

**Submission to  
The Workers Compensation Act Review Committee**

**June 23, 2004**

**Submitted by  
The Minerva Manitoba Steering Committee**

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Minerva Manitoba is a volunteer, not-for profit organization that exists to promote and facilitate the efforts of post-secondary institutions to develop educational resources for integrating occupational safety and health concepts into existing curricula and to assist faculty and staff to become informed about occupational safety and health issues.

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***Minerva Manitoba Steering Committee Members***

***Trevor Boulanger (Standard Aero)***  
***Peter Walker (MB Federation of Labour)***  
***Grant McCaughey (University of Manitoba)***  
***Jim Duthie (Winnipeg Regional Health Authority)***  
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**SAFE  
WORK**



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Thank you for the opportunity to present the views and concerns of the Minerva Manitoba Steering Committee to this Manitoba Workers Compensation Act Review process. The Workers Compensation Act provides for compensation and other benefits to injured workers. As well, it is pivotal to the protection of our workforce both in the role of support for primary prevention and secondary prevention perspectives. We will limit our comments to one aspect of primary prevention – the shifting of Manitoba's workplace culture to one of preventing workplace injury and illness through the education of young people, in particular post-secondary students, and the role that the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) can play in this capacity. Members of the Minerva Manitoba Steering Committee acknowledge the support the WCB has provided in this area and we feel the WCB could be a primary driving force for more fundamental change in this sector.

Knowledge of and attention to situations that can lead to injuries are key elements in prevention. Young workers, and particularly males, are injured at a rate higher than any other group of workers. There is a movement in all jurisdictions in Canada and many in the United States and around the world, to address the issue of young worker safety and health with a variety of approaches. It is recognized that, if we want to make any significant move toward eliminating workplace injuries and deaths, we have to begin when people are young. They will be the future workers, business owners, managers, professionals and leaders. They need knowledge and understanding to not only protect themselves but to influence societal change.

The costs due to accidents and injuries in Canada are estimated to approximate ten billion dollars a year in organizational costs and similar amounts in personal costs (e.g., Landsbergis & Vivona-Vaughan, 1995). These extraordinary costs highlight the need for improved health and safety measures within workplaces. Post secondary educational institutions must play a significant role in facilitating improvement in the health and safety of work environments. Only those who are more educated about health and safety issues will be enabled to facilitate the development of healthier workplace policies and practices. Many experts agree that the answer to improved safety and health lies with the management of a company.

Graduates from post-secondary institutions have a unique opportunity to influence the safety and health culture in Manitoba and thus have an impact on the prevention of illness and injury in the workplaces where they become employed over the life of their careers. Safety and health and prevention are universal attitudinal issues. We have all been working with a variety of means, organizations and individuals to instill an attitude and foster a sensitivity that doing things safely is the only way to do it. Post-secondary institutions such as our universities and colleges are no different – we need to work with them to instill this attitude and to help them understand the importance of their role in educating young people and thus contributing to the societal shift.

At present, there is some attention given to the teaching of safety and health in post secondary schools. However, it remains sporadic. The curriculum may or may not contain specific safety-related learning outcomes and it is often not a requirement for accreditation purposes in professional schools. Where occupational safety and health (OSH) is taught, it is done so on a “voluntary” basis, usually due to foresight on an individual’s part as opposed to a school requirement. The subject is often treated as a technical subject or add-on and not as an integral part of the normal work activity or field of study.

The design of products and services and their management always need a leading priority – that is, the product or service needs to be safe or it is not an optimum product or service. Quality is dependent on its safe use, not safety imposed as an add-on. For example, a university professor told us a story about a team of engineering design students who designed a wonderful piece of equipment only to find that it was completely impractical to manufacture because of exorbitant cost - his point being that the mindset to consider factors other than functionality, things like safety, is not necessarily present without some kind of instruction. Imagine designing a car that wasn’t safe to drive. It would be unheard of. Yet we still design equipment that causes hearing loss, or allows fingers to be amputated. In the course of running a workplace, do managers and supervisors ask themselves “am I designing or buying or running the safest process that I can?” It is not a “top of mind” issue. If it were, it is most likely Manitoba’s injury and illness rate would be much lower than it is today. We have yet to make that paradigm shift. We need to instill this kind of thinking into the young professionals graduating from post-secondary facilities so that it can be taken to the workplace, into the management and running of safe systems and operations.

