

Day of Mourning and Injured Workers
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On this day we recognize the many contributions of all workers. However, I stand here honouring the many essential workers who have given more than average. While some have paid the ultimate price, with their lives. Today, let's not forget those who have been injured while "doing their jobs"!

No worker should have to worry about "will I be able to make it home the same way I came in to work". It matters not what industry you work in, you have made a commitment to do the job you have been mandated to do. Many people will never have the choice of where they will work. You should not have to think, imagine or anticipate that having to fight for survival would be part of that contract. Furthermore, you will never find on said signed contract the words "you may not make it home because of death or injury" anywhere on it.

Workers are the foundation of every workplace. However, once you are injured at times you are made to feel as if it was your fault why you got injured in the first place.

You must complete a stock pile of paperwork for WSIB in order to begin your claim. This system is made to make you feel as if you are being penalized for putting forward a claim. It really makes one wonder if it is an attempt to frustrate you into not going through with the claim. The further anguish that is experienced leads to one developing increased anxiety, and if you didn't suffer from anxiety before, you will certainly be diagnosed with some generalized anxiety after.

Is it a coincidence that you don't usually have an email address for your assigned specialist? I think not! By the time your claim is completed you would have gone through no less than 3-4 case workers. The argument that is sometimes had between your GP/MD and WSIB, who at times sadly have the final say!

The same can be said if you did not get injured on the job and are lucky enough (or so it is thought) to have insurance through work. The challenges are similar to WSIB, but different, in that you don't have as much paperwork.

On return to work, you would have been through no less than 4 calls to find out when you will be returning to work (all the time under the guise - "just calling to see how you are doing"). Having to jump through the virtual hoops a few times is an understatement to say the least.

The major challenge is the lack of a system approach to ensure you are appropriately accommodated by your employer. Being lucky enough to have not only a lack of thought, consideration, let's not forget empathy. You may have a Manager who is capable of being empathetic so your transition back to work is made a bit easier. Also, not to forget if you are unionized and have a knowledgeable union representative with you during this return to work process. For anyone returning it is not recommended and recognized that a gradual return to work would be the best option, why is this not a consideration, especially for those returning after being away for a long period of time.

Returning to your regular area of work, sadly, sometimes you are treated with indifference and disdain even by your colleagues. What is neither thought of or recognized, is that you are experiencing increased anxiety about returning to work. At times you may have varying extremes. One might be, the individual may be avoided, which leads to feeling of being isolated, and the other end of the spectrum where the expectation is for the individual to return pre-injury functions. Another staff member being expected to "pick up the extra task" for individuals on an accommodation leads to animosity and hostility among staff.

Whether it is WSIB or not, Insurance Companies and organizations need to do a better job at mitigating risk by ensuring systems are in place to protect workers, not just physically, but psychologically. Working in unison will not only reduce the risk for possible re-injury and loss of production but will facilitate that much needed support to injured workers in transitioning safely after an injury.

We all play a part in ensuring that supporting an injured worker is essential to who we are as a workforce!