

## Injured Workers June 15<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting

On June 15, 2011, injured workers and their allies met in Toronto to discuss how to get fair compensation from the WSIB. The conversation centred on ongoing actions of various injured worker groups, how to build momentum in the movement, and developing skills for activism.

The event was organized and facilitated by the Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario (IAVGO) community legal clinic and the Injured Workers Action for Justice (IWA4J) injured worker group.

It started with a lively discussion about the kinds of actions injured workers knew about or were involved with in Canada or overseas. Some of the sentiments were: the hope that one day all injured workers will come out; the desire to organize demonstrations; and the need to build solidarity.

The stage was then given to Airissa Gemma, Community Legal Worker at IAVGO, to discuss the recent patterns and changing policies at the WSIB. She noted that much of what is happening at the Board is detrimental to injured workers. Of particular concern is the WSIB Funding Review. The review focuses on how the Board can save money (to reduce its “unfunded liability”). Many question whether those savings will come –or are already here- on the backs of injured workers.

Up next we met with the MPP for Trinity-Spadina, Rosario Marchese (NDP). Mr. Marchese provided an

overview of the economic and political situation in Ontario, specifically as it relates to low and middle-class people and injured workers. He also spoke about the importance of MPP delegations to challenge corporate power in government, racist employment practices, and unjust tax cuts for the rich. In terms of practical tips: he said injured workers should meet face-to-face with their MPPs, get promises from MPPs in writing, and ask MPPs to approach their party leader in writing. If their promises are sincere, they will do it. Another point was that, if you write letters to MPPs send them “private and confidential” so the letters actually get directly to the MPPs hands. Marchese emphasized in the need use political pressure to resist and fight back WSIB’s cuts to injured workers.

As the night continued, participants were able to choose to participate in one of three workshops. The workshops were on community organizing, public speaking, and the history of the injured worker movement.

The meeting ended with injured workers committing to ongoing MPP delegations and holding information pickets. People articulated a desire to connect with the Ontario Network of Injured Worker Groups (ONIWG), other injured workers and other allies who may have common issues. Overall it was a well-attended and motivating event.

*(source: IAVGO)*