



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

February 9, 2004

Honourable Michael Baker
Chair Law Amendments
5151 Terminal Road
P.O. Box 7
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2L6

VIA FAX: 424-0547

Dear Minister Baker and Members of the Law Amendments Committee:

RE: AMENDMENT TO THE WORKERS COMPENSATION ACT

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of almost 2,000 businesses in our region and more than 93,000 employees. I am writing today, on behalf of these members, to express concern about the proposed changes to the Workers Compensation Act. We recognize that the Province must deal with the changes required under the Supreme Court Ruling regarding chronic pain, and we encourage this to be done in an expedient manner. However, given that we still do not know the financial implications of even the required change, we recommend that any other changes to the Act should be dealt with separately.

Transparency and accountability in governance are of key importance to the Chamber. We have significant concerns that the implementation of the current Bill No. 20 could put these principles at risk. Moving forward with significant changes, outside those required by the Supreme Court, without an understanding of financial impacts to the system or to business, could have detrimental effects to business in our region. Fiscal responsibility of government and maintaining the competitiveness of business in our region are both of high priority to the Chamber, and both are inherent in this discussion. Government must ensure that the fiscally responsible decision is made, and that it does not hamper the competitiveness of business in our region. It is necessary to ensure that the impacts are clearly understood by all stakeholders and that changes are implemented in a time frame to minimize negative impacts to competitiveness.

The Chamber supports the recommendations of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in that:

- Bill 20 must abide by the Supreme Court Ruling;
- Bill 20 should deal only with removing the discriminatory language of the legislation;
- A separate process should be developed to address the other elements of Bill 20;
- Rates should be frozen for up to three years, or until a determination of costs can be made.



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

/2

The Chamber believes that during legislation changes, substantial and meaningful consultation is imperative and we are pleased with the level of consultation government is undertaking before moving forward with this Bill. Open lines of communication and strong working relationships will enable us to achieve the common vision of our shared communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie Payn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, prominent initial "V" and "P".

Valerie Payn
President

CC Members Law Amendments Committee
Leanne Hachey, CFIB
Honourable Kerry Morash, Minister of Environment and Labour