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The Pas  
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### **Industrial Wood And Allied Workers Local 324 Submissions**

#### **Re: Workers Compensation Act Public Review Committee**

The IWA Local 324 has workers represented in operations throughout Manitoba that include Perimeter Lumber on Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway, to Neepawa's Prendville Prairie Forest Products, to Roblin Forest Products, Louisiana Pacific's Operation in Minatona's Manitoba, Birch Rivers Prendville Operations, and as far North as Thompson's Tolko Manitoba's Operation. In the surrounding areas we have workers in Wabowden, Cranberry Portage, Cormorant Lake, Moose Lake. In The Pas our workers include Tolko's Solid Woods operation, Wescana Inn, Aurora House, Waugh Woods, Ian Munro Transport and The Town of The Pas Airport workers. My name is Christopher. T. Parlow and I work on behalf of these workers as their Regional Health & Safety Director and Business Agent.

IWA Local 324 would like to thank the Committee for taking on this effort on behalf of Manitoba's Workers and permitting an Open Forum such as this.

Of utmost importance for this review panel to know on behalf of our workers in Manitoba is that we need a Workers Compensation Board that doesn't compound workers difficulties by adding stress levels that are unmanageable but rather functioning in a way that is driven by the ideal that this is an avenue to relief rather than an avenue to grief, after suffering a work related injury.

None of our workers intentionally go to work to get injured. They go to work to produce income for families, contribute to the operation productively, which allows for a sense of well-being, structure in life, and stability. A workplace injury disrupts all of this. We need a framework, and body in place at the Workers Compensation Board that leads to confident feelings as workers that we will be treated as humans and not as numbers when we proceed and file a Workers Compensation Claim.

IWA Local 324 would like the Review Committee to not only review legislation, covered under the Act, but also the policies and how they affect injured workers.

We strongly concur with the submission to the Workers Compensation Board on behalf of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, and encourage change as pointed out in the submission, because their concerns are our concerns.

### **IWA LOCAL 324 REQUESTS FOR CHANGE**

#### **FIELD OFFICER WORK**

We urge reform in the way Claimants reviews are conducted once the claim is rejected. Please allow for more direct contact, and investigations by Review Officers. Currently

Adjudicators do not have to meet face to face with Injured Workers, and this could allow for an incomplete investigation. We'd like to see that when new evidence of any kind

is presented on an appealed case that it is given Top Priority. Please give consideration that workers who submit new evidence that is vital to succeed on the appeal of their case are further along in the process and have been waiting longer for relief.

#### SECTION 67 (4)

-We encourage change to the Workers Compensation Act that will permit workers to come forward at a later date even though previously their claim had been denied by the Appeal Commission. This would insure that if technology changes or new evidence surfaces as a result of a diagnosis that was not known at the time of the appeal commission hearing we can reopen up the workers file to allow for this newly surfaced diagnosis to be put before a Medical Review Panel if warranted.

#### MEDICAL REVIEW PANELS

-Injured workers want to be a part of the entire process. Having the WCB act on their behalf may not get all the questions answered. Workers want to have an opportunity to write questions and ask questions to the Review Panel. It is their forum therefore they should be entitled to be present. Therefore section 67 (4) of the Act should be amended to allow injured workers to call for the Medical Review Panel if a difference in Medical Opinion arises. Workers want direct input by being able to pose questions to the Medical Review Panel.

#### COMPANY MONETARY REWARD PROGRAMS

- IWA Local 324 would like to have the Workers Compensation Board eliminate monetary reward programs that allow companies to pay workers for the lack of Work Related Injury claims. In our Local 324 Louisiana Pacific in Minatona Manitoba has a reward program in place. On a quarterly basis if there is not a work related injury the policy allows for compensation of \$125.00 every three months or \$500.00 a year.

If a work related injury occurs that requires a worker to miss time he/she not only suffers, but his/her co-workers also suffer due to not getting the \$125.00 that quarter. Needless to say the peer pressure to not come forward is obvious, and you feel intimidation that is real. Workers should be encouraged to come forward with Work Related Injuries not penalized by their Company, and Co-Workers as a result of taking money out of their pockets.

#### APPEAL PROCESSES

-All costs related to travel, lodging, and related expenses should be covered if workers have to see specialists at the direction of their Physicians, WCB or any other involved party, while appealing their claim.

#### WAGE LOSS BENEFITS

-Policies in place now don't come anywhere close to providing for 90% of workers wages for the first two years. Due to deductions for Income Tax, EI, and CPP a worker may have a take home net income of 65%. These deductions are not submitted to the aforementioned

agencies due to not qualifying to do so, so they are deducted right off the workers wage loss benefits.

-Workers need financial security when injured to aid in recovery and we encourage this Panel to find ways to improve earnings for workers while they are on WCB. We promote the idea that by basing earnings on a workers entire earnings package there will be more financial stability for injured workers and far less hardship. There should also be a minimum guaranteed income level of Wage Loss that will never be below the Provinces Minimum Wage.

#### RETURN TO WORK/ MODIFIED WORK PROGRAMS

-Injured Workers Must Be Guaranteed Employment Protection After Suffering A Workplace Injury.

-Employers should not be permitted to choose whether to put in place transparent Modified Work Programs or not.

-Vocation or Rehabilitation should not be discretionary. Injured workers should have full rights to be retrained.

-With the co-operation of the Worker, Physicians, Company and the WCB it should be key to provide no roadblocks to workers getting rehabilitated, re-established, and back to becoming full vital contributors to the well-being of the Operation.

-The responsibility of WCB should be that all workers once capable are provided with the opportunity to be re-introduced back into the workplace in a gradual or modified way.

#### CONCLUSION

Northern and Central Manitoba is Isolated in many ways and workers don't have access to all the services, specialists, and resources that Southern Manitobans do. Due to the rising costs of fuel, maintenance for vehicles, lodging, food etc please increase mileage rates to reflect increasing costs, and other monetary entitlements due to the ever increasing cost of living.

Respectfully Submitted,

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