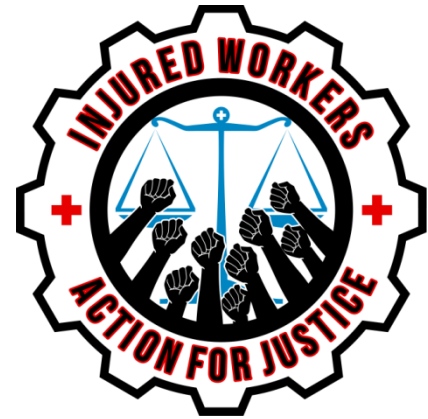


April 27, 2021

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block, 80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2

Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1A1



Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Ford,

Open Letter – National Day of Mourning: No More Deaths or Injury at Work

April 28th is the National Day of Mourning for workers who were killed or injured at work. Injured Workers Action for Justice (IWA4J) is writing this letter to demand both the Canadian and Ontario governments do more to protect all workers during this devastating pandemic.

During this time, many workers on the front lines have become gravely ill and have died due to a lack of COVID-19 specific OHS regulations, insufficient safety protocols in the workplace, lack of social safety net to decline unsafe work, and government insistence that workplaces with outbreaks remain open.

The governments' inactions are disproportionately impacting workers who are racialized and marginalized, including: undocumented workers, refugees, migrant workers, injured workers and people with disabilities in precarious workplaces and communities. These workers have been working continuously in hospitals, nursing home facilities, the agricultural industry, grocery stores, restaurants, public transit, construction, manufacturing and food industry and more. Many do this unsafe work while facing an onslaught of anti-Asian racism, harassment and attacks.

Political leaders like to pay lip service to these workers by calling them "essential", yet it would appear they are expendable. Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Ford, please know that no product is so important that it is worth the life of one of our neighbors. No worker should have to risk their life to do their job.

Both federal and provincial governments are responsible and accountable for the unnecessary deaths and illness that continue to occur in the workplace as a result of

COVID-19. We, therefore, urge you to take the following actions immediately to protect all workers and provide immediate support to the workers and families of workers who have been killed, injured and infected with COVID-19:

Provincial

1. The Chief Coroner and Ministry of Labour should be required to investigate all work-related deaths, including occupational disease, regardless of the industry and with no delay. Inquests should be mandatory for all workplace deaths.
2. The Ministry of Labour should:
 - Establish specific and strict regulations - not guidelines -to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our workplaces.
 - Have significantly more investigators targeting large operations. The focus should be on non-unionized workplace settings such as agricultural operations and distribution centers.
 - Prosecute employers under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* when violations occur. Prosecutions are especially important when there are clusters of COVID-19 in workplaces because employers have not taken the necessary steps to prevent transmission.
 - Temporarily shut down any and all worksites with COVID-19 outbreaks and ensure industrial cleaning and worker testing is done prior to reopening businesses.
3. The Ministry of Labour and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) should strengthen protections and protocols to prevent workplace harassment and provide immediate and accessible compensation to workers who suffer from harassment, bullying and chronic mental stress at their workplaces.
4. The WSIB should:
 - Accept injured workers' healthcare providers' medical advice regarding workers' healthcare and return to work instead of wasting money on WSIB "paper doctors" and overriding injured workers' doctors' recommendations. Ensure that any return to work plan ensures workers' safety from COVID-19.

- Ensure that companies are paying their fair share of WSIB premiums. For example, the WSIB has allowed Amazon, a multi-billion dollar company who has profited tremendously during the pandemic and who is a notoriously dangerous employer, to be classified as a “specialized retail” instead of “warehouse”. [This means that Amazon is paying significantly less premiums than it should.](#)¹ It’s scandalous that the WSIB allowed this to happen, especially when injured workers face so much austerity.

5. The government should:

- Pass Bill 191, which would amend the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* to add COVID-19 to the list of presumptive occupational diseases.
- End the WSIB practice “deeming” (ending disabled workers’ benefits by pretending that they are earning a living when they are not), and ensure that this practice is stopped especially with the pandemic lockdown (see Bill 119, Respecting Injured Workers Act (Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment), 2019).
- Provide compensation to injured workers who are age of 65 or older and who have not been able to contribute to CPP because of their injuries.
- Legislate at least 10 paid sick days so that workers can get tested and stay home when they are sick to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Federal

1. Provide immediate and unconditional permanent immigration status for all undocumented and migrant workers. This should include workers who become sick or injured at work and who are often repatriated to a life of poverty and ill health as a result of workplace injuries sustained in Canada. The program recently proposed is grossly inadequate to allow more than a tiny fraction of farmworkers and other essential workers to qualify.

Federal and Provincial

1. Immediately offer free vaccines to all essential workers, including undocumented and migrant workers, and ensure protections are in place to guarantee privacy and freedom from reprisals if they decline it.

¹ <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/12/10/amazon-warehouse-workers-saw-injury-rates-double-then-covid-hit-inside-a-hidden-safety-crisis.html>

2. Provide social assistance benefits with a real living-cost increase and implement a new Canada disability income benefit for people with disabilities to sustain their life. Any social safety net should be available to everyone who needs it regardless of immigration status.

On April 28, we will remember, honour, and mourn the workers who were killed at work. We as workers and communities are united and working together to make sure that these demands are implemented and followed by our representatives in both levels of government. We will continue working with our allies and people in the communities to help our representatives do their jobs to protect all workers during this critical time. We urge both governments to respond with immediate action.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

In Solidarity,

Members of Injured Workers Action for Justice

Injured Workers Action for Justice (IWA4J) is a diverse group of injured workers who have been fighting for fair compensation and respect from WSIB (Workplace & Safety Insurance Board) for all workers in Ontario since 2010. We work closely with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG), other injured workers groups, Community Legal Clinics and other like-minded community organizations and unions, who understand the systemic issues and support our work.

Contact us for more info:

[facebook.com/justiceforinjuredworkers](https://www.facebook.com/justiceforinjuredworkers)

twitter.com/IWA4Justice

[instagram.com/iwa4j](https://www.instagram.com/iwa4j)

Email: IWAction4J@gmail.com

Bad Medicine & No Evidence Reports: <https://www.fairnessforinjuredworkers.org/>

Real Healthcare for Injured Workers Campaign: <https://iavgo.org/get-involved/>

#CoverOurCare: <https://twitter.com/IWA4Justice>

#WorkersComplsARight: <https://injuredworkersonline.org/workers-comp-is-a-right-campaign>