

# WCB Update

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## WCB opens regional office in Thompson



*Cutting the ribbon: (l to r), WCB Chairperson Wally Fox-Decent, Jerome Hustins, Labour and Immigration Minister Becky Barrett, and Thompson Mayor Bill Comaskey.*

As part of its ongoing commitment to improve services throughout the province, the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba officially cut the ribbon on its new regional office on October 18 in Thompson, Manitoba.

Jerome Hustins, a WCB claimant from Thompson, performed the ribbon cutting. The Thompson office is part of a pilot project to provide claims management services to covered workers living

in Northern Manitoba. Besides Thompson, the new office serves Gillam, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, Wabowden and Churchill.

The office will help claimants access WCB services quicker and easier, which will allow a more timely return to work. In addition to filing claims in person, claim reporting is available by telephone for workers and telephone and the WCB website for employers throughout Manitoba.

## WCB holds the line on 2003 average rate

The WCB announced on December 11 that the average premium rate charged to employers for WCB coverage will remain at \$1.56 for 2003.

On average, Manitoba employers pay \$1.56 per \$100 of their assessable payroll to the WCB in return for accident insurance coverage for their workers including wage loss payments, medical benefits and rehabilitation services. Employers may pay a lower or higher rate depending on the safety and health risk of their business and the cost of prior claims.

“Despite declining revenues from our investments, our average rate will remain unchanged,” said Wally Fox-Decent, WCB Chairperson. “Manitoba will still have the lowest average rate of all provinces.”

The average rates in other provinces for 2003 range from \$1.89 to \$3.24.

Approximately 54% of Manitoba’s 22,400 employers registered with the WCB will see a decrease in

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their premium rates due to improvements in their accident records. A significant number of companies in the mining and forestry industries were among those with rate decreases. A number of health organizations, and businesses in the services industry will see increases in their rates next year.

"Employers pay lower premiums when they reduce accidents and have effective disability management programs," said Doug Sexsmith, WCB President and CEO. "Employers with weaker safety records pay more."

The number of timeloss accidents in Manitoba is projected to be down about three percent by year end. WCB and Manitoba's Workplace Safety and Health Division are pursuing joint initiatives intended to see the accident rate decline by at least 25 percent over five years.

"Although accidents are decreasing, the numbers are not acceptable," said Fox-Decent. "We all need to work together to develop and sustain a safety culture in Manitoba."

## Manitoba Construction Conference

January 28 & 29, 2003  
Winnipeg Convention Centre

Participants may register for one (\$80.00) or two (\$145) full days of training

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# Returning injured workers to work a high priority

## Seminar opens dialogue between WCB, employers and workers

Employers have spoken - returning injured workers to work must be one of the board's highest priorities.

That was the focal message coming out of a lively return to work seminar held at the WCB on June 28. The seminar generated an additional series of internal sessions at the WCB, all intent on building a new and improved return to work program in 2003.

"We were very pleased by how productive the dialogue was. It was a very useful and collaborative seminar," says WCB Chair Wally Fox-Decent. "Its purpose was to foster constructive communication between labour, employers and the WCB, and I think we've achieved that."

The seminar, the first of its kind in Manitoba, was attended by employers, labour representatives and interested members of the general public. WCB staff, Board of Directors and executive listened intently to the concerns and suggestions of attendees during the June 28 seminar, facilitated by WCB Chairperson Wally Fox-Decent.

Nine main themes for improving return to work initiatives developed from the seminar on alternate and modified work:

### 1. Mutual Trust

- Workers, unions, employers, healthcare providers and the WCB should work towards

enhancing levels of trust between each group.

### 2. Healthcare Providers

- Healthcare providers (doctors, chiropractors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, etc.) have an important role in the return-to-work process.
- There should be more effective communication between the WCB and a worker's healthcare provider.
- Workers need timely access to healthcare, including diagnostic testing.

### 3. Short Term Claims (STC)

- More needs to be done to strengthen Short Term Claim's ability to deal with the return-to-work process. (Most returns to work involve workers in Short Term Claims.)

### 4. Enhanced Communication among all Parties

- There is a need for greater dialogue among workers, employers, healthcare providers and the WCB.

### 5. Prevention

- More needs to be done to educate all parties, especially young workers, about prevention.

### 6. WCB Policy

- The WCB's current policy on Modified and Alternate Return to Work

is satisfactory. However, consistent application and education surrounding the roles it sets out are required.

#### 7. Workplace-based Disability Management Programs

- All parties see workplace disability management programs as a valuable part of the workplace.
- Workers and employers agree with many of the principles in workplace-based disability management programs.

#### 8. Role of the WCB

- The WCB primarily facilitates the return-to-work process, but needs to be available to assist and monitor the process.

