

October 19, 2017

Dear Minister Flynn:

I had the honour of attending, as an observer, the press conference at Queen's Park on October 18th. The [Toronto Star article](#) by Kristin Rushowy covers very well the human tragedy the workers and widows suffered after their exposure to the toxic chemical brew at the Peterborough GE plant. I also witnessed the tears, the sense of loss and discouragement described in the article. I can also confirm the deep mistrust of the WSIB, which already denied most of the claims. How can they trust the very agency that said no before? The mistrust is heightened by the fact the WSIB derives a financial gain by denying claims. They have over \$30 billion in the bank today, and are reducing employer rates like never before. The link between denial of claims and the enrichment by the WSIB and employer rate cuts is not going unnoticed.

The workers were particularly incensed about having to call a 1-800 number to pursue their claim. How insensitive! As an advocate for people suffering mental stress yourself, Mr. Minister, you will appreciate how alienating and discouraging it is to have to telephone "someone", (who-knows –where?) when **a local and personal approach** is required. The message from the Ministry and WSIB needs to be "we care" and "we are sorry you had to wait so long". An acknowledgement of the stress and loss they have suffered is also very important.

What I heard yesterday is that TRUST must be established.

That is why the request for funding for the local OHCOW clinic is essential. This would provide local and personal assistance to the workers. In addition, local resources for the workers to navigate their claim with the WSIB bureaucracy will be very important. The letter from the workers indicates that proper OWA funding and local assistance are essential.

I also heard that, ultimately, the WSIB must be truly "fixed" at its foundation. The standard of adjudication is too restrictive and, in fact, in contravention to the legal principles of workers' compensation. This should be a "look to allow" system, that reflect the benefit of reasonable doubt to workers (who gave up the right to sue for a just compensation system). What we have now needs fundamental change, and that is your ultimate responsibility.

A fair Ontario means fairness to workers and injured workers.

Orlando Buonastella

Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic