

Appendix 4 Employers Survey Comments

The following comments were made by respondents under question #20 of the online survey. Comments are verbatim although obvious typographical errors have been corrected to help readability. "No comment" entries and those unrelated to the issues are not included.

I think it is important to have an Employer Consultant available and working on behalf of Employers. I don't think so that the cost should be paid only by the employers, but at least partially out of a general fund!

Since I have never made a claim as a sole proprietor, some of your questions were hard to answer (e.g. have I been actively involved in helping an injured workers return to work)

I support an employer consultant but \$200K/year?? (How do I apply for the job!?) I would like to see the budget for this as this seems extravagant.

I was probably advised that there was an Employer Consultant Service but as I had no need for this service I did not pay attention. I am not sure what the role and responsibility of this position would be but in my experience the staff at the office or the safety officers have been able to answer any of my questions. If they don't know the answers they are very good about finding the answers. Overall I find that YWH&SB is a very easy office to deal with even if we do not always agree.

Maybe a 1/2 page FYI notice help? But then, if I had a question I would have called whether I knew to ask for an Employer Consultant or not.

The amounts that we are paying for administration is outrageous. Why has the admin costs of WCB increased so much in the past five years? WCB needs to look internally... if they were more proactive with their administration instead of paying people to host a convention (yes it brought dollars to the community... but were 6 staff needed????)... we would be better off

"We are only recently involved with the Yukon as we now have our first project in the Yukon in 2004. I have just submitted the yearly summary for premiums. In short the form does not work well for anyone not a permanent resident business in the Yukon.

The form needs big improvements - use the Alberta summary as an example.

"I would definitely support a Employer Consultant service as long as that service covered all areas and that service was always available.

I think the whole Workers Compensation organisation in the Yukon is incredibly bureaucratically top heavy, with a huge organisation and staff for a very small workforce. It would be interesting to know the ratio of YWCB staff to Yukon workers, compared with other jurisdictions.

The premiums levied by the YWCB have risen substantially over the past few years and will increase by two large increases over this year and next. In comparing the value of coverage with that available in the private insurance sector, better coverage is available for less cost through private. WHY? The WCB needs to reevaluate its coverage, service, fees and processes. Quite

frankly I feel that WCB hands out money freely to government workers on "stress leave", but does little for workers who are actually physically injured at work.

Private sector employers (small businesses) in the Yukon have faced enormous financial challenges over the past several years. In our business, rising costs related to wage level employees (WCB, CPP and increasing admin requirements) has meant the loss of two full time positions. If the Yukon is to grow again, we need to be able to increase our profitability. It is ironic, that our own government works against small business in a multitude of ways to place ever increasing demands on us. The lip service is that small business is the backbone of our economy, but the truth is that we can either be self employed in our basements, or we can get a government job, but god forbid we make a few jobs for other people. Its almost impossible to absorb all the admin time required for compliance with the ever increasing red tape, fees and premiums being forced upon us."

The expense of running the Board is already significant. Throwing another position or two into the mix will not solve the problems that currently exist and, therefore, is a terrible waste of taxpayer money.

AS FOR EVERYTHING IN LIFE, IF YOU ARE NOT IN NEED OF SOMETHING , YOU DO NOT SEE THE REAL PURPOSE FOR IT, IS THERE REALLY A STRONG NEED FOR A 200.000.00 A YEAR POSITION. ARE EMPLOYEERS RIGHTS BEING ABUSED THAT MUCH?

I will enjoy a bilingual survey

I honestly only recently started this job and never had to deal much WCB. When I have - they have been very helpful.

This survey appears to be misrepresenting itself in that it seems to be seeking approval to hire an Employer Consultant rather than finding ways to use the existing administration to better serve employers.

How about this - why don't you find a volunteer to do this work?

As the owner/operator of a business that does office-type work and not having any employees, many of the questions were n/a. I felt the alternative ""multiple choice"" type of format did not allow me to reflect this fact accurately.

I actually feel that paying into WCB should be optional; but as my company is incorporated, I must pay premiums. That is the only reason I participate in WCB. Years ago, it was indeed optional for businesses that had negligible possibility of injury on the job to be members of WCB.

