

- Ask all the political candidates in your area where they stand on issues relating to workers' compensation and WSIB.
- Hold the candidates accountable for their party's positions or for policies or laws that they have supported or resisted in the past.
- Focus on the goal of making workers compensation and WSIB improvement an election issue and getting your local political candidates to make promises that you want them to keep.
- Choose the right tactics for each opportunity.

## ABOUT ALL CANDIDATES MEETINGS

All candidates meetings are where local candidates from political parties share their views with the community and tell people what their party is promising to do. This is a great chance for you to bring up the issues that affect injured workers (and all workers) in Ontario, and to ask for a commitment from all of the candidates. This is also a great opportunity for people to hear about our issues and to collect contact information from sympathizers.

Most all-candidates meetings follow a similar agenda, which could look like this:

1. Each candidate talks about their issues.
2. A moderator asks the candidates prepared questions.
3. Community members get a chance to ask the candidates some questions.
4. The candidates have a final chance to speak.

### How do you get your issue out there?

- Plan to attend with a group of people to divide the work and maximize your impact. Select someone who will record what is being said.
- Prepare questions for the candidates on the issues facing your local community.
- Assign a different question to different people in your group.
- Have your group spread out across the room. This helps demonstrate that deep concern about workers comp comes from more than one individual.
- Try to speak from your experience, but keep it brief.
- Take pictures and record candidates responses - If you're using Twitter tag the candidates answers or non-answers. Post the info to your facebook group, be sure to email your candidates' answers or pictures/videos to [workerscompisaright@gmail.com](mailto:workerscompisaright@gmail.com) so we have them on record.
- After the question period, stick around to further discuss your issues with candidates.

### How to find your all candidates meetings

- Check with community groups and organizations.
- Political parties websites, social media, local media, google it.
- Information boards at the library.

### SAMPLE QUESTION:

*Injured workers are in crisis in Ontario because of WSIB cuts. Since 2009, the WSIB has cut about \$2 billion from the benefits it pays out to injured workers. The result is that almost 50% of injured workers with a permanent disability are living at or near the poverty line. What will you do to hold the WSIB accountable, and to make sure that injured workers get the support and compensation they need?*

## BRINGING IT TO THE PUBLIC

During the campaign period there are going to be many opportunities to interact with the public. You can attend public events, host events, do presentations, do street corner education, or some good old-fashioned door knocking. Whatever you choose to do, make sure you are prepared, have leaflets and take pictures of your actions.

Below are some examples of actions people have done in their communities.

### Community Town Halls

These are different from all candidate meetings in that:

- Not all candidates need to be there.
- Can be issue-based.
- Often organized by an organization, union, faith-groups, sitting MPPs etc.

This is a good space to hear a more in-depth analysis about a specific issue and a good space to find allies or sympathizers on your issues.

### Street Corner - Leafletting

This action is on your terms and can be very fun. Choose a busy street corner to hand out information about your issues and what you want the political candidates and parties to do about it. This increases public knowledge and gets your community energized. You can also collect petition signatures and contact info of potential allies.

Find leaflets and petitions in our Action Toolkit online at:

<http://injuredworkersonline.org/workers-comp-is-a-right-campaign/action-toolkit/>

### Presentations

Public presentations to community organizations, unions, faith groups, tenant associations, etc. is a way of bringing people up to speed about the work you are doing to make the issues “live” during the election and beyond. Try to keep your presentation short and to the point. Start with why the issue is important to you, and to all working Ontarians (anyone can get injured!) and then invite people to join in actions you will be taking to bring about the change you want.

Tips on public engagement

- Prepare: The personal connection to your issue and why you joined the cause are very important to start off your presentation. Once you say why you got involved, then you can move to the facts. End with what they can do about it. It is so important to leave them with information about how people can get involved with the change they want to see.



- Know your audience - Do a little research about the audience that you are going to present to. What are their interests? What is their connection to the issue? how have they supported causes in the past? A little research goes a long way in helping to build a relationship with your audience.
- **Leave them with an action they can do** - We cannot stress how important this is. You could do the best presentation in the world, but without something for them to do, it goes nowhere. For example; do you want an endorsement letter from them? Do you want them to visit the candidates? Do you want them to ask the candidates questions when they come to their doors?
- Take pictures - This is a good way to get more people involved and raises the profile and energy of your group. If there are pictures that can be shared publicly, tagging the local candidates on social media will help to bring attention to the issue and puts pressure on them to commit.
- Follow up - This is the number one thing that campaigns often forget to do. They do all of this work to raise awareness, bring attention to the issues but forget to follow-up with people who want to join. Keep people involved and get their contact information. You will need this after the elections. Try to follow-up with interested contacts within a week.

## USING THE MEDIA TO GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT

Contacting local media during an election campaign is a good way to raise public awareness of workers' compensation and WSIB issues. The media will spend a lot of time covering the campaign, but they might not cover the issues you care about.

