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IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH



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For Immediate Release

Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups Demands Openness and Fairness in Consultation Process That Proposes Sweeping Changes

ONIWG is demanding that the WSIB changes course and democratizes its consultation process on KPMG's disastrous "Value for Money Audit" that reviewed the Board's Dispute Resolution and Appeals process.

The WSIB announced the consultation for the audit in mid-June, with written submissions and feedback due by July 21. Stakeholders are being provided a mere 1.5 months to make written submissions on an audit that is proposing sweeping changes to the appeals process.

These proposed changes will negatively impact injured workers and their ability to appeal their claims, which is how many injured workers achieve justice – over 80% of worker appeals were allowed/partly allowed by the Tribunal in the last half of 2022.

Wayne Harris, ONIWG Vice-President, states: "As it stands, KPMG's recommendations would take a sledgehammer to the appeal rights of injured workers by introducing unnecessary time limits that will make the appeals process even more confusing and bureaucratic. In short, the proposed changes will lead to fewer injured workers appealing their WSIB claims, which will result in the Board saving a buck. As injured workers we know that the appeals process provides us a shot at receiving fair decisions following injury and/or illness."

It's concerning that the consultation is happening during peak summer season, when few people are available. And it's even more concerning that thousands of injured workers are left in the dark about this consultation, despite the recommendations having a direct impact on their appeal rights.

ONIWG and other labour groups have met with the WSIB outlining our concerns with the way that this consultation is structured. Unfortunately, the WSIB refuses to change course on the consultation process.

Janet Paterson, President of ONIWG, states: "ONIWG and allies have requested 3 changes to make this consultation transparent/fair: 1. The deadline to make written submissions should be extended by 6 months, so everyone has the necessary amount of time to develop their responses; 2. There should be public consultations on KPMG's audit, chaired by subject-matter experts with workers' compensation experience; and 3. All injured workers who could be impacted by the proposed

changes should be notified by the WSIB to ensure that they have an opportunity to respond.”

The WSIB needs to start listening to injured workers, rather than just corporations.

For more information, please contact:

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Injured & Ill Workers and Allies Demand Help With Skyrocketing Cost Of Living

I/we are writing you to express support for ONWIG's holiday demands.

People from all sides of the political spectrum agree that there is an affordability crisis in Ontario, and this holiday season nearly everyone is experiencing the crunch. Injured & ill workers – along with many of our marginalized allies – have spent years feeling a disproportionate amount of the pressure from austerity, cuts to services, and of inflation, making this a particularly difficult time of year for us.

The Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) wants to take this opportunity to remind the Government of Ontario of some of the basic steps they could easily take to ease the awful poverty experienced by those who have been hurt on the job. **The easiest thing the government could do is simply honour its election promise of raising Loss of Earnings benefits to 90% of pre-injury wages, as a first step.** Additionally, the government must remember and act on the core demands of ONIWG's *Workers' Comp Is A Right* campaign:

- **End Deeming** – No more phantom jobs. Stop cutting injured and ill worker benefits by pretending they have a job when they are unable to work or to find suitable work. The previous legislature sat on a private members bill that would end deeming (Bill 119) for years without even calling it for a vote. A new version of the bill will be introduced soon and the government must do the right thing and pass it, or introduce anti-deeming legislation of their own.
- **Listen to our doctors** – Stop ignoring the advice of workers' treating physicians in favour of the clearly flawed opinions of "paper doctors" who never meet or examine the injured or ill worker.
- **Stop cutting benefits based on asymptomatic pre-existing conditions** – This practice – imported from the insurance industry – cuts workers off benefits by blaming so-called "pre-existing conditions" for workers' injuries, even if the condition never caused the worker to feel any pain or miss a single day of work for their entire pre-injury life.

The current Government of Ontario often speaks about their fiscal concerns and constraints, and preaches the need to be financially responsible. We would like to remind you that in the last few years alone, the WSIB has simply handed billions of dollars in refunds to employers, all while cutting workers benefits by deeming, ignoring workers' doctors, and blaming unrelated pre-existing conditions. When the WSIB uses these excuses to cut compensation benefits, injured & ill workers often end up in the publicly funded health system, and on OW/ODSP, creating a cost to taxpayers and unnecessarily depleting public resources, rather than being cared for by the employer funded workers' compensation system.

Year after year, the Ontario Government, Ministry of Labour, and WSIB just keep giving generous gifts to Ontario's wealthy employers. **Don't you think it's time to give injured workers their rights this year?**

For more information, visit: injuredworkersonline.org/workers-comp-is-a-right-campaign