



December 12, 2022 - No. 58

Justice for Injured Workers
Ontario Injured Workers to Rally at
Ministry of Labour



Rally

Toronto

Monday, December 12 -- 11:00 am
Ministry of Labour, 400 University Ave.

Thunder Bay

Monday, December 12 -- 3:00 pm
MPP Kevin Holland's office, 774 N. James St.

Workers Demand Safety at Work

- **Quebec Construction Workers Step Up Fight for Recognition of Their Demands**

No to Police Headquarters on Guertin Arena Site in Hull Sector of Gatineau

- **A Vibrant Appeal to Humanize the Social and Natural Environment**

– Pierre Soublière –

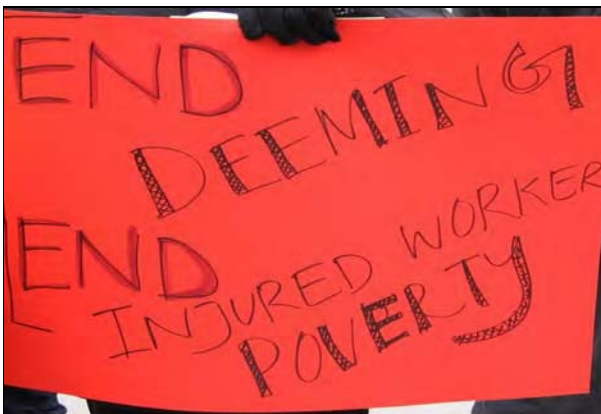
Justice for Injured Workers
**Ontario Injured Workers to Rally at
Ministry of Labour**



After two years in which injured workers gathered virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG) is once again holding its Christmas rally outside the Ministry of Labour at 11:00 am on Monday, December 12. It has been thirty-one years since the first Christmas rally was held to draw attention to the difficulties faced by injured workers, difficulties felt particularly acutely at this time of year. The actions highlight the impoverishment of injured workers due to the refusal of the Ontario government to ensure that all workers receive full compensation when injured or made ill at work.



A second rally is taking place at 3:00 pm the same afternoon in Thunder Bay outside the office of the local Member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP). See ad above for details.



This year the theme of the rallies is to make life more affordable for injured workers by meeting the basic demands that injured workers' organizations have been putting forward through their Workers' Comp Is a Right campaign. These demands are that the Ford government keep its election promise to raise benefit rates; stop pretending injured workers are employed when they are not; listen to injured workers' treating physicians; and stop cutting benefits

because of so-called pre-existing conditions. As part of the action ONIWG will deliver hundreds of letters reiterating these basic demands collected from injured workers and

organizations across Ontario to the Minister of Labour.

One of the main tools used by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to systematically impoverish injured workers is deeming, the process by which WSIB reduces injured workers' benefits on the basis of "deeming" that they are receiving earnings from jobs that are theoretically available to them, but which they do not have.

A private member's bill (Bill 57) to end this practice sponsored by NDP MPP Wayne Gates was presented to the legislature on December 7 and passed first reading. The previous legislature sat on an anti-deeming bill (Bill 119) for years without putting it to a vote and it died on the order paper when the legislature dissolved for the June 2022 election. Injured workers are demanding the Ford government pass this bill or introduce anti-deeming legislation of its own.



Workers Demand Safety at Work

Quebec Construction Workers Step Up Fight for Recognition of Their Demands

We're Starting 2023 with Health and Safety Reps
on Our Construction Sites!



Montreal

Tuesday, December 13 -- 11:00 am
CNESST office, 150 Rue Ste-Catherine O

[Facebook](#)

A key problem Quebec construction workers face is that when they speak up to demand safe working conditions they are criminalized by the construction companies and the government and its agency, the Quebec Construction Commission (CCQ).

Workers are demonstrating on Tuesday, December 13 in Montreal in front of the offices of

the Labour Standards, Pay Equity and Workplace Health and Safety Board (CNESST) to demand that health and safety representatives, who, according to the legislation, are to take office on construction sites on January 1, 2023, be trained by workers and not by employers.

The statistics show the urgency of this demand, which is part of the overall demands of construction workers in defence of their rights.