We speak of the issue of developing a safety culture within Manitoba’s workplaces and we also need to emphasize the need to do this in our educational system. Ron Britton, a professor and champion of this issue at the University of Manitoba says “In my own efforts I attempt to develop what I call a Safety Mind Set. What I mean by this is that I attempt to get my students to consider safe operation/use of any system they design as a normal part of the process rather than a separate issue. If design engineers have a safety mind set then they do not consider safety issues as being an option. Not all design constraints are prescribed. Some are simply “known” as a required part of the process.

I do not believe that safety should be one of the items on a list of design options. If it is not part of the fundamentals, it gets on the list with 101 other constraints, it can become a production cost and it can be ignored. Post secondary institutions need to strive for inclusion, and that takes resources to develop the special fit into "required" courses. We ignore the Law of Gravity at our peril. The "Law" of safe design should be seen in this same light."

Business leaders also tell us that new graduates do not have the skills and abilities to do this.

At a recent Minerva Canada round table discussion on safety and health at the post-secondary level, Art Heeney from DuPont Canada said– "In order to be successful you have to understand health and safety. There is no compromise whatsoever". He spoke about the fact that they see new graduates as a source for new insights and opportunities that the company hasn't seen before and they are disappointed when they don't do that. He said "We would be delighted if a new grad would take us to task."

DuPont has one of the most recognized safety and health programs in the world. They understand the connection between the culture of the workplace and prevention. And they seem to understand the importance of creating that culture by beginning with young people, particularly at the post-secondary level.

Otto Peter, a manager with General Motors of Canada, at the same forum said "...[we] hire graduates from business and engineering schools, many of whom become managers and supervisors. ...Need graduates who have a keen understanding of safety management principles and making decisions with health and safety in mind. .... Need post-secondary institutions to make safety and health an integral part of their curriculum..."

He also pointed out, "...small companies don't even know they need it. How are we going to change attitudes in small business?"

Small business, of which there are many in Manitoba, is another challenge in terms of prevention. Most tell us they have little time and no resources to tackle the issue of safety and health and do not have the knowledge to understand how to integrate it into their systems and day to day practices. Small businesses will often hire young graduates who again have an excellent opportunity to not only influence practices but to integrate safety and health into the "way of doing things" at the workplace, in other words, a cultural shift.

This cultural shift can only occur with support from senior management. As obvious as this may be to people regularly involved in health & safety, what we need to remember is that it doesn't happen over night. Today's young workers quickly become tomorrow's leaders and in five short years will be making many of the daily decisions and directing work where hazards abound. In 10 years they will be making the strategic decisions that affect the overall approach to health & safety in an organization. We must establish the basic safety mindset in young worker's post secondary education.

In the short term they will be more prepared to work safely and for the long term will be better prepared to embrace their function in health & safety programs if they take on future leadership roles.

Once established into the leadership team as a core value, accident rates and severity will fall. Paul Soubry, President of Standard Aero Canada is a firm proponent of effective health & safety management and has shared his vision with many industry associations, safety organizations and local government regulators. Mr. Soubry's leadership has woven health and safety into the fabric of the company and will take any opportunity to motivate others to become involved. "Safety is paramount to everything we do. The rewards of maintaining a safe work environment extend far beyond the basic goal of reducing accidents and we count on our future leaders to lead continued improvement and deliver an even safer working environment."

Business tells us we don't have adequately educated professionals in safety and health management, small business supports that view, and we have our post-secondary educational institutions working in a piecemeal fashion to attempt to provide those skills to fill the gap. While working with employers and workers will always remain a significant priority in prevention of injury and illness, it is time to consider broader approaches to the issue for young workers and to the creation of a corporate mindset that safety and health management and injury prevention is a good investment. The importance of education as a contributor to broader public policy is a generally accepted principle. Yet we see little in our post-secondary programs to support the current WCB and government policy that says we will shift culture in Manitoba and reduce injuries and illnesses in the workplace. The WCB has an interest in influencing social and public policy in this area as the costs of not doing so will add to the economic burden of the WCB and employers in Manitoba. One way to begin influencing broader change is by working together with government and the Council on Post-Secondary Education.

The Council on Post-Secondary Education is the provincial agency that works to promote excellence and cooperation within the post-secondary education sector to meet the diverse educational needs of Manitobans. Created by an Act of the Manitoba Legislature in November 1996, the Council commenced its operation in April 1997. The Council facilitates the coordination and integration of post-secondary services and facilities, reviews and approves university and college programming, develops policy, and promotes fiscal responsibility and accountability in the post-secondary system. A major responsibility of this Council is the allocation of funds to the province's eight public post-secondary institutions.

