



GOOD NEWS:

# RIGHT ATTITUDE HELPS WORKER GET BACK ON HER FEET



Linda Thomson

As a former paramedic, Linda Thomson confronted danger daily. But she said the fears she faced on that job were nothing compared to the fear of the possibility of not working again when she was sidelined by a fall at work this March. At the time of her injury, she was employed as an addictions attendant at Ridgewood Addiction Treatment Centre in Saint John, a job she loved.

"I was petrified," Thomson said. "I knew it was bad. I am 57 years old, and thought 'what am I going to do'."

Ironically, Thomson was already suffering from back pain developed during her time as a paramedic and had been for an MRI on the morning she fell.

"The pain was unbearable," she said. "I could barely walk. It was debilitating."

Her first course of remedy was physiotherapy and prescription pain medication. Thomson did see some improvement with this but her recovery was limited and slow, so she was admitted to the Workers' Rehabilitation Centre (WRC) in Grand Bay-Westfield. "Things started to look up from there," Thomson said, adding however, that when she first set a painful step in the centre she was intimidated. "It is so big and I thought, oh my, how am I going to get to the end of the hall? How am I ever going to be able to do this?"

But she was wrong. She was able to do it, and after a six-week program at the WRC Thomson is back to work at Ridgewood.

"I won't kid you –it wasn't easy. But I had to do it to get rid of the pain and get working again."

Thomson offers the following advice for others in a similar situation: "They (WRC) can't always cure you, but they will help you work with what you have, and help you manage your pain. And you have to want to get better."

Thomson's regime began with a warm-up, followed by physiotherapy, occupational rehabilitation, more physiotherapy, and then three-quarters of an hour in the pool. She also received counselling on symptom management strategies.

"With the rehab I was taught proper lifting techniques and had to do stair climbing. These are not part of my job, and I thought 'what does this have to do with me'? But these things help with co-ordination and balance, and how to move your body properly."

"Linda was very motivated and got the message straight away that we weren't going to cure her lower back pain but that we would help her get control of it rather than it controlling her," said Pam Pinnington, Thomson's physiotherapist at WRC. "She found the exercises very hard at first, but she persevered and worked hard to establish a program that was right for her. She had the right attitude, after a bit of convincing, from the start – she was here to get the most out of the program, to help her get back to work and improve the quality of her life overall. She was a pleasure to work with," Pinnington said.

"We're confident that she will continue with her home exercises and symptom management strategies and that she will see further progress."

Thomson continues to exercise at home, with equipment provided by WorkSafeNB. This includes an exercise ball (for core muscle strength), floor mat, arm weights, moist heating pad, and even insoles for her sneakers. Her day begins at 5:30 a.m. with a hot bath to relax the muscles and then her exercises, before heading to work for 7.

"If I don't follow my routine and do my exercises I really feel it. And it's not a nice feeling," she said.

"I want to thank my team at WRC – they were fantastic. I am so happy to be back at work, and to be able to get down on the floor to play with my grandchildren." •

# BOARD MEMBER PROFILE



Mary Martell

When Mary Martell joined WorkSafeNB's board of directors, she brought with her extensive experience in compensation, assessments and disability management. Martell joined the board in October 2008 as an employer representative, a nominee of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Before moving to New Brunswick, Martell spent two years with the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta and eight years with WorkSafeBC (when it was the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia).

"In B.C., I enjoyed the benefit of working for both employers and injured workers. My expertise was focused on disability management, and how the long-term effects of injuries affect workers. This opportunity enabled me to broaden my experience and move into private industry," Martell said.

Martell joined Irving Health Services in 2000 as a disability manager. In 2002 she became manager of claims, and, in 2007, she took on the role of director of Irving Health Services.

"In my current position, I am responsible for strategic planning and developing processes that align with the company's business initiatives.

Strategic planning and risk assessment is an important function of the WorkSafeNB board, and I believe my position at Irving Health Services has prepared me with the knowledge and skills I need to contribute effectively in my role on the board."

In addition, Martell said her position at Irving includes leading a team of certified disability management professionals, and working closely on issues dealing with occupational health and safety. "I work with a great group of safety representatives across the J. D. Irving organization who have a strong passion for safety and for ensuring a safe work environment for all our employees," she said.

"I am dedicated to helping any employee who has experienced an illness or injury return to their workplace. In my years working in this field I have seen many lives turned upside down because of a traumatic illness or injury, and witnessed the impact not only on the employee, but their families and their quality of life. Too many times we focus on what we can't do, and in my role as a disability manager, I look to what an individual can do. Industry can't afford to lose valuable employees; the costs alone continue to rise. With today's shrinking workforce in the trades and skilled labour, it is more important than ever to recognize opportunities in successfully returning skilled employees to the workplace."

Martell said she's proud to be a member of a board that's committed to govern in the spirit of balance. "We work diligently to ensure our

decisions not only serve New Brunswick's employers and workers, but also the staff of WorkSafeNB," she said. "We believe in ensuring a fair and balanced workers' compensation system in New Brunswick that has sustainability now and in the future."

