



News Release/Communiqué

Andrea Horwath MPP/Députée
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EXPAND WSIB COVERAGE FOR ALL WORKERS, HORWATH SAYS

QUEEN'S PARK – Hamilton East MPP Andrea Horwath says for more than three years the McGuinty Liberals concealed a crucial report that recommends workplace injury coverage for all Ontario workers.

Currently more than 1.3 million workers, some 35 per cent of Ontario's workforce, can't access compensation for on-the-job injuries because they are excluded under the Workplace Safety Insurance Act.

Using freedom of information provisions, Horwath obtained the report and impact study, undertaken for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in October 2002 and November 2003 respectively.

The Brock Smith report concluded, after extensive consultations, that injury coverage should be expanded to cover all Ontario workers, with few exceptions.

"Every worker who suffers a workplace injury should have the right to apply for compensation through the WSIB," Horwath said. "I'm appalled that the McGuinty Liberals buried this report rather than implement its recommendations and end the suffering for thousands of workers who are not covered now. "

One such excluded worker is Maryam Nazemi, who joined Horwath and Ontario Federation of Labour President Wayne Samuelson to stress the need for expanded coverage.

Nazemi described her physical and financial struggles that followed a back injury she suffered while teaching at a Montessorri School. Private day cares, private health care practices, banks, trusts and insurance companies are among the employers who are exempt from the WSIB, leaving those workers unprotected.

In a letter responding to Nazemi's concern for workers who are not currently covered by the WSIB, Labour Minister Steve Peters said he would "keep them in mind when considering what further work needs to be done."

Premier Dalton McGuinty also wrote Nazemi saying that "people's health and well-being are our most precious resources".

"I challenge the McGuinty Liberals to put meaning to their words, prove they are on the side of workers by implementing the report's longstanding recommendations," Horwath said.

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