

May 31, 2023 - No. 30

40th Anniversary of Injured Workers' Day -- June 1

All Out to Support the Just Demands of Injured Workers and Their Allies for Human-Centred Reforms to Workers' Compensation!

Ontario Injured Workers' Day Actions



Toronto

March and Rally
11:00 am
Queen's Park

Thunder Bay

Flag Raising and Ceremony
10:00 am
City Hall

London

Celebrate 40 Years
11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Northwest corner, Victoria Park

Interviews

- **Oppose Attempts to Restructure Workers' Compensation in the Name of "Value for Money"**

– *Christine Nugent, Barrie and District Injured Workers' Group and Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups* –

- **"I Want All of the People Who Have Been Disrespected, Ignored, and Hidden Away to Be Seen, to Be Counted, and to Be Heard!"**
– Liz Garant-Yaremcio, President, Windsor Injured Workers Group and Vice-President for Southwestern Ontario for Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) –
- **"We are Honourable Canadian Workers" – Injured Workers' Stories**
– Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups –

40th Anniversary of Injured Workers' Day -- June 1

All Out to Support the Just Demands of Injured Workers and Their Allies for Human-Centred Reforms to Workers' Compensation!



On June 1, the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) will hold its annual Injured Workers' Day rally and march starting at Queen's Park in Toronto at 11:00 am. Some local injured workers' groups will hold actions as well.

This year, June 1 marks the 40th anniversary of the day in 1983 when injured workers and their allies converged on the Ontario Legislature where the government of Bill Davis was holding hearings to prepare attacks on the injured workers' compensation system. Over 3,500 people came to address the hearings, forcing the government to hold them on the lawn of Queen's Park. This resulted in the government backing down on its main attacks at the time.



Since then, June 1 has been kept as a day of struggle, when injured workers and their allies return to the Legislature to speak out about their conditions and their demands.

Today injured workers and their allies stand second to none as an organized force to affirm their

rights, which upholds the rights of all workers to dignity and respect. Today through their local, provincial and national collectives and organizations injured workers and their allies are speaking for themselves about their lived experience and what it tells them is required of a workers' compensation system worthy of the name.

Building up to June 1, ONIWG has published stories from injured workers themselves from different parts of Canada who have worked in different fields. In the videos the workers discuss how they were injured, their experiences, and in particular what the experience of fighting for their rights within the existing workplace compensation regimes has taught them about what changes are required.

They are clear that the existing arrangements consider them as things which are treated as burdens, liars and even criminals in order to facilitate the interests of employers, and governments in their service, who only want to eliminate their responsibilities and use the system to limit what workers can claim while they get paid in the form of rebates using a fraudulent surplus which the board has generated by cutting back on workers' compensation.

The stories show that injured workers, as representatives of the working class of Canada and the world, are nobody's fools. Everyone should listen to what they have to say and join their fight for justice by sharing their demands as demands of the working class as a whole. They are making it clear that they must be empowered to decide the direction of the system, and not those who do not share their experiences and reality. They are standing up for safe and healthy workplaces and have taken up doing their own research and training to ensure they can fight effectively.

Their experiences show them the human-centred reforms which are desperately needed, and by putting them forward they are planting a flag around which they can organize. They want governments to be accountable to the working people. They are honourable Canadian workers who are fighting for the rights of all by fighting for their own rights to compensation and accountability and they must be heard.

On this occasion, ONIWG is putting forward demands for reforms to the existing workers' compensation system in Ontario. They are calling for:

"- Increase injured workers' WSIB [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board] wage loss benefits back to 90 per cent,

"- Stop the damaging recommendations from KPMG,

"- End the WSIB damaging practice of deeming that creates fake jobs, and

"- Show your support for injured workers by joining the rally at Queen's Park, Toronto, 11:00 am!"

Everyone is encouraged to join actions on Injured Workers' Day, June 1, and help to make them a success, and also to share ONIWG's injuredworkersorganize.ca website and the stories there to broaden its reach.



Interviews

Oppose Attempts to Restructure Workers' Compensation in the Name of "Value for Money"

– Christine Nugent, Barrie and District Injured Workers' Group and Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups –

In this *Workers' Forum* interview we speak with Christine Nugent of the Barrie and District Injured

Workers' Group and the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) about Injured Workers' Day and ONIWG's demand to stop the anti-worker restructuring of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board on the basis of the global accounting firm KPMG's "value for money" audits.



