

Stakeholder Engagement Meeting

Debrief Report

December 13th, 2017



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December 13, 2017

Letter from the Chair on Behalf of WorkSafeNB's Board of Directors

On behalf of WorkSafeNB's board of directors, I would like to thank you for having joined us at our fourth stakeholder engagement session. This meeting was held on December 13th, 2017 at the Delta hotel in Saint John, New Brunswick. Along with WorkSafeNB board members and staff, representatives from the employer community, worker community, the Workers' Compensation Task Force, and various levels of government attended.

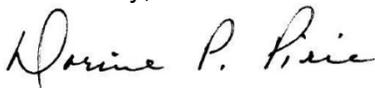
This session used an engagement format known as *World Café*. This format encouraged small group discussions in a casual café-style environment. In small groups, facilitated by a WorkSafeNB board member or senior staff member, stakeholders discussed the topic of return to work by answering three key questions:

1. What does "return to work" mean to you?
2. What do you think might be a barrier to returning to work?
3. What could we (i.e. all parties) be doing to better encourage return to work?

WorkSafeNB will use information gathered from these discussions to identify areas where it might improve return to work efforts. Our hope is that stakeholders feel they benefited from this engagement session both from being heard, but also from listening to the perspectives of others. WorkSafeNB believes that working together is the best way to achieve one of our shared goals of returning workers to their workplace as safely and as soon as possible.

We hope that you will be able to join us at our next meeting which will be held in April of 2018.

Yours truly,



Dorine P. Pirie

Chairperson, Board of Directors

Stakeholder Meeting – Executive Summary

Overview

On December 13, 2017, WorkSafeNB hosted the fourth in a series of stakeholder engagement meetings at the Delta hotel in Saint John, New Brunswick. WorkSafeNB's board of directors welcomed over 55 stakeholders representing the worker community, employer community, and various levels of government.

Welcome and Context

Dorine Pirie, Chair of the board of directors of WorkSafeNB, welcomed stakeholders to the meeting, noting that stakeholder presence speaks volumes to the collective commitment to creating a system that works for everyone, and will continue to work for years to come.

Ms. Pirie explained that the topic for the engagement session was return to work. She noted that work is such an important part of our lives and is a place where social bonds are made, where we create a sense of self-worth and pride, and helps to define who each of us are. She explained that remaining connected to our workplace while healing from a workplace injury is important in minimizing the potential impacts which can result from a disconnection from the workplace. She also noted studies show the longer a worker is off the job due to an injury, the less likely it becomes that the worker will return.

Ms. Pirie explained that the most successful return to work plans involve the worker either remaining at work or being away from work for as little time as possible. She explained that early return to work brings numerous benefits, including accelerating the healing process, reduction in loss of earnings, and even obtaining new skills and opportunities resulting from different work opportunities.

She also noted that early return to work also benefits employers in areas such as business productivity, retention of workers with critical knowledge and skills, and a reduction in cost of training new workers. She explained that a successful return to work program shows the employee that they are valued by their employer.

Ms. Pirie continued that while early return to work is great in principle, there are barriers. She explained that the hope for the session, through discussion on three key questions, was to create a shift in how we all approach effective return to work.

Ms. Pirie invited each stakeholder, board member, and staff member present at the meeting to introduce themselves.

Ms. Pirie explained that the session would use a different format from previous engagement sessions, known as the *World Café* format. She continued that this format encourages small group discussions in a casual environment. She noted that the goal was to create an environment where each stakeholder felt comfortable expressing themselves, and the insights gathered from the discussions will be analyzed by WorkSafeNB.

Return to Work Overview by Tim Petersen, acting President & CEO

Tim Petersen, acting President & CEO of WorkSafeNB, introduced a safety share video which followed the story of a New Brunswick injured worker who was unable to return to his pre-accident employment. The injured worker was successfully retrained and returned to work in a new career. Mr. Petersen reiterated that return to work benefits both workers and employers and is good medicine. See appendix A & B for more details.

Stakeholder Discussion

The session moved to the café-style round table discussions. In three 20 minute segments, stakeholders discussed the following three questions:

1. What does “return to work” mean to you?
2. What do you think might be a barrier to returning to work?
3. What could we (i.e. all parties) be doing to better encourage return to work?

