The following is an interesting article from the Bracebridge Examiner:

**WSIB rejects Muskoka man's efforts to exchange opioids for cannabis**

***Norm Miller's office advocating to help local man get off opioids with appeal to Ministry of Labour***

**MuskokaRegion.com**

**Bracebridge Examiner**

**by Mary Beth Hartill**

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UTTERSON — Al wants to get off opioids.

He has been dealing with pain management for 20 years since he suffered a serious work-related accident 20 years ago.

He was making a delivery when he was knocked off a load of lumber and struck both legs on the edge of a trailer before hitting the ground, where he was struck by a tow motor.

“It created a lot of problems in my life and a lot of pain,” he said.

Over the years he has had eight surgeries and deals with pain throughout his entire body including his legs, shoulder, and neck. He is most comfortable standing or lying prone. Work, he says, is out of the question. Something as simple as running the snowblower over the driveway will leave him bedridden for two days. His pain in continuous.

“It feels like somebody’s got a knife continuously in my ear,” he said.

He uses medication to relieve the pain. Now he wants to do away with the opioids and other pain medication and use cannabis instead. Currently, he uses a combination of both.

Being disabled with time on his hands, Al began researching and learning all he could about medical marijuana. In consultation with his family practitioner, he went to a doctor in North Bay, got his licence from the Ministry of Health and began dabbling.

“We’re still doing the opioids because you can’t stop one without having something to go back onto,” he said. “I told my doctor and he agreed, I would take my opioids at night.”

In his dabbling, Al struck upon what he says is the right amount of THC and CBD to manage his pain and found it didn’t leave him with the fogginess he experienced with other medications.

There were a number of steps involved in his WSIB application. In addition to consultation with doctors and a trek to a pain management centre in Toronto, he consulted with a professional nurse practitioner to complete a prescription.

His application was denied. The amount of THC allowed under the WSIB is considerably less than what Al finds effective to manage his pain, which means the opioids continue. Without coverage, cannabis is a medical expense Al struggles to afford.

Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP Norm Miller’s office is taking up the fight.

“We have been working with him,” said Miller. “It’s good that he’s trying to get off opioids and he should be commended for that. We’re certainly in the process of advocating for him.”

Miller’s office has drafted a letter to the Ministry of Labour to deal with the issue.

“I’m not a doctor so I’m not about to get into what is a correct amount or not a correct amount but I would suspect, if you’re on opioids and you’re trying to get off, you would at least, in the beginning, need a higher dosage of an alternative,” said Miller. “But, as I said, I won’t try to be a doctor.”

When WSIB was contacted for comment, a representative provided a link to the WSIB document Cannabis for Medical Purposes, published in December 2019. It states, “Medical cannabis is not necessary, appropriate, or sufficient health care treatment for most medical conditions due to the lack of strong and consistent evidence of therapeutic efficacy, and the known harms of cannabis use. However, in limited circumstances, medical cannabis may be necessary, appropriate, and sufficient health care treatment as a result of a work-related injury-disease.”

For those interested the following is a link to the WSIB’s cannabis policy:  <https://www.wsib.ca/en/operational-policy-manual/cannabis-medical-purposes>

The policy provides that medical cannabis is contraindicated for any one that has a current substance abuse disorder, as well there are other options available under the policy for this worker, that may not have been attempted. But then we don’t have all the facts.