"I Want All of the People Who Have Been Disrespected, Ignored, and Hidden Away to Be Seen, to Be Counted, and to Be Heard!"

– Liz Garant-Yaremcio, President, Windsor Injured Workers Group and Vice-President for Southwestern Ontario for Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups –

The following presentation was made by Liz Garant-Yaremcio at the May Day 2023 Workers' Roundtable held in Windsor, Ontario on April 30, 2023.

On April the 28, those that know and care pause, reflect, and mourn all the workers that have been killed on the job or died from work-related diseases.

On May 1, those that know and care, pledge to take action against the many wrongs and injustices that workers are subjected to in their workplaces and their work-related conditions.

June 1 is injured workers' day in Ontario, a historical day where for the last 40 years plus injured workers have been demanding governments listen to their demands.



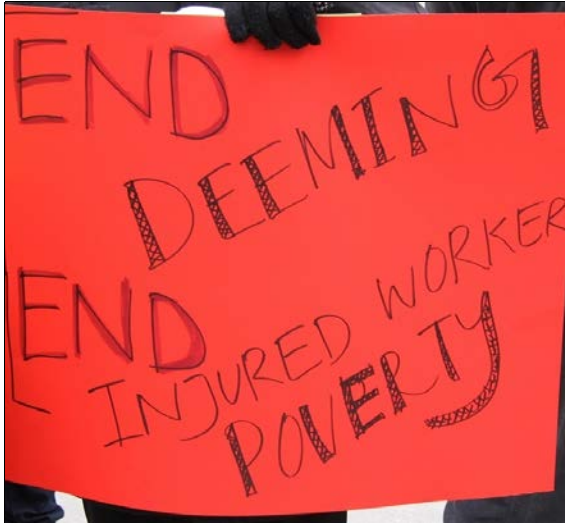
The problems of the many are not just ignored, they are hidden from view. The suffering is hidden. The injustice is hidden. The deaths are hidden.

These things are hidden not just because they are emotionally difficult, but because the powerful

and wealthy do not want to know, and do not want us to know what the truth is.

I know what some of you are thinking: "Here comes another crazy conspiracy theory."

Well, I do not know what to call it, but I do know at least some of the truth. I ought to know. I am one of the literally countless permanently injured workers who are not counted. We have been "deemed" to be back to work and earning as much as we ever did.



Except that is not true. Deeming is a lie. A legal fiction created by a section of the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, Worker's Comp., to cut off or reduce compensation for our injuries.

Not because we are all better. We are not. Our injuries are permanent.

Not because we are earning as much as we did before. Most of us are not.

We are cut off because money in the pockets of employers is more important than workers' lives and suffering.

And there is more, a lot more to say.

But first, I want to let you know who I am. I do not think that I am all that important, but the compensation board and the government must think I am important, because they sure do not want to talk about me and all the other injured workers like me. So I am going to talk about us.

I used to work in a warehouse that held and managed parts for Chrysler.

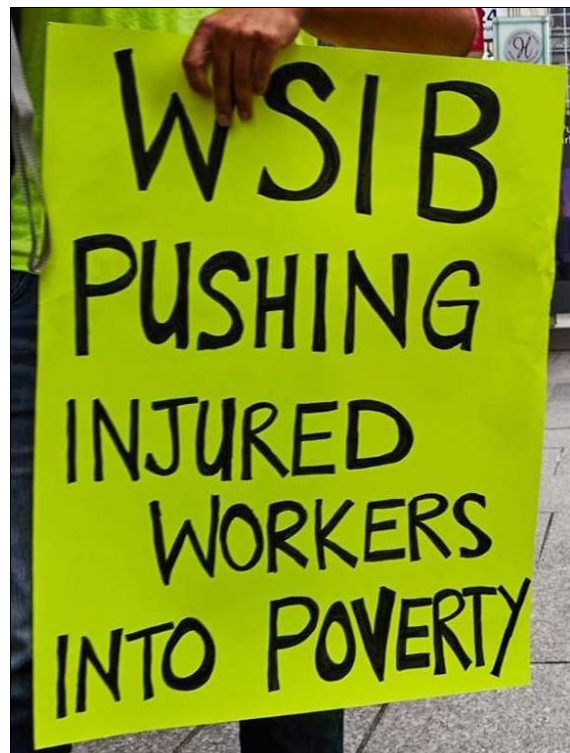
I suffered an on the job back injury in 2006. It did not get better, it got worse. I was put on light duty in 2011. My injury is permanent. I cannot do the things that I used to do. I will spare you the details, and just tell you my life is not the same as it was, and never will be.