Key themes across all three questions emerged during round table discussions, as follows:

Communication and Collaboration

Several stakeholders discussed a lack of communication between the injured worker, employer, physicians, and WorkSafeNB (including occupational therapists, case managers, etc.). Stakeholders noted that differing reports from physicians and WorkSafeNB can exist and stressed the value in establishing a collaborative return to work plan including regular communication between all parties involved. Stakeholders explained this would help ensure that any issues or concerns are addressed promptly and that injured workers are actively involved in their return to work plan.

Accommodation / Modified Duties in Return to Work

Many stakeholders explained that employers often do not have the tools or knowledge in place to properly accommodate an injured in their return to work. Stakeholders expressed that employers would benefit from education on modified duties and how they can best support the injured worker in their return to work plan, particularly in small businesses who may have little experience or education in return to work processes.

Some stakeholders noted that making modifications to work duties can be difficult, including reluctance by unions to make modifications to job descriptions and occupations where light duties are not an option. Similar difficulties exist in certain subsets of workers (aging workforce, young workers, workers with personal or pre-existing conditions, etc.)

A couple of stakeholders noted that forcing a return to work plan, even with modified duties, before the worker is ready could be detrimental and may lead to re-injury.

Role of Physicians

Several stakeholders expressed the need for physicians to gain a better understanding of occupational medicine, particularly in identifying abilities instead of focusing on limitations. Stakeholders explained that rather than physicians prescribing strict time off work, they would like to see a greater focus on how the worker could be accommodated through a gradual return to work plan or modified duty.

Psychological Support for the Injured Worker

Many stakeholders discussed the psychological and emotional impact when a worker experiences a workplace injury. Stakeholders also noted the anxiety an injured worker may feel with re-entering the workforce and a fear of being perceived as “weak” among their peers. Stakeholders expressed that resources related to mental health should be readily available in order to fully support injured workers and their families.

Some stakeholders noted that injured workers need to feel valued by their employer as they return to work. Giving injured workers the opportunity to complete meaningful work would help them feel productive and regain a sense of purpose.

Timely Claim Processing

Stakeholders discussed the importance of timelier, more streamlined claim processing involving less paperwork to help facilitate a faster return to work plan. Stakeholders stressed the importance of early intervention and returning the employer to work as soon as possible.

Limitations Due to Privacy Legislation

Several stakeholders expressed the challenges they face related to limited access to information due to privacy legislation, noting that access to some of the injured worker’s medical information (nature of injury, limitations, etc.) would help the employer make the necessary accommodations to return the worker to work.

Inclusion in the Workplace After Injury

Stakeholders expressed the need for a worker to maintain their connection to the workplace after an injury. Stakeholders suggested that inviting an injured worker to attend staff meetings, holiday parties, training sessions, etc., would help them stay connected to the workplace and facilitate the transition back to work. This would also help build supportive relationships with co-workers, who play an important role in a successful return to work.

Focus on Value of Early Return to Work

Stakeholders noted that some workers may experience a disincentive in early return to work as they may wish to continue to receive wage loss benefits or remain off work long enough to recoup wage loss benefits lost during the three day waiting period. Stakeholders stressed the importance of injured workers understanding the value in returning to work as soon as possible.

Prescription of Certain Medications

Some stakeholders noted challenges when injured workers are prescribed opioids and medical cannabis and explained certain medications may create a barrier to accommodation if the worker is not able to carry out certain work duties because of that medication. Stakeholders also noted the prescription of these medications may create an addiction issue with the injured worker. Stakeholders also noted that difficulty arises when the employer has a “no drug policy” in the workplace.

Estimated Capable Earnings / “Deeming”

A few stakeholders noted that due to the inability of some employers to accommodate the injured worker, or due to the worker not being able to return to their pre-accident employment due to the nature of the job, workers may feel demoralized when they are deemed to be capable of another occupation.

Final Remarks and Next Steps

Ms. Pirie thanked all stakeholders for their attendance and contribution at the session and assured stakeholders that WorkSafeNB has listened. She encouraged stakeholders to complete the survey to help WorkSafeNB improve these engagement sessions and noted she hopes to see stakeholders again.

