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Good evening and welcome to Thompson. I would like to take a moment to thank you all for the opportunity to present our views here tonight. I also want to commend the Provincial Government for mandating this much needed review of the WCB in the Province of Manitoba.

My name is Robert Desjarlais. I am the President of the United Steelworkers of America, Local Union 6166. I have proudly served this Local in my current capacity for ten years. Prior to that, one of the many positions I held in my Union was as an advocate for our members who had to deal with the WCB.

Unfortunately, the WCB has been turned into a political football. All of a sudden in 1992, we found the Tories introduced into the public discourse, a massive unfunded liability that needed to be corrected. They used that lie to introduce the draconian changes the WCB is currently forced to operate under. Not unlike the Labor Relations Act changes they introduced three times in their mandate, these changes were designed to make things as

difficult for workers as possible and steal money from the WCB system in the form of massive rebates. That money belonged to WCB claimants and their families. Employer groups such as the Tax payers Federation and the Chamber of Commerce were salivating with the endless possibilities of having everything they wanted in the form of Legislation.

The historical compromise brought forward by Sir William Meredith including its five elements, in the view of the Steelworkers, has in itself been compromised by the changes made to the WCB Act in 1992.

We would like to make it clear we support the entire submission made by Brother Rob Hilliard, who, as you know, is the President of the Manitoba Federation of Labor. In addition to those issues and in some ways a supplement to, we will bring forward here tonight a number of problems endemic in the WCB system.

I would like to bring to the Review panel's attention, after years of lobbying, we finally opened up a WCB office in Thompson. We believe this has to be reflected in the Act so that it becomes more difficult for future Governments to close the office, without opening up the Act.

The Occupational Health Clinic, located in Winnipeg, has been invaluable in assisting claimants throughout Manitoba in dealing with problems related to the WCB. We believe the WCB should fully fund this facility because 99% of the work they do is dealing with injured workers in Manitoba.

The last issue I want to touch on is something that is near and dear to our hearts. The Workers of Tomorrow Program has been introduced to at least forty thousand students last year. We believe it is a great first step in preventing workplace injuries or deaths, as they relate to our youth. The WCB needs to be more pro-active in the area of accident prevention. The WCB Act should reflect the program in its text and a funding formula that would entrench this valuable tool to help bring our children home safe every day.

Other members of our Executive Board and membership will now make presentations to you. We all have a responsibility to make the required changes to the Act that will undo the damage that has been done since 1992.

Once again, I would like to thank the Review panel for the opportunity to bring our views to this very important forum. Injured workers and their families are counting on us to get it right.