



POWER WORKERS' UNION

March 26, 2015

The Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health & Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Dr. Hoskins,

I write to join with the Ontario Lyme Alliance in support of Michael Mantha's November 2014 motion in the Legislative Assembly calling for the development of a provincial strategy for Lyme disease. The Power Workers' Union was particularly pleased to see that the Assembly approved the Mantha motion unanimously. That all-party support underlines the importance of your government acting to table a Lyme disease strategy by the November 27, 2015 deadline specified in the motion.

The risk of Lyme disease is of particular concern to many men and women who work outside in areas where ticks can be prevalent. Electrical foresters, electrical forester labourers and utility arborists, for example, are responsible for removing brush, diseased trees and branches that have potential to interfere with electricity transmission and distribution lines. They clear electrical lines and right-of-ways of trees and brush. The work consists of pruning, roping and rigging, chain saw operations, tree identification and tree removal. The work is performed from the ground, by climbing the tree or from bucket trucks.

The PWU believes that it is essential that your government address the method in which our health care system deals with Lyme disease. At the moment, physicians will treat patients solely on the basis of a notoriously unreliable blood test even if they are demonstrating clinical symptoms. People without the disease and exhibiting no symptoms may test positive because they have been exposed to the Lyme disease bacteria. The blood test does not detect all of the upwards of 300 species of Lyme bacteria.

As a consequence of this approach, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) short-changes workers with Lyme disease. It is the WSIB's practice to allow claims for treatment or medication solely based on a positive blood test for the disease. It is patently unfair for the WSIB to deny claims automatically on the basis of a negative blood test and to ignore Lyme disease clinical symptoms. As part of the provincial strategy, legislative changes may be required to ensure that the WSIB adopts a policy for the treatment of Lyme disease claims.

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The Power Workers' Union applauds this call for the development of a provincial strategy for Lyme disease. Workers with the disease deserve to get the needed support that they have been so often denied in the past.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don MacKinnon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Don MacKinnon
President

c: Bruce Shilton, Chair, Ontario Lyme Alliance