

June 25, 2020

Members of the Workers Compensation review Board:

The Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association represent postal workers in most rural community in Newfoundland and Labrador. We were deemed essential workers and proudly worked during the pandemic. We thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of the workers compensation system in NL. We are very interested in advocating for improving workplace rights, stronger laws and improved policies and practices related to injury prevention, occupational health and safety, as well as workers compensation.

Recommendations:

- 1. There is a need to increase the Maximum Assessable Earning Rate from \$ 66,980 to \$90,000 at the least with annual CPI adjustments. Workers in high income professions should not be penalized financially because they have gotten injured while working. The employer contributions are based on the wages they pay premiums on and those benefits should be passed on to the injured worker at a more compensated rate. The worker still has expenses they have to pay such as pension contributions, medical benefit premiums, living expenses and in addition, they may have to pay others to do things they once could do for themselves and their families such as home or car repairs, snow clearing and child care. Other provinces have maximum rates to \$127,000, NL should be in line with other provinces.**
- 2. Wage-loss benefits are 85 per cent of your pre-injury net earnings less deductions, this needs to be raised to 100% for the same reasons listed above, not less to penalize workers.**
- 3. Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, Part IV- Compensation and Right of Action, article 81.1 needs to be amended to allow bargaining units to have the right to bargain with employer to add top to workers compensation payments in their Collective Agreements. This should be a decision left to the employer and employees bargaining reps to discuss during bargaining, not an outside source deciding on this issue. It has no bearing on the amount the injured worker will receive from Workers Compensation. It could be seen as bridging the gap between employee and employer relationship and also improvements in health and safety concerns getting addressed in a timely manner.**

- 4. Presumptive coverage for healthcare and other frontline workers exposed to viruses and communicable disease that are deemed essential workers. First establish a simplified claims process that would be expedited as much as possible used when an essential worker has to be quarantined but not paid by employer.**

Secondly, the clause should cover such situations as the COVID – 19 pandemic, where one will not know for years the damage that may be caused to a person who was exposed to this disease through the workplace. Workers are being increasingly exposed to viruses and communal diseases.

- 5. Establish an Occupational Health Clinic in Newfoundland and Labrador. Occupational disease is the biggest killer when it comes to workplace fatalities. A new report just came out from the Occupational Cancer Research Centre in September 2019, showing that workplace carcinogens are responsible for over 10,000 cancers every year. Workers are getting cancer. In Ontario, health clinics over the past 20 years have benefitted workers, families and communities. The surplus money in the WC fund could go toward helping to fund this clinic instead of being returned to the employers and giving them a break on premiums. This could be a win win for all parties. The employee gets assisted faster, losing less time at work and may not need to be on Workers Compensation so long. Addressing issues in the workplace faster through these clinics will enable the workplace to be fixed and less people exposed to the illness caused in the workplace.**

- 6. Not to lower the employer's assessment rates. Have a set percentage that can not be lowered but can increase if there are incidents in the workplace. We need to keep the pressure on employer's to keep enforcing OH&S rules to make sure employees continue to be protected in the workplace at all times especially in the event of a pandemic.**

- 7. Not to return the surplus in the WC fund to employers. Use this to give back to the workers in such ways as: to fund OCC clinics, increase wage loss by employees, increase services offered to injured workers,...**

Thank You for giving CPAA the opportunity to participate and make suggestions to improving our Workers Compensation system for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Kimberly Hunt

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Kimberly Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'K' and 'H'.

Kimberly Hunt

President CPAA NL Branch

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