In 2021, 207 workers lost their lives in Quebec as a result of work-related accidents or occupational diseases. This is an increase of 20 per cent over 2020. Of these deaths, 71 occurred in the construction industry, an increase of 60 per cent from 2020. In total, across all sectors of the Quebec economy, 105,692 occupational injuries were recorded, 960 more than in 2020

Fatalities in the construction industry increased from 25 per cent of total workplace fatalities in 2020 to 35 per cent in 2021, while construction workers represent only five per cent of the employed workforce.

In several speeches during and after the election, Premier François Legault said that the construction sector is essential for building infrastructure for energy and trade corridors, for building facilities for the extraction of critical minerals required by the United States for its war machine, and other projects. The Premier said that the shortage of construction labour is the main problem to be solved at the moment.

There is indeed a demand for labour in the construction sector right now. The statistics on hours worked show this. According to the most recent statistics available there were 195 million hours worked in construction in 2021 by about 190,000 workers, an all-time high. In 2018, hours worked were almost 150 million, by about 160,000 workers, a higher ratio of workers to hours worked than in 2021.

Claim of a Labour Shortage in Construction

The number of workers leaving the industry each year is about 15 per cent. In 2020 there were 22 per cent more departures than in 2019. Workers are leaving for many reasons including poor working conditions, rampant acceleration of the pace of work, lack of job security with no seniority or recall lists in the vast majority of sites, intimidation by companies when workers denounce unsafe conditions, refusal of the CNESST to guarantee safe working conditions, among others.

The response of the government and the CCQ to the resulting "shortage" is to lower the standards for training of workers to get them into the sector faster.

Crane operators have been fighting for many years, and continue to fight, against the abolition of the requirement that operators receive formal training and obtain a Diploma of Vocational Studies before they can operate a crane. This requirement resulted in a significant reduction in deaths and injuries resulting from accidents involving cranes.



Now, in the name of dealing with the labour shortage, we are witnessing a general phenomenon throughout the construction sector called "opening the labour pools." A massive number of workers, including a very large number of young people, are entering the construction sector without any professional training. The CCQ allows anyone with a 150-hour job guarantee to enter the construction industry as an apprentice. Young people are being offered the opportunity to earn good wages without having to go to school.

According to one construction union, the drop-out rate for workers who enter the industry without training is much higher than the rate for those who have graduated from training schools or have relevant work experience. Many do not even complete their 150 hours.

According to the union, 9.3 per cent of graduates leave the sector on average after one year, compared to 20.6 per cent of non-graduates. After five years, 28.3 per cent of graduates leave the sector compared to 41.6 per cent of non-graduates.

The government and the CCQ are openly promoting this adventurist method in the name of addressing the labour shortage.

Another issue raised by workers is the training and job security of health and safety representatives.

An Act to modernize the occupational health and safety regime, received royal assent on October 6, 2021 despite massive worker opposition. It is a full-scale attack on workers' right to healthy and safe working conditions. Among other things, it leaves prevention programs in the hands of employers.

The law mandates the presence of health and safety representatives on construction sites, previously required on only the largest sites. These representatives are elected by the workers and are supposed to work independently of the employers. Officially, they cannot be dismissed or disciplined by employers for performing their duties.

These representatives are supposed to be in place on January 1, 2023 across Quebec.

The December 13 demonstration in front of the CNESST offices is aimed at ensuring that these representatives are not only in place but are trained by the unions and are able to act independent of employers. The big construction companies are opposed to this and want to control the training.

In addition, because there is no job security in construction, no recall or seniority list except in very rare cases, and workers have to apply for a job on every new project, there is no protection for health and safety representatives. Officially, the employer does not have the right to fire a worker who is a health and safety representative, but routinely, workers who stand up for their rights are fired and told that there is no more work available for them, that they should look for work elsewhere.

Workers are demonstrating on December 13 to oppose this arbitrariness, and to demand that health and safety representatives be fully trained by workers and their unions.

Construction workers are putting forward demands including job security, planning of the work to avoid overwork in peak periods followed by periods of a shortage of work and adequate training for all construction workers.

The Workers' Centre of CPC(M-L) strongly supports these demands of construction workers and their right to organize and make their claim on the immense value they create for the economy.