The Council acts as an intermediary between the post-secondary institutions and the government, and is composed of eleven members including a chairperson. Reporting to the Council is a staff Secretariat of nine provincial civil servants. The purpose of the Secretariat is to provide research and analysis on a broad array of post-secondary education issues, and to support effective decision making and policy direction for the benefit of Council members.

In 2002, the Department of Advanced Education published a paper (see <http://www.copse.mb.ca/en/documents/policies/index.htm> for the complete document) that outlines their priorities over the next few years.

They noted the following as one of the contextual challenges facing advanced education in Manitoba:

“...the links between education and other economic and social issues are well recognized, but the processes for closer ties between programs or institutions are not sufficiently developed. Everyone talks about the importance of education as a contributor to broader public policy goals, but the means to achieve this contribution are not necessarily well developed or understood”.

They also noted as two of their goals:

- Better integrate and support knowledge and skill development within economic and social priorities
- Build the capacity of institutions and the community to support learning

While the Council recognizes the need for graduates to have broader knowledge in terms of social priorities and public policy, safety and health does not appear to be considered or well supported. Discussions at senior levels need to occur to place the issue of the economic and social burden of workplace injury onto their agenda. Providing information and funding to be shared among post-secondary programs would support initiatives to tackle the challenges facing institutions and show leadership in encouraging the development of safety and health knowledge and skills for very little cost. Such incentives have been shown to be successful in promoting student learning and in integrating safety and health into curriculum in the past.

For example, Minerva Manitoba has initiated and supported, through the Community Initiatives and Research Program of the WCB, several projects at the post-secondary level. The financial contribution has been \$75.0K to date, with another \$50.0K granted for projects to the end of 2006. For this investment, the following projects have been completed or started. These and others not yet initiated, have the potential for impact on a significant number of graduates over the long term, enhancing skill sets to fill an existing gap.

- Faculty of Engineering project providing Power Point presentations, lecture notes and website to enable lectures and presentations on safety and health. Website information available to all faculties and other programs to pick up and use.
- Faculty of Agriculture project providing Power Point presentations, videos, CD-ROM and website to deliver lectures and presentation to students in the Diploma program on a wide variety of agriculturally related safety and health concerns. Website information available to all faculties and other programs to pick up and use.

- Project started with Dr. N. Sue Bruning of the Asper School of Business to conduct research on the needs of the business community concerning safety and health and to develop a curriculum guide for use in all Manitoba schools of business.

- Tentative plans made for a web based training program in the School of Nursing at the University of Manitoba – the intent is to share these resources among all nursing schools as well as other facilities that teach health care related programs, for example, health care aides.
- Discussions are taking place to consider support for the development of curriculum resources to teach basic safety and health information to all students in an apprenticeable trade.
- Discussion held with the Natural Resources Institute to consider integrating information into their curriculum
- Sponsored Minerva SAFE Manitoba Student Award at the University of Manitoba.
- Sponsored Minerva SAFE Manitoba Student Award at Red River College.
- Obtained matching funds for these two awards from the Manitoba Schools Bursaries and Scholarships Initiative for an endowment fund at each facility of \$15.0K.
- Minerva Manitoba Coordinator participates on a working committee with Minerva Canada and has encouraged a more systematised process for sharing the resources developed across the country.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in an effort to highlight the areas that members of the Minerva Manitoba Steering Committee consider important to the issue of shifting business culture in Manitoba workplaces and where the Committee feels the WCB can play an important and strategic role.

It is recommended that:

- The WCB work jointly with government to provide the leadership that will assist the Council on Post-Secondary Education to strengthen the link between education and the economic and social impact of workplace injury and illness and develop processes for closer ties between programs in post-secondary institutions and the prevention of injury and illness in the workplace.
- The WCB continue to provide funding for programs such as the Community Initiatives and Research Program to ensure that institutions and other organizations can access funds to initiate and support new health and safety initiatives.
- The WCB sponsor a system wide – (e.g. community colleges and universities, key government departments, etc.) health and safety conference on how to improve and expand OSH in curriculum.
- The WCB work with government and other agencies to ensure that all youth job training/creation programs have components of safety and health integrated into programming including efforts to ensure the employers follow/comply with health and safety rules.
- The WCB enhance their support for work in the area of primary prevention.

We recognize that some of these suggestions are more administrative than regulatory in nature. However, to continue with existing programs in post-secondary education or initiate new ones to support prevention activities does require a continued regulatory mandate as well as will on the part of the WCB Board of Directors and we appreciate your careful consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this panel and for your time and effort in reading and considering the material presented.