

# altered lives project

## Kim's Story

Kim is a long-time employee at a grocery store in central Ontario where she works in the floral department. While unpacking and displaying a large volume of tropical plants at work, Kim suffered an injury to her lower back.

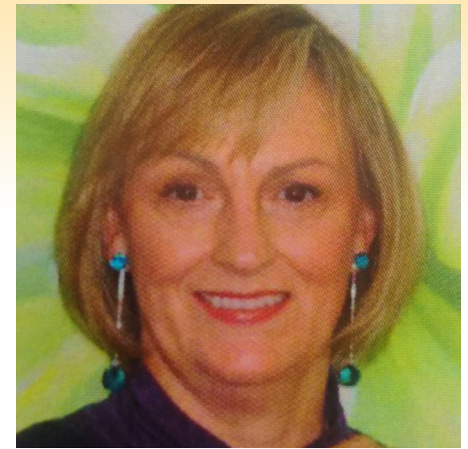
Severe back pain resulted in total disability at times for Kim. She could no longer participate in routine things she took for granted previously. Regular household chores and activities she enjoyed, like putting around her garden in the summer, became impossible. The injury affected her well-being and her quality of life. It was a difficult time for Kim.

Her injury prevented Kim from spending any prolonged time standing, sitting, and walking. "My injury dominated my life," Kim explained.

"I remember seemingly endless medical appointments. I am grateful for the care I received from my family doctor and the referrals too," she said.

Over time, some of the treatments Kim tried started to improve her injury and give her some relief. In particular, she found comfort in aqua-therapy. In time, Kim's injury healed. She remains guarded, however, during physical activity because one wrong move could bring a recurrence of the injury and pain.

In 2016, lower back injuries accounted for 17% of all allowed lost-time claims at the WSIB.



The Local Union for All Workers



The injury had a significant financial impact on Kim's life as well. She went through a time when she had no income at all, before she could return to work on modified duties.

Before the injury, Kim contributed to the household income and set aside funds to save for other things. She had not anticipated undergoing a lengthy appeal process to get her rightful compensation benefits.

Kim got married not too long before her injury. She credits her partner with being her rock and supporting her throughout the physical and emotional rehabilitation.

"I know many workers will experience far worse injuries than mine. My thoughts go out to them and their loved ones," said Kim. "This injury made me realize that you must take care of yourself and your co-workers on the job. We have to be persistent and try to prevent injuries."

"It's true," continued Kim, "that the squeaky wheel gets the oil. Documenting is also very important. It was particularly useful when trying to resolve my compensation claim."

"The process can be long, so keeping detailed notes about in-person meetings with your employer, the WSIB, your doctors, etcetera, can be valuable."

"If you feel something is unsafe, report it and keep at it until it is corrected. It might mean asking for help to do a job, or getting the employer to redesign how work gets done. Whatever it takes to make it safe!"