



# ***POLICY UPDATE***

News and views from the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce *April 23, 1999*

## Workers' Compensation Bill is Passed by the House

### Background

On April 13, 1999 the Legislature passed an amended Bill 90. This Bill makes some necessary changes to the Workers' Compensation System (WCS) in Nova Scotia while limiting increased costs.

The Chamber played a key role in ensuring that these changes did not put the long-term sustainability of the WCS at risk.

Letters and submissions from you, our members, to the Law Amendments Committee highlighted universal assessment as one change that could have very negative impacts for our members as a whole.

The Chamber also called on the government to hold a full stakeholder review of the WCS before proceeding with fundamental changes to the system. This would allow time to assess what various changes could mean to business.

### Issue

In its submission, the Chamber stated that if the government was going to move forward with Bill 90, then the legislation had to focus exclusively on the problems which led to the substantial appeals backlog within the WCS and not make fundamental changes to the WCS and the benefits it

delivers.

Specifically, we argued that an amended Bill 90 should **only** include:

- a clear definition of chronic pain;
- measures to streamline the appeals process within the WCS, and
- a guarantee that a full stakeholder review of the WCS and the Workers' Compensation Act take place at the earliest possible time.

We also argued that Bill 90 should **not** include:

- universal assessment, or
- additional benefits which would not address the appeals backlog

### Results

By working closely with all three provincial political parties, the Chamber was able to ensure that the views of the business community were heard and understood. The changes made to Bill 90 ensure that the WCS can still effectively meet the needs of the workers of Nova Scotia without placing the entire system at risk.

The final Bill:

- eliminated universal assessment;

- excluded several new or increased benefits which would not have helped reduce the backlog;

- clarified the definition of chronic pain and how compensation for chronic pain is to be handled by the WCS;

- made several key adjustments to the appeals process, and

- set a firm date when a full stakeholder review is to take place.

### Conclusion

The work on Bill 90 by the politicians, the Workers' Compensation Board, and the many community stakeholders has paved the way for a full review of the WCS which is now scheduled for April 1, 2001.

The Chamber looks forward to working with the government and other stakeholders in helping to make the WCS in Nova Scotia the fair, equitable and sustainable system it must be.

*All three parties deserve credit for the open and extensive consultation they undertook to ensure they heard all perspectives on the possible impacts of Bill 90.*

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