Martell has worked closely with WorkSafeNB since moving to New Brunswick. "I believe there is a strong desire within the organization to ensure that what they do matters—both to industry and labour. I've noticed an increased focus on safety which, the numbers suggest, has helped reduce accident frequency. And while I have also witnessed a move by WorkSafeNB to be more transparent and having a consultative process toward change, I believe there is always opportunity for further partnering with labour, industry and WorkSafeNB."

While her roles as director of Irving Health Services, WorkSafeNB board member, and chief editor of the editorial advisory board for *Disability Management Dialogue*, an international publication, leave her little leisure time, Martell said she tries to squeeze in time for fly fishing and gardening. She also enjoys travelling and cooking.

Martell and her "wonderful" husband, have been married for 30 years, and live in Saint John. They have two children. "My son is a great guy and is married to a wonderful woman; thankfully they live here in Saint John so we can be close. I also have a fantastic daughter, who keeps both my husband and I young." •

# WORKSAFENB APPOINTS NEW VICE-PRESIDENT

Douglas Stanley, president and CEO of WorkSafeNB, is pleased to announce that Shelly Dauphinee has been appointed as vice-president of WorkSafe Services Division, effective November 16, 2009.

Dauphinee is a results-oriented bilingual leader with more than 12 years of executive experience in public, private and not-for-profit organizations that are characterized by diverse stakeholder

interests and by legislative and regulatory environments. She joined WorkSafeNB in 1999, and brings to her new position experience in a broad range of health, safety and compensation issues gained through her 10 years as WorkSafeNB's director of Policy and Planning.

Dauphinee has a Bachelor of Arts degree from UNB Fredericton, and a Master's of Planning from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. She



Shelly Dauphinee

most recently completed the Government of New Brunswick's Executive Leadership Program, supported by WorkSafeNB.

David Greason, current vice-president of WorkSafe Services Division, will mentor Dauphinee during the transition and will continue to work for WorkSafeNB on special projects until his retirement in November 2010. •

# VIEW CSA STANDARDS BEFORE BUYING

Since helping develop Canada's first standard for hard hats in 1948, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has published more than 170 standards and guidelines, covering everything from machinery and equipment to office ergonomics and injury prevention. New

Brunswick's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* references about 40 of these standards. On October 1, 2008 the CSA launched a pilot program to provide users with broader and easier access to their occupational health and safety standards.

Now in its second year, the pilot program provides view access to the CSA standards referenced in the occupational health and safety legislation of

all Canadian jurisdictions. Users can see the standards before buying them. The standards are in a read-only PDF format, and users will not be able to cut, paste, print or download them.

To access the standards, go to: [ohsviewaccess.csa.ca](http://ohsviewaccess.csa.ca) and register (it's fast and easy). Then click on the jurisdiction you want (New Brunswick, for example) to see the list of standards, and then click on the standard. •

# 2010 ASSESSMENT RATES ANNOUNCED

WorkSafeNB has announced its 2010 average assessment rate. The rate will increase slightly from \$2.03 per \$100 of payroll in 2009, to \$2.08. The increase is effective January 1, 2010.

"This represents the first increase since 2004, and is necessary to help move WorkSafeNB toward a fully-funded position," said Roberta Dugas, chair of WorkSafeNB's board of directors. In 2008, WorkSafeNB's funding level fell to

87.7% because of lower than projected investment income caused by volatile capital markets worldwide. WorkSafeNB is legislated to maintain 100% funding over four years.

"While investment returns are improving, it is difficult to predict if this trend will continue. We must take precautionary measures to secure future benefits for New Brunswick's injured workers and their dependants," Dugas said.

Along with a gradual recovery in investment returns, 2009 has seen lower than projected accident costs. "Because accident costs play the largest part in determining assessment rates, it means that New Brunswick's workplace safety continues to improve. Maintaining healthy and safe workplaces is the best way for employers to reduce their assessment rates," she said.

WorkSafeNB continues to maintain the lowest assessment rates in Atlantic Canada. •

# WORKSAFENB LAUNCHES WORKPLACE SAFETY CALCULATOR

Safety saves – it saves lives and limbs, and it also saves money. And when safety is ignored it costs – a lot. To show employers just how much a workplace injury could cost them, we've introduced the Workplace Safety Calculator. This tool helps employers calculate the non-insured costs of a workplace injury – costs such as finding and training replacement workers, purchasing new equipment, and loss of productivity.

The Workplace Safety Calculator presents scenarios in four different industries – construction, hospitality, retail and sawmills – to enable employers to predict or compare the full range of costs of a workplace injury, costs that come

out of their pocket. The calculator also provides employers with the function to tailor their own injury scenario.

"While the safety calculator was designed with small business in mind, it is a useful tool for any size business as a determinant of the actual upfront costs of workplace injuries, and another reason why they should be prevented in the first place," said David Greason, vice-president of WorkSafeNB's WorkSafe Services Division.

To access the calculator, go to [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca), and click on the Employers tab, then click on Safety Calculator from the drop-down menu. •