#### 9. Small Businesses

- It is often a challenge for small businesses to offer modified or alternate work to injured workers.
- The WCB needs to examine ways to help small businesses overcome this challenge.

Follow-up sessions to the June 28 seminar took place between WCB staff in August and September, to examine outcomes and issues.

"The WCB, the employer, the healthcare provider and the injured worker all have very important roles when it comes to return to work options, and there are ways we all can improve," says WCB CEO Doug Sexsmith.

Sexsmith added that several proposed solutions were discussed.

"There may be a need for additional communication and education from the WCB to healthcare providers and businesses to help improve the return to work process. WCB policy changes may also be needed to help us return injured workers to work sooner."

He added that other possible solutions included developing appropriate supporting materials on disability management for employers and workers and studying best practices of businesses with effective return to work procedures.

Currently, the WCB involves itself in return to work issues if either the worker or employer requires financial or technical support to help the worker return to work, or when the worker and employer disagree about whether the modified work placement is appropriate.

## Important dates for employers

You must report workers' earnings to the WCB by the dates below, even if you haven't received a form requesting you to do so.

#### For those reporting annually

- Feb. 28 – Annual Workers Earnings Reports due.
- Firms owing more than \$500.00 automatically qualify to pay their assessment in three installments.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Installment is due 30 days from date of the initial Account Statement.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment due Aug. 31.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Installment due Oct. 31.

#### For those reporting quarterly

- Feb. 28– Annual Statement for Quarterly Firms and Reconciliation Form due.
- Payment of the assessment, and the completed top portions of the Quarterly Remittance form and Account Statement must be at the WCB by these dates:
- Jan. 20/03 - 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 02
- Apr. 20/03 - 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 03
- July 20/03 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 03
- Oct. 20/03 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 03
- Jan. 20/04 - 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 03

#### Penalties and Interest Charges

Employers can be charged penalties if information is submitted late. Employers who report workers' earnings annually may also be affected by interest charges. For more information, log on to [www.wcb.mb.ca](http://www.wcb.mb.ca). Go to Publications, Employers' Reference Guide 2002 and scroll to page 39. If you do not have Internet access contact the WCB at 954-4567 or toll free at 1-888-504-1339 ext. 4567.

## Notice

The WCB inadvertently portrayed one of our staff members, Ms. Norie Figueroa, as a Case Manager in a recent poster campaign. She was actually an Acting Case Manager at the time.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused Ms. Figueroa.

# Late Reporting Penalties

## *Employers required to report accidents within 5 business days*

Timely reporting of workplace accidents is key to the Workers Compensation Board starting a claim quickly and ensuring that workers receive their entitled services and benefits. The WCB relies on the prompt reporting of all workplace accidents by all employers to achieve this goal.

In light of the need to ensure timely intervention and to address the concerns recently raised by employers regarding timely return to work, the WCB is consulting with employer and labour groups on how best to update the late reporting policy.

“We are working with employer and worker representatives to improve the return to work process. One of the keys to achieving that is ensuring accidents are reported quickly and accurately. We all know that the earlier we learn of an accident, the sooner we can become involved in returning an injured worker to health and work,” says Doug Sexsmith, President and CEO of the WCB.

The Workers Compensation Act requires employers to report accidents to the WCB within 5 business days of the time when the worker notifies the employer of an accident. Currently, any employer who fails to do so may be charged \$150.

“While most employers report accidents within the five business

days provided for by legislation, up to 5,000 claims a year are not reported within that time frame,” explains Sexsmith.

Since January 2002, employers have had access to faster and more convenient ways to report workplace injuries, such as phoning the WCB Claim Information Centre (954-4100) or providing accident information online through the WCB web site ([www.wcb.mb.ca](http://www.wcb.mb.ca)). Traditional methods of fax, mail, and in-person delivery of accident reports are also available to employers.

The introduction of new reporting processes was intended to help the WCB achieve its target of learning about workplace accidents more quickly. However, late reporting of accidents continues to be an issue.

Factors under consideration through the consultation process concerning the late reporting policy are:

- Allowance for a one-time warning to any employer who

exceeds the five-day reporting requirement once the new late reporting policy is implemented.

- Implementation of a progressive structure where the first instance of late reporting would result in a charge of \$200, \$400 for the second instance, \$600 for the third and \$1,000 for the fourth and subsequent incidents.
- An allowance for the WCB to reset the late reporting payment level for an employer who has shown improvement in reporting after a predetermined timeframe.
- Implementation of the new policy for three months without actually charging the employers who do not meet the reporting requirements.

“Our commitment to the consultation process will give employer and labour representatives a voice in how the late reporting policy will be structured and phased in,” explains Sexsmith.

“The consultation will facilitate a smooth and fair transition to a new policy, which will allow us to return workers to health and work sooner and minimize the impact of workplace injuries.”

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