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MEDIA ADVISORY

INJURED WORKERS 'BAKE SALE' AGAINST CUTS TO COMPENSATION

11 a.m. December 10th 2010 - Ministry of Labour - 400 University Ave, Toronto

On Friday December 10th at 11:00 a.m., injured workers will hold their 19th annual Christmas demonstration, held at this time of year to highlight the poverty and insecurity of one of Ontario's most vulnerable groups.

Despite promises that the board's "unfunded liability" will not be solved on the backs of injured workers, the government will keep injured workers benefits below the cost of living. The inflation rate for Ontario this past year was 3.4% but the government has only permitted a 0.5% adjustment. Since the McGuinty government came to power in 2003, injured workers have lost 6.8% to inflation. Since 1996, compensation for the permanently disabled has fallen behind inflation by about 20%.

Injured workers have long maintained that the Board's financial situation or "unfunded liability" is not critical. The WSIB has \$16 billion 'in the bank' and could raise even more money if it had not reduced employer premiums dramatically under the Harris government. Many injured workers live in poverty while employers' rates are 25% lower than what they paid 15 years ago.

This year the tone will change. Injured workers see they are being sacrificed for the sake of the billion dollar WSIB institution and will ask for a change of direction – justice and humanity speedily rendered. Injured workers will have a Kafkaesque "**bake sale**" where the poor will be raising money for one of Ontario's richest agencies which already has a reserve fund of \$16 billion.

The workers' compensation board was established in 1915 to provide a system of full justice, not half measures, to injured workers, while protecting employers from lawsuits. Injured workers want a public system that is responsive to their needs, not a cheap insurance plan that protects employers but not the injured.

The rally includes injured worker and labour speakers from the Ontario Federation of Labour and other labour groups. It will feature Santa, Scrooge and many symbols created by injured workers, such as the "Tree of Pain", a Christmas tree decorated with a colourful array of the medicine bottles they rely on to relieve pain and suffering. Minister Fonseca is expected to attend.

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For more information: <http://www.injuredworkersonline.org>

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