

Janet Paterson
President



Peter Page
Recording Secretary

Willy Noiles
Executive Vice President

Robert Larocque
Treasurer

March 25, 2020

Premier Doug Ford
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups in response to the COVID-19 virus that is rampant across the world and here in Ontario. Enclosed is a copy of the letter that ONIWG sent to the President and CEO of the WSIB, expressing our concerns for injured workers across the province and demanding that the WSIB put the necessary supports in place to ensure that this very vulnerable population will not be left to the mercy of the COVID-19 virus.

We understand the urgency of the issues and decisions that you are making daily to ensure the safety of Ontarians and we applaud your actions. We ask that you work with the WSIB to ensure that their role to support all workers affected by COVID-19 health conditions and related matters such as isolation and quarantine is carried out to the best of their abilities, assuring all workers that they will be fully supported should they be affected in any way by the virus. Finally, we ask that a framework is provided in collaboration with labour, injured workers, the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB, ensuring full protection for all Ontario workers.

The government has the ability to include COVID-19 in Schedule 4 by regulation and we ask you to take that step. Schedule 4 is meant for health conditions which would be strongly linked to work exposures, providing an "irrebuttable" presumption of work relatedness so long as you meet the conditions of the regulation, thereby offering no recourse for the employer to try to show that the worker was exposed elsewhere. We are asking that the same principle be applied to workers serving the public, naturally including healthcare and first response, but also retail, transit etc. These workers could of course get COVID19 from a non-work exposure, but it's much more likely, given the kind of work they do, that they got it at work. This would make workers' compensation benefits flow automatically, without all the hurdles in the current WSIB approach, maximizing the safety and well-being for not only the worker but their family as well.

The Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups is also requesting an emergency fund to assist with outreach to injured workers in Ontario during this pandemic. We are workers with permanent injuries that have left us with low income, physically and psychologically vulnerable and, like those who have suffered occupational disease, victims who have already suffered greatly. We look forward to your response to this very urgent matter.

Yours truly,

Janet Paterson
President

cc: Tom Teahen, CEO & President, WSIB