



**IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH!**

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### **A Serious Anniversary on Halloween: 110 years of workers' compensation law**

On October 31<sup>st</sup>, while our children and grandchildren trick or treat, injured and ill workers will be remembering Chief Justice William Meredith's report to the Ontario Legislature that created our workers' compensation system. This was the first piece of social legislature, preceding Medicare, Unemployment Insurance, social security, and other progressive measures. We remember with pride and mourn the fact that very sadly, the tide has turned against us today. Meredith tabled his report on October 31, 1913.

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/about-us/reports/meredith-report?lang=en>

In celebrating this anniversary, injured and ill workers are keenly aware that the system was supposed to help, not hinder. Justice Meredith said injured workers deserved "full justice" instead of "half measures" or "the least they can be put off with". He set up a system that was humanitarian and supportive to injured and ill workers.

Justice Meredith set a high moral compass for the workers' compensation system to meet. He stated with determination that the purpose of the compensation system was: "...I believe the true aim of a compensation law is to provide for the injured worker and dependents and to prevent their becoming a charge upon their relatives or friends, or upon the community at large".

<https://injuredworkersonline.org/workers-compensation/>

Injured and ill workers today, especially those with permanent injuries, experience a very different system. The present system has been modelled on private insurance; cold, manipulative, bureaucratic, and unresponsive to human suffering. On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the report, Professor Robert Storey and Carolann Elston held hearings across Ontario and were shocked about the stories they heard. They concluded the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board was "mean spirited" and had "lost its moral compass". It recommended radical change to return

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to justice and humanity. ONIWG with allies has also gathered video stories of injured and ill workers.

[https://www.youtube.com/@InjuredWorkersVideoCampaign/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf\\_id=0](https://www.youtube.com/@InjuredWorkersVideoCampaign/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=0)

<https://injuredworkersonline.org/revived-meredith-commission-reports/>

In celebrating the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary, injured workers demand “justice and humanity speedily rendered”. This used to be the slogan of the old Workers’ Compensation Board, paraphrasing Meredith’s words. We want more than slogans; we want the system to return to its original mandate and find its lost moral compass. This will require profound change.

Janet Paterson, President of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers’ Groups (ONIWG) said: “The system needs to return to its humanitarian origin. It is not about claim numbers, auditors, or employer rebates. It is about injured workers and our families. We will not allow the DNA of workers’ compensation to be erased.”

Workers Compensation is a right!

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

Collectively,

The Ontario Network of Injured Workers’ Groups

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