

# Merger? Occupational Health & Safety and Workers' Compensation in Nova Scotia

## POLICY UPDATE

December 6, 1999

As part of its 1999 policy platform, the government announced its intention to pursue strategies to reduce the high cost of the Nova Scotia Workers' Compensation System. Three elements of this strategy were articulated:

- To restructure the Occupational Health and Safety Division (OH&SD) and the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) to operate under one board that is equally representative of business and labour;
- To proactively target occupational health and safety training and compliance audits at industries and businesses with high accident rates to reduce injuries, leading to lower business costs and lower WCB premiums;
- To re-instate the Accident Prevention training section of the Department of Labour.

The Chamber is a member of an ad-hoc employer group formed to submit its views on the government's commitment on this issue. This group has developed a proposal which favours a merger of the OH&SD and the WCB but emphasizes the need for strong stakeholder input. Support for a merged workplace health and safety "commission" is based on the success of similar models in place in B.C., Quebec, New Brunswick and P.E.I.

The central theme of the proposed position is that prevention, assessment, enforcement, insurance, injury management and compensation services should be provided by a new, integrated commission. This would involve the following changes:

- 1) A new board of directors made up of stakeholder representatives would provide operational and policy direction for the new commission.

- 2) The separation of the criminal investigation and prosecution section of the OHS division into a branch reporting to the Department of Justice and completely separate from the new commission.

- 3) The handing over of the majority of workplace training and consulting activities to private sector operators certified by either the new commission or, preferably, by a private sector association working in partnership with the commission.

- 4) The use of ad-hoc advisory committees to assist the board of the new commission in setting regulatory and policy direction for OHS and WCB in Nova Scotia.

Before the Chamber formally endorses this proposal, we would like your input on the idea of a merged workplace safety and compensation commission.

Please respond to the following questions and fax back to the Chamber at 468-7333 by Friday, December 10. Thank you.

1. Do you support a merger of the WCB with the OHS division as described above? (Please circle)

Yes                      No                      Don't Know

2. Are there measures that you feel must be taken to protect business if the government is to proceed with the proposed merger?

---

---

3. Do you have any general concerns about OHS or WCB in Nova Scotia?

---

---

**METROPOLITAN HALIFAX  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
*Strong Business. Strong Community. Since 1750.*

P.O. Box 8990, Halifax,  
Nova Scotia B3K 5M6  
Telephone (902) 468-7111  
Fax (902) 468-7333  
[www.halifaxchamber.com](http://www.halifaxchamber.com)