Attendees

Amanda Aubé, WorkSafeNB
Amber Leclerc, WorkSafeNB
Andrew Diotte, Injured Workers Advisory Committee Guest
Andrew Hardy, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1190
Anne McInerney, WorkSafeNB
Azarie Ross, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Barb Keir, WorkSafeNB
Barbara Boudreau, Injured Workers Advisory Committee Guest
Beth Folkins, Irving Oil Refinery
Beverly Doyle, Moosehead Breweries
Bob Davidson, NB Police Association
Bob Sleva, Connors Bros. Limited
Brigitte LeBlanc-Miller, WorkSafeNB
Carolyn MacDonald, WorkSafeNB
Carolyn Radcliffe, WorkSafeNB
Darrel Nickerson, J.D. Irving, Limited
Darren Nason, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 946
David Giddens, Connors Bros. Limited
Denny Vautour, International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Crafworkers Local 8NB
Dino Scichilone, WorkSafeNB
Dorine Pirie, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Dr. Paul Atkinson, WorkSafeNB
Dwayne Squires, NB Police Association
Elisha Milne, WorkSafeNB
Emily Venart-Wood, Service New Brunswick
Erin Crandall, Horizon Health Network
Ernest Guy Charest, Injured Workers Advisory Committee Guest
Frank Forestell, WorkSafeNB
Gaëtan Guérette, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Haley Flaro, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Harold Fisher, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 1555
Hector Losier, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Helen-Louise Mitchell, WorkSafeNB
Hercules Georgiadis, AV Group Inc. Nackawic Mill
Hermel Thériault, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Isabelle Morin, Injured Workers Advisory Committee Guest
Jackson MacQuarrie, Bourque Industrial Ltd.
Jane Graves, Armour Transportation Systems
Jane Wellman, NB Power
Jean Landry, WorkSafeNB
Jenna MacDonald, Coast Tire
Jerry Doucett, City of Moncton
Joanne Vautour, WorkSafeNB
Josée Gaudet, Vitalité Health Network
Julie Marr, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Kathy Betts, Quality Concrete Inc.
Krista Collins, Construction Association of NB - Saint John Region

Krista Ross, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce
Laragh Dooley, WorkSafeNB
Larry Cook, International Association of Fire Fighters
Leica Gahan, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Lisa Dionne, WorkSafeNB
Lise Bourque, Brunswick Sheet Metal Ltd.
Luc Erjavec, Restaurants Canada
Marc Roy, Jacobs
Marc Tanfara, WorkSafeNB
Martha Smith, Government of New Brunswick - Treasury Board
Michael Bewsher, WorkSafeNB
Michael McGovern, WorkSafeNB
Michel Fournier, Sunnymel
Michèle Caron, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Mike MacMullin, Unifor
Morgan Peters, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce
Murielle Gaudet, Service New Brunswick
Nancy Boutcher, WorkSafeNB
Nicole Poirier, NB Power
Pam Wasson, WorkSafeNB
Pamela Baker, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Paula Garant, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Pauline Diotte, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Phyllis Allain, BSM Services (1998) Ltd.
Renaud Cormier, Nadeau Poultry Farm Ltd.
Rick Hicks, WorkSafeNB
Sally Blount, WorkSafeNB
Shawna Wallace, WorkSafeNB
Shelly Dauphinee, WorkSafeNB
Shirley Mitchell, Coast Tire
Stacy Newman, WorkSafeNB
Stéphanie Rancourt, WorkSafeNB
Susan D. Smith, Connors Bros. Limited
Tammy LeBlanc, Irving Oil Refinery
Tim MacFarlane, WorkSafeNB
Tim Petersen, WorkSafeNB
Tina McCormack, AV Group NB Inc - Atholville Mill
Tina Soucy, WorkSafeNB Board of Directors
Tom Barron, Barron T. Labour Relations
Tom Coughlan, OSCO Construction Group
Tommy Wood, WorkSafeNB
Wayne Guitard, Injured Workers Advisory Committee
Wayne MacAllister, Maple Leaf Homes
Yanick Hache, Scieries Chaleur Sawmills
Yvon Collette, WorkSafeNB

Attachments

Appendix A – Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Presentation

Appendix B – Importance of Return to Work Handout

Appendix C – Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Order of the Day