

Returning injured workers to the workplace a major issue for employers in Newfoundland & Labrador

NL Employers' Council to hold workshop to discuss psychosocial factors that impact duration of Worker's Compensation claims in this province

--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 14, 2010, St. John's, NL – When an injured worker goes on worker's compensation in this province it takes, on average, 36% longer to return them to the workplace than in other provinces in Atlantic Canada¹. Injured workers in this province are also more likely to end up on long term disability than in the other Atlantic provinces. This represents a significant problem for employers and injured workers in Newfoundland & Labrador. The NL Employers' Council (NLEC) will be holding a workshop for employers on Tuesday, October 19th in St. John's to address some of the factors that may be contributing to length of claims and the difficulty employer's face returning some employees to work.

The full day workshop, entitled "**Why Won't They Come Back? Understanding the psychosocial impact of workplace injuries**", will address psychosocial factors surrounding workplace injuries that contribute to some injuries becoming long term disabilities while others do not. It is important for employers to understand these factors, in order to set proper expectations and manage through risk factors to return injured workers to the workplace in a timely fashion.

"Lengthy worker's compensation claims impact not just the employer but the quality of life of the worker and their colleagues," says Richard Alexander, NLEC Executive Director. "The NLEC is working with the WHSCC to try and reduce the length of claims in this province through more aggressive claims management and changes to the system, but it is also important to educate employers on other factors that may be at play within their workforce and their employees and how they can manage through them."

The session will address risk factors that place barriers to recover, such as mental health concerns; fear of re-injury; work environment; age; gender, social and economic factors and more. The session will also discuss the legislative framework of the Worker's Compensation system in this province and limitations it places on the employer's ability to return injured workers to the workplace. The workshop will provide proactive strategies employers can put in place to combat some of these factors before an injury occurs, improve the quality of life for injured workers and their colleagues, and save the employer time and money.

The NLEC session "**Why Won't They Come Back? Understanding the psychosocial impact of workplace injuries**" will be held Tuesday, October 19th, from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm at the Delta Hotel & Conference Centre in St. John's. For more information and to register, employers should visit www.nlec.nf.ca.

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¹ According to 2008 Key Statistical Measures of Average Composite Duration of Claim by the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC)

Workshop presentations include:

- **Dr. Rod McCarthy, Family Medicine Physician:** Dr. McCarthy will outline the role of the family doctor when dealing with workplace injuries that may be impacted by psychosocial factors, expectation setting and disability recovery guidelines
- **Catherine Puddister, Registered Psychologist:** Catherine will discuss common psychological attributes seen in individuals with prolonged or frequent absence from work, psychological intervention programs and the responsibility of the employer vs. the employee when dealing with psychosocial barriers to recovery
- **Sharon Horan, Occupational Therapist and President of FIT for Work:** Sharon will provide an overview of types of injuries and duration of claims that occur in NL in comparison to other parts of the country and how psychosocial factors may be playing a role in extending recovery times in this province
- **Tom Mahoney, Executive Director, Worker Services, Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission:** Tom's presentation will focus on socio-economic issues in worker's compensation and how they influence the length of claims along with emerging issues in worker's compensation legislation and policy
- **Chris Peddigrew, LLB, Associate, Cox & Palmer:** Chris will discuss employer rights and responsibilities when dealing with Worker's Compensation claims impacted by psychosocial factors, including what legal recourse an employer has on a lengthy claim when they feel "enough is enough."

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Interview Opportunities Available

Media contact: *Jaelyn Sullivan* (o) 368-6532 x 225; (m) 687-6552 or jsullivan@nlec.nf.ca.