

Non- Presenting :            Anonymous  
   Operating Engineers of Manitoba Local Union 987  
Date Received:                June 23 2004

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Comments:

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find enclosed a letter from SS detailing his experiences in dealing with the WCB system. SS has been a member of our Union since 1991 and spent close to 5 years on WCB. We ask that you give SS's situation consideration in reviewing the Act.

Sincerely,

Business Representative  
Operating Engineers of Manitoba Local 987

#### WCB CAN WORK IF YOU WILL

The effectiveness of the Workers Compensation Board in its current form has been hotly debated over the years. The pros and the cons of the system have been discussed by all stake holders, as is occurring during this most recent review. As a Manitoban who spent close to 5 years navigating this system I feel it is important to share my experiences. In doing so I can only hope that the decision makers may be able to draw insight from my story.

I was injured at work while operating a grader for the Rural Municipality of Tache on September 25, 1997. while exiting my machine I stepped onto uneven ground and injured my knee. I continued to work till the spring of 1998j at which time the pain became too great. I was lucky

enough to find myself in a Country that supports a system like WCB, and without another option I stopped working and submitted my claim, going in for my first knee operation in November of 1998. my injury required a second operation, September 3 1999, which lengthened the time I was off on WCB.

As far as any negative experiences I had while on workers compensation, one was the length of time it took to receive the first payment. Having been accustomed to a regular pay period, the long wait for the first payment from WCB added financial stress to an already difficult situation. The second would only be felt by an individual who is on a WCB claim for an extended period of time. For close to 5 years I was on WCB and during that time no money was paid into the C.P.P. for me. As I get older the effect of those lost contributions will certainly be felt. The immediate impact of being injured at work is enough for any worker to have to deal with. It seems to me that the worry associated with the ripple effect that a long term injury might have on a workers C.P.P. could be alleviated by changing how the WCB system deals with C.P.P. contributions.

Sadly the greatest obstacle surrounding my return to work was not the injury to my knee or a lack of assistance from WCB, but rather the employer's refusal to accommodate my situation. Once I had made a reasonable recovery WCB offered to retro-fit the employer's grader which would enable me to return to work with minimal impact on my knee. however the employer refused. Given the fact that I had spent most of my working career operating heavy equipment the WCB suggested sending me back to school for retraining and I agreed.

The adjudicators and vocational workers that I was in constant contact with were very good. They made it very clear that the schooling that I was going through was to be looked at as my job and should get my full attention. I enrolled at the Winnipeg Technical College and graduated

February 28, 2003 after completing a program in Technical drafting. I was in school for almost 3 years including upgrades, completing my program with a 95% average. The impression I got in dealing with WCB was that they more than will to help those who wanted to help themselves. The biggest benefit of the retraining was the job experience component. Starting in April of 2003 at VV Ltd. I was able to apply the skills I learnt in school in a work setting.

WCB again approached my previous employer to see if I could return to work now that I had acquired new skills an again this door was closed. The employer claimed that I was now overqualified. After making several unsuccessful attempts to get me back to work at the RM of Tache, including having me for 6 months without having to pay my wages, the adjudicator advised me that it may be best to look for work elsewhere.

If it had not been for having the option of retraining through the WCB my financial future and that of my family would have been very uncertain. I am still employed at VV Ltd. and am working to better my new found skills each day. For all the negative stories that one might hear about WCB, I felt it important to tell mine. If your willing to make an effort you can make the system work for you.

Sincerely,