Here are some ideas for ways you can engage the media on the issues:

- Collect a little information (backgrounder) about workers comp and our demands, as well as the steps you want the local candidates to take to address them, and have it on hand to give it to the media. Visit <http://injuredworkersonline.org/workers-comp-is-a-right-campaign/action-toolkit/> for pre-made backgrounders, reports, and flyers.
- Invite local media to events you are hosting and organizing. Share your backgrounder with journalists who attend. Be prepared to talk with them about the issues.
- In whatever media work you do centre lived experience about the issues. Make sure to prepare for talking with the media.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Lots of people read the letters to the editor. Even if they are short, letters are a good way of reaching the public with our issues. They help encourage people to discuss issues and respond to them. See our tips below.
- Call in to a local radio or TV show during call-in segments. Calling in to one of these shows can be a good way to make sure that people in your local area know about issues that affect injured workers. See below for some tips.

### Tips for writing letters to the editor

- Keep it short – check your local newspaper for their word length.
- Use words and language that people easily understand. Talk about your emotions and your personal connections to the issue.
- Sign your name and give your address and a contact telephone number.
- Letters should be in your own words, targeted to the newspaper you are submitting to. Where possible write it in response to an article (cite the date) they have published.

### SAMPLE LETTER

*Injured workers forgotten in Ontario election.*

*Dear Editor,*

*Since 2009, the WSIB has cut about \$2 billion from the benefits it pays out to injured workers. For me, that has meant losing my benefits, which has driven me and my family below the poverty line, a place I share with about half of*

*permanently injured workers in this province. The WSIB ignored my doctor, and even though I can't find a job that is safe for someone with my injury, the WSIB is pretending I am employed, and has stopped paying me the benefits injured workers are supposed to be guaranteed by law.*

*All workers are at risk of injury in this province, and if you get hurt, you will want the system to be there for you. When candidates come knocking on your door, make sure you remind them that "Workers Comp Is A Right."*

### Tips for radio and TV call-in shows

If you want to raise a workers' compensation or WSIB related issue on a local radio or TV call-in show, here are a couple of tips and ideas:

- Decide on your message: Before you call, decide on which issue you're going to raise and the one or two points that you want to make. Write down your points and the key messages that you want to convey. Refer to your notes.
- Know who you're calling: The person who answers the phone will be the producer, not be the show's host. They will ask you what you're calling about. Give them a very brief version of the couple of points that you want to make.
- Educate don't fight: Remember your role is to educate the community, not fight with the host. If the host is combative, stay calm and stick to your points.
- Enlist support. Tell your friends or members of your group in advance that you're going to call in and recruit them to also call-in. If you have several points to make on the issue, divide them among members of your group so each one can raise a different point on the same issue.

### Tips for making the most of social media

Social media is a tool to help with your organizing (it can't replace face-to-face, but can boost it). Here are some tips to help make your support visible:

- Encourage your supporters to like and follow your facebook and twitter accounts, and share/retweet each others posts.
- Take photos at every action you participate in & share it online by tagging relevant campaigns and politicians (you can tag up to 10 people with Twitter photos) and using the hashtag #onpoli and any campaign hashtag, like #WorkersCompsIsARight and #JusticeForInjuredWorkers.
- Comment on posts by politicians – this can bring more engagement if you start a conversation. Keep your comments brief and respectful.
- To increase your followers on twitter, tweet early, tweet often, and use #hashtags.
- Find logos, images and factsheets to tweet out at <http://injuredworkersonline.org/workers-comp-is-a-right-campaign/action-toolkit/>.

## HOW TO FIND YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES

Major parties running in Ontario's June 2018 election are:

- Ontario Liberal Party <https://www.ontarioliberal.ca/>
- Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) <https://www.ontariondp.ca/>
- Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PC) <https://www.ontariopc.ca/>
- Green Party of Ontario <https://gpo.ca/>

The first three parties have elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) at Queen's Park.

There are 124 electoral districts (or "ridings") in the province. Some ridings have more candidates and more parties running than others. Candidates who want to run have to be nominated by the local members of their party or appointed by their party leader.

Their names and other information have to be reported to Elections Ontario before they can run in the election. They must follow the rules in the Election Act and the Election Finances Act.

You may want to focus your pre-election work (all-candidates meetings, group meetings, community events) on the major party candidates or you may want to include candidates from other parties. This could depend on which parties have the best chance of winning in your local riding or in the general election. There are three ways to find out who all the candidates are:

### 1) Elections Ontario

A full list of candidates in all 124 ridings will be available on the Elections Ontario website after the close of nominations on May 17.  
<https://www.elections.on.ca/en.html>

### 2) Party Websites

As the parties nominate their candidates for election, they will be posting information online. Check the websites above

### 3) QP Briefings

Queen's Park Briefing is a publication that monitors and analyzes politics in Ontario. They are compiling a list of nominated candidates for the PCs, Liberals, NDP, Green and Trillium parties. They also have a handy map of all the ridings, with links to the candidates for those areas.

<http://www.qpbriefing.com/2017/01/05/nominated-candidates-for-the-2018-ontario-provincial-election/>