My workplace is gone, and I have been "deemed" to be earning money that I am not actually earning. But that inconvenient fact is no problem for the Board. Because they are entitled under law to make up a lie about me, cut me off, and close my file. Me and an unknown number of others like me.

The number of permanently injured workers who have been "deemed" right off of the system is unknown. It is unknown, because the Board does not keep count of them. They have saved some money and maybe closed a file, and they sure count that. But what happens to the "deemed" workers? They do not count that.

They do not know because they do not ask. They choose not to ask about what happens to us. They do not care about us enough to even be bothered to ask.

And it is not just the so called "deemed" workers they do not ask about.



The Board does not ask how many injured workers commit suicide.

The Board does not ask how many injured workers OD'ed

The Board does not ask how many injured migrant workers have been sent home with no training, no compensation, and no hope of returning.

The Board does not ask how many workers live in poverty.

The Board does not ask how many injured workers have suffered family breakups after an injury.

The Board does not ask for a true reckoning of deaths from occupationally related illnesses. So you worked in a mine or foundry, or breathed in specks of metal cutting fluids, and you are dying of cancer? You smoked. Not our problem!

The Board does not ask a lot of questions that you and I would think are important. Questions that common sense and common fairness and common decency would demand to be asked.

The only reason they do not ask is because they do not want to know. And because they do not want us to know.

If they and you and I do not know these things, it makes it easy for the Board to know only the things it wants to know and to do the things it wants to do.

Like hand one and a half BILLION dollars back to employers in premium rebates. The Board was able to count every one of those dollars really well. But it sure did not count what it took to take that money and those resources away from the injured to give to the rich. The injured paid for that rebate in tears and more trouble than anyone knows. No one knows, because no one asks. Especially not the Board.

Still think that I am talking about a crazy conspiracy theory?

Then why don't you ask some questions?

Why don't you ask why there are NO injured workers on the Board of Directors of the compensation board?

Why don't you ask why out of ten directors, only two come from organized labour?



Why don't you ask why there are NO workers on the Board of Directors that come from the industrial sector of the workforce?

Why don't you ask all ten directors just what their ties and connections are to the Conservative Party?

Why don't you ask why directors are appointed by the government instead of elected?

Why don't you ask who the compensation system is for?

The compensation law prohibits injured workers from suing employers for workplace injuries. Injured workers are supposed to get their

compensation from the system. But the system tries to charge employers as little money for premiums as possible, and even give money collected for the benefit of injured workers back to

employers.

So the employers get complete protection from lawsuits, but injured workers get less and less and less every year.

So who is the system for?

I do not want to sue my employer, even if I could. I want justice. I want to live in dignity. I want fairness. I want all of the people who have been disrespected, ignored, and hidden away to be seen, to be counted, and to be heard!

Do you want to know what a conspiracy is? It is a group of people who have organized themselves to hurt you and help themselves at your expense.

Do you want to know what crazy is? It's ignoring the evidence that these people have enriched themselves at our expense. It's being complacent. It is doing nothing and saying nothing because they think we are nothing.

But you want to know what REALLY crazy is? It's them thinking that we will remain ignorant, complacent, saying nothing and doing nothing, forever. That is REALLY crazy. Because that is NOT what is going to happen.

Starting now.

Workers' Comp Is a Right!!



"We are Honourable Canadian Workers" – Injured Workers' Stories – Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups –



In the lead up to June 1 Injured Workers Day, the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Group is publishing stories from injured workers from across Ontario as well as other parts of Canada. The stories bring forward the lived experiences of injured workers in empowering themselves to affirm their rights following their injuries and their views on what is required to change in Canada to affirm the rights of all those injured on the job.

To view the stories on youtube [click here](#). As new videos are added they will automatically be added to the playlist so we encourage you to check back every few days.

