

BM's Story

I got injured in 2008 after only seven months working as letter carrier when I experienced terrible pain on my right knee going down the stairs to the subway after work. Work was brutal: I left at 4 am. and came home at 9 pm, one night 1 am because "mail is mail is mail is mail" and householders and parcels and almost every day a different route. Where was the Union?

The hospital diagnosed a sprain and over exertion. Canada Post put me on "light duty when available" but it was made clear that "temp" workers are not entitled to "light duty." I was still trying to work "light duty" in 2011, i.e. an occasional overnight shift, when Canada Post finally fired me. The Union was useless in helping me.

I did get my job back and was even granted a transfer to inside sortation, but my knee was just not cooperating anymore. The pain fluctuated depending on how much weight I carried (groceries, laundry), how long I walked and what exertion I did (bicycling, rollerblading was out of the question, rollerblading still is, dancing my favourite hobby, is today three hours with a lot of pain killers).

For six months, after my injury on October 18, 2008, I received WSIB. Then they deemed that the injury should have healed and stopped paying. Employment Insurance ran out after some time and I applied for welfare. However, on welfare I could not keep my apartment - so I would have become homeless if friends in Keswick, Ontario had not picked me up. But from Keswick-Pefferlaw, I could not comply with doctors and government authorities. In January 2009 a doctor at Mount Sinai made a critical error by asking me whether I had seen a chiropractor before - yes, I did. But it did not occur to me until approx. one year later when I read WSIB reports that the doctor perceived I went to the chiropractor for my right knee. She did diagnose arthritis, and fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis was mentioned. That had a huge impact on my WSIB claim, making it easier to cut me off from WSIB as I was just old. That I had easily participated up to that time in three hour high impact aerobic classes prior to working for Canada Post at age 51 WSIB argued something - but I did not care what dishonest and unfair argument WSIB presented - I threw the WSIB decision away mostly unread. Also, had I had won, my compensation would have been \$25 per month until age 65. What am I going to do with \$25/month?

Every time I tried to volunteer and in any form to get my feet back on the ground, my knee would not cooperate. Insoles, cortisone shots, pills - nothing would keep the pain away effectively to lead a normal life and go back to work. But the icing on the cake was the run-around ODSP gave me. I was already damaged from fighting with WSIB and my living conditions with renting a room in Toronto. I sought the help of a Community Legal Clinic for my 2nd attempt to get accepted by ODSP. In the meantime, I went to see the mayor of Toronto three times begging for a place to live, as I was on the Housing List for five years. By that time my nerves just couldn't take anymore systemic abuse and financial suffering, and I wished for nothing more than to find the strength to commit suicide.

Eventually, I received a call from Toronto Community Housing and was offered to live in a slum apartment where I lived for four years with cockroaches, mice, bedbugs and seriously mentally ill people. But I also met some great people along the journey and I volunteered when I could, but unfortunately I am still living today because there just is no hope.