No to Police Headquarters on Guertin Arena Site in Hull Sector of Gatineau
A Vibrant Appeal to Humanize the Social and Natural Environment

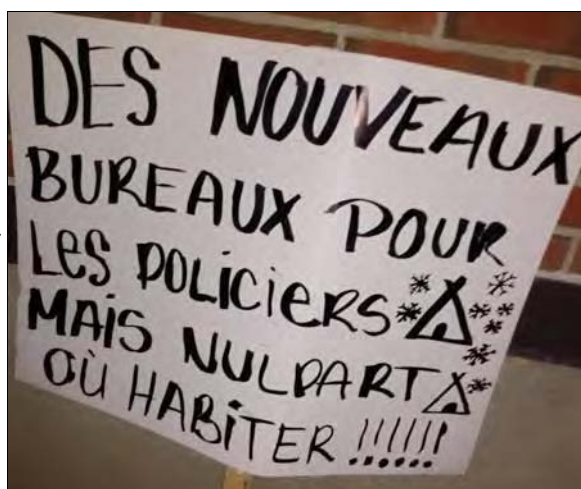
– Pierre Soublière –



An important mobilization is underway to demand that the City of Gatineau abandon its project for a police headquarters on the site of what was the Robert-Guertin Arena in the Hull sector of Gatineau. To sound the alarm, a demonstration was held in front of the Guertin centre on November 14, organized by the Association for the Defence of Social Rights (ADDS) and the Île-de-Hull Residents' Association (ARIH).

At the city council meeting the next evening, more than twenty people from the community showed up, with many intervening to express their preoccupations and to remind elected officials that a number of municipal plans had been developed over the years to revitalize the downtown area, attract families and businesses (the neighbourhood has been without a grocery store for several decades), build social and affordable housing, help those who are in a situation of homelessness, and many others.

In their own name or on behalf of various associations, those who spoke represented street help workers, associations fighting against poverty and for social and affordable housing, those helping the homeless, social workers, lawyers, architects, teachers as well as citizens who settled down in Hull with their families. They very convincingly explained how a police headquarters would only exacerbate the problems which already exist in the neighbourhood and would not contribute in any way to community life. The interventions were often based on municipal studies in which some of them had



themselves participated and reflected the opinions of neighbourhood residents obtained through interviews, coffee-house meetings and organized discussions.

Many city councillors said they were moved by the presentations and appreciated the "intelligence and wisdom" of the intervenors, thanking those who spoke for their involvement as citizens and said that the discussion had an impact on them and would surely influence their final decision.

The opening salvo was an open letter from the Outaouais Interdisciplinary Clinic for Social Rights (CIDSO), an organization which helps and defends the rights of an increasing number of people facing homelessness and poverty in the Hull sector. The ten cosignatories point out that the site where the City of Gatineau wants to build the Police services' headquarters is less than 200 metres from the Gîte Ami, the only available emergency shelter in the region.



CIDSO explained that the presence of the police headquarters could cause serious problems for the numerous homeless people who live in the targeted area and that studies have shown that a closer proximity of the police to marginalized populations can have dire consequences such as an increased risk of harassment, profiling and judicialization. This could in turn result in the displacement of marginalized persons away from the neighbourhood near the Robert-Guertin Centre where most of the social services can be found. They also find it

appalling that such a decision is contemplated in the midst of an unprecedented housing crisis in which the demand for social and affordable housing is on the rise. Of those who seek help at the clinic 88 per cent are in need of affordable and decent housing. Since 2020, the Robert-Guertin Arena has served as a emergency homeless shelter as well as an out-of-the-cold shelter.

A council meeting scheduled for November 22 was postponed until January, members of the municipal plenary committee having raised that more information is needed to, among other things, examine the possibility of alternative sites, showing that the mobilization has, in fact, had an impact and that it must not let up in the coming months.

A petition has been launched demanding that the Gatineau City Council not consider the Robert-Guertin site for the Gatineau police headquarters and that consultations be held with the population of Gatineau to work out a plan by which the entire Guertin site will be developed with the aim of meeting basic human needs, including social and affordable housing, sports and recreation infrastructure, as well as local businesses and parks.

To access and sign the petition, visit the Association pour la défense des droits sociaux [website here](#).

