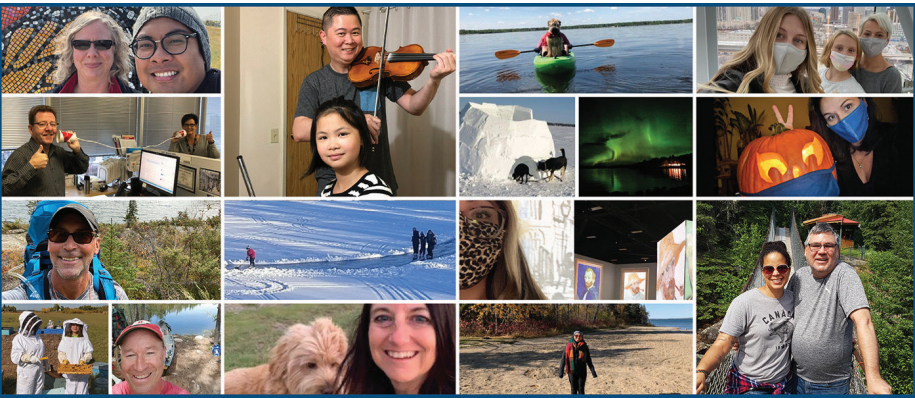


WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD OF MANITOBA

COLLABORATION & CONNECTION FLOURISH AT WCB DURING PANDEMIC



COMMUNICATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STRENGTH AT THE WCB, AND IT'S ONLY GROWN STRONGER UNDER THE STRESS OF THE PANDEMIC. A UNITED WAY RALLYING FOR RECOVERY PHOTO CONTEST HAD STAFF VERY ENGAGED. HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE PICTURES SENT IN BY EMPLOYEES SHOWING THE MANY WAYS THEY WERE STAYING ACTIVE OUTSIDE OF WORK.

Compassion and collaboration are among the core values of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba — values that have perhaps never been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The emergence of COVID-19 has brought many challenges and unexpected adjustments. An already collaborative workplace with a solid base of communications has grown to ensure employees are able to maintain connections, work co-operatively while physically separated and continue to provide excellent service to customers, all while remaining safe and healthy. Communication tools that were enhanced to meet the demands of the arrival of

COVID have carried forward as a positive effect of the pandemic. With 95 per cent of the WCB's roughly 600 employees ultimately transitioning home to work, physical distance and technology were among the early issues that needed to be resolved. Staff worked collaboratively and adapted quickly in response. "Although they've been physically separated, our employees have come together and worked as a team to ensure our customers continue to receive the same excellent service," said Winston Maharaj, former president and CEO, who retired from the WCB at the end of October. "Employees across the organization have contributed not only to ongoing service, but to keeping our workplace safe and healthy as well. I'm proud of the way our staff have pulled together." Increased communication and connection has been vital, and it's taken many forms.

Frequent communications to staff from the executive increased as waves of employees left the office to work from home. Ongoing messages from leadership keep staff updated on the latest pandemic news and provide information on the evolving work environment. A pandemic recovery planning committee has been created to guide efforts and provide ongoing email updates and other information to staff. Regular messages from the president and CEO give employees a more personal take on the situation, and provide support and encouragement. Employees are invited to ask questions at any time; answers are shared through leaders' email messages and in Q-and-A documents.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM STAFF
Feedback on the increased communication has been very positive, with some employees even sending unsolicited emails to leaders to express their appreciation for the leadership shown and the effort to keep everyone connected during such an unprecedented time.

"We want to encourage everyone to stay well-connected and to make the transition to a changing work environment as smooth as possible," said Shannon Earle, Vice-President, Human Resources and Strategy. "Working from home can come with many distractions and other challenges, and we're really proud of the way our staff have stepped up and demonstrated how dedicated they are to their work." Most importantly, communication has not only been "top down." The WCB's workplace safety and health committee sends out regular tips on a range of subjects from practical at-home ergonomics information to more lighthearted messages and uplifting videos. The existing staff newsletter is used to share stories and pictures from employees at home and those who remain at the office. Employees in various departments have found creative ways to stay in touch — one area established a shared music library; others

have regular video coffee breaks. Response to a United Way Rallying for Recovery photo contest was overwhelming, with staff sharing numerous pictures of their activities during off-work hours. Although they were physically separated, this allowed staff to maintain connections and stay up-to-date with their colleagues.

Over the summer, as preparations began for a gradual return to the office, leaders talked to each employee to ask about their readiness to return and to address any concerns. The recovery planning committee prepared a gradual, cautious return, taking employees' feedback into account. A small pilot group returned to test the waters first. A walk-through video and orientation module were created to give employees a sense of what to expect and to provide information to help keep everyone safe. As COVID case numbers began to grow in October, though, employees were required to work from home once again. Fortunately, all of the work involved in preparing for the return to the office will mean a smooth transition back, once it's safe.

PUTTING VALUES INTO ACTION
While the pandemic has brought many difficulties, it has also given the WCB a chance to shine. Staff members see the organization's values in action on an everyday basis — in an environment of respect and inclusion, and two-way communication. These values have been more obviously demonstrated during the pandemic. As the WCB works to return to a "new normal," enhanced connections will make it an even greater place to work. "This is the 10th consecutive year that we've received this Top Employer honour, and we hope to continue earning this recognition in years to come," said Maharaj. "We're striving to attract the best and the brightest, and to be an employer that Manitobans want to build a career with."

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