

# Peel's injured workers must beat the myths

## WE DON'T FAKE EITHER PAIN OR POVERTY

BY CATHERINE FENECH

It's been 25 years since I filed my original WCB (now WSIB, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) claim. It was the day my life changed forever and unfortunately for the worse.

Each year on this sombre anniversary, it's a time to reflect on just how much I've lost due to injury and how different my life became. Looking at pay alone, I have easily lost over a million dollars in earnings.

Of course, I have lost so much more than money.

Despite this, people still have this misplaced idea that injured workers are somehow faking injuries to take advantage of "generous" WSIB benefits.

In 25 years, I have yet to meet anyone who didn't lose after a work injury, and I have yet to meet anyone who didn't want to be healthy again and able to work.

Of course, I haven't met a single injured person who thought the benefits were generous.

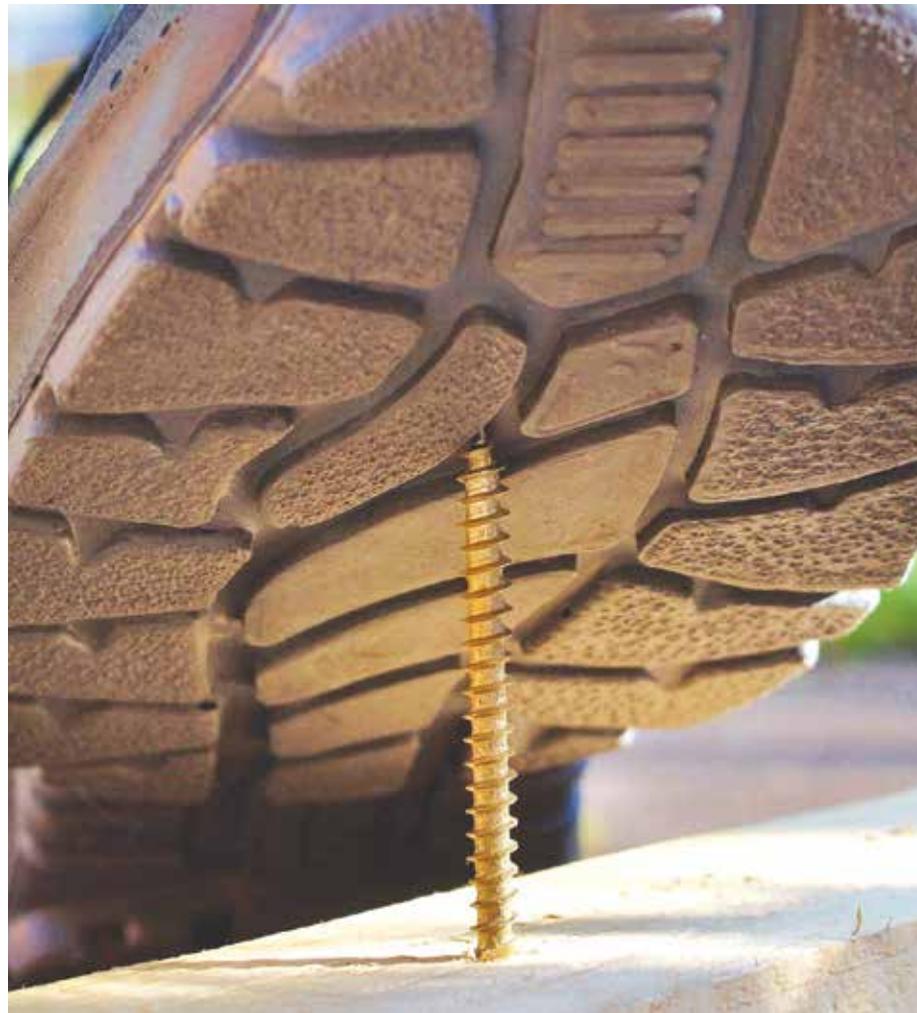
Yet this myth continues to stigmatize and mistreat injured workers.

As injured workers, we have an obligation to tell our stories and counter the myths surrounding workers' compensation. Our truth is what will change opinions and change the system.

Will 2020 be the year that WSIB gets rid of deeming?

Deeming is based on the worst stereotypes of injured workers and needs to go.

It assumes that injured workers are lazy and don't want to work.



This is what happens:

When you are permanently injured and unable to find a suitable job, the WSIB will 'deem' -- pretend -- that you have a job. WSIB then deducts from your benefits the wages that they think you can earn at this pretend job.

Many injured workers are "deemed" even when their doctors say they can't return to any work. For example, if you were earning \$20/hr before injury and

WSIB thinks you can earn minimum wage, \$14/hr, you would be left with benefits based on \$6/hr.

Because of deeming, injured workers who are unable to get a job live in poverty on meagre benefits, which can be even lower than social assistance rates.

Some end up on social assistance but others receive just enough from WSIB that they are excluded from receiving

any top up from social assistance.

The one thing that is certain is that deeming unfairly causes poverty for injured workers.

In 2019, NDP MPP Wayne Gates introduced Bill 119 in the Legislature, which can change the law and eliminate deeming.

We need the public's help to pressure Conservative MPPs to support this Bill. Some of us have already met with Peel and nearby NDP MPPs who have pledged their support.

If you live in a Conservative riding, please contact your MPP to set up a meeting. We will come with you and help you present to them.

They need to hear how their constituents have been impacted by workplace injuries and how the system fails to take care of them.

Please get more involved in Peel Injured Workers. As devastating as workplace injuries can be, it is important to know you are not alone. Others out there understand what you are going through.

Our meetings are an opportunity to meet others and get involved in the larger injured worker movement.

Peel Injured Workers meet the second Tuesday of every month (March 10 and April 14) at 6 p.m. in Room 109 at 40 Finchgate Boulevard, Brampton.

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