



*Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support*

## **Backgrounder**

Threads of Life brings hope and healing to Canadian families who have been affected by a workplace fatality, life-altering injury or occupational disease. It is a national charity connecting more than 2,700 family members through one-on-one peer support, links to community support services, and the opportunity to take action to help prevent similar tragedies to other families.

Threads of Life was created in 2003 to fill a major gap in Canada's health and safety and social systems. There was no "helpline" to call or place to go to find the kind of emotional support and caring often required to make it through the aftermath of a workplace fatality or severe injury/illness in Canada.

The long-term emotional, societal, and financial consequences of this gap are enormous and evident. These consequences include psychiatric problems, stress-related physical health problems, substance abuse treatment, family stress, marital breakdown, suicide, loss of productivity, loss of personal income, increased social welfare costs, and more. This is a substantial and costly burden for every citizen and taxpayer, but one that can be significantly reduced.

Threads of Life is a place where people can turn to help find the "cure" for workplace tragedy, which can only be accomplished through prevention.

### **MISSION**

Our mission is to help families heal through a community of support and to promote the elimination of life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths.

### **VISION**

Threads of Life will lead and inspire a culture shift as a result of which work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths are morally, socially and economically unacceptable.

### **WHAT WE DO**

Threads of Life provides families with one-on-one peer support, links to community agencies and the opportunity to promote public awareness and accountability for workplace health and safety. It is supported by a group of volunteers from across the country who have been personally touched by a workplace tragedy.

### **CURRENT SERVICES:**

#### **1. Family Support**

- Offers personal and sustained interaction with a trained peer called a Volunteer Family Guide, to facilitate a sharing of experiences. Family Guides have also lived through a workplace tragedy.
- Provides an opportunity for families and workers to meet each other, create communities of support, and learn skills to cope with grief and change in healthy ways.
- Provides resources to help people understand grieving or traumatic emotional processes and experiences.

## 2. Partnerships

- Provides families with answers to procedural and administrative questions about investigations, inquests and compensation.
- Offers links and knowledge to individuals working in government, compensation agencies and other organizations that can help with case-specific questions/issues.
- Connects health and safety-minded companies and organizations with opportunities to support families, promote safety and act on their commitment.

## 3. Community Action

- Coordinates a Speakers Bureau consisting of volunteer members who offer personal testimony on the impact of workplace injuries, fatalities or occupational disease in their lives. Members are sought after for conferences, health and safety events and community events. *Since 2005, Threads of Life speakers have presented to more than 90,000 people who have heard the injury prevention message.*
- Presents **Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy ([www.stepsforlife.ca](http://www.stepsforlife.ca))**, a 5K awareness and fundraising walk that showcases the personal impact of a workplace tragedy. Steps for Life is an event where families can meet other families who have suffered similar pain and loss and help raise awareness of the national issue of workplace injuries/illnesses and death. It is also a unique opportunity to honour the memory of their loved one or their own experience.

In 2018, Steps for Life will take place across Canada on the May 5-6 weekend (in most communities). More than 5,000 walkers will help raise awareness of workplace tragedies and its ripple effect on families, workplaces and society as a whole, as well as fundraise for Threads of Life Family support programs and services.

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