I am opposed to individuals utilizing WCB as a type of "retirement fund". They should be paid out and encouraged to work at something.

"As a large employer we have found it more beneficial to do this work on our own. We felt that we often needed some expert advice that was not available through the Employer Consultant's office. The Board should be providing more information sessions for the Employers, be more Employer friendly and this could minimize the need for this type of position.

What does this consultant do exactly?

not even aware of the position - didn't get any notification of service.

"WE ONLY OPENED OUR ACCOUNT IN THE YUKON IN 2004, SO DON'T HAVE A LOT OF INPUT TO HELP IN THE SURVEY. MOST ANSWERS SUPPLIED IS BASED ON OUR KNOWLEDGE OF W.C.B'S IN OTHER PROVINCES. TRUST IT HELPS SOME!!"

I believe the Board itself can adequately address Employer issues concerning claims, assessments, etc. Policy issues/lobbying, etc. best handled by Employers and their representative associations (Chambers Commerce/Mines etc). Bigger concern is with the Employee Consultant position in terms of Mandate, etc. and resultant costs being born by the Board. The Board should not be funding Employee Consultant office for legal costs of appeals, etc. Employee Consultant services funded by the Board should be limited to information and advice as to process and alternatives available to Workers as well as assistance if required in initiating a claim.

I know very little of the service and would like to know more.

If there was an employer consultant service available (at no fee), this should have been generally better publicized by way of sending this specifically to the employers. If it was, it was obviously overlooked as "another letter from WCB". Perhaps a specific flyer noting what services the employer consultant offers to employers and how to contact.

The level of coverage sold to a business has been misrepresented as a level of income rather than a level of insurance. I believe that not distinguishing this by representatives of WCB has led to confusion on the part of the employer in terms of what coverage can be had, what coverage is required and what the employer is actually purchasing.

Our company is based in (omitted) and does a limited amount of work in the Yukon. In 2004 we had no employees working in the Yukon. Therefore, our input may not be as imperative as those companies who are based in the territory and execute all of their work there.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input; our experiences with the Yukon Board have always been very helpful and informative.

The cost of \$200k is outrageous, as is the entire cost of WCB. Need to get administration costs in line NOW. Start looking inward instead of looking for industry to continue to have to pay for overpaid staff that may or may not have a purpose (ie staff being used to coordinate a convention)

If the YCC could obtain funding other than thru YCB I would support the Consultant service. WCB is a mismanaged elephant.

We only have 3 employees that work in the Yukon. Last year one of the employees had a claim. I thought the service was very good. I compared my assessment on working with the other provinces WCB agencies

I do not have enough information to answer a number of your questions. More information needs to get out to employers to answer these questions. A lot of the information that is sent out is so large it is never read because it is overwhelming.

The survey provides no options. Similarly, an introductory paragraph that said it was a 2 year experiment budgeted at 200K that did the following would have provided a frame of reference to respond since the survey design suggests you are not sure whether 1) the employer consultant is needed or 2) represents good value at a price tag of \$200k.

This is not a very well thought through survey and gives the impression of bias rather than neutrality.

I do believe the Employer Consultant position should not be renewed as it is a waste of time and money. It should be handled through WCB. THAT IS THERE MANDATE!!

My only problem with the YWCHSB is the amount spent on administration. It seems to be very high relative to the size of our jurisdiction.

There needs to be a balance between the services employees receive and the services employers receive. This is even more the case when you take into account the WHSCB is fully funded by employers such as myself and yet we don't even currently have a consultant to help us through any issues we may have with the board.

Appendix 5 Employers' Views: Comparing 2005 with 2001

			2005	2001
In your opinion, how well do you feel the Board is helping injured workers recover from their workplace injuries?	Helping a great deal	Count	20	123
		Column %	12.7%	12.7%
	Helping to some extent	Count	74	230
		Column %	47.1%	23.8%
	Helping very little	Count	15	37
		Column %	9.6%	3.8%
	Not helping at all	Count	1	10
		Column %	.6%	1.0%
Don't know	Count	47	415	
	Column %	29.9%	42.9%	
Total	Count	157	815	
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Do you think the Boards' policies are ...	Completely fair	Count	3	39
		Column %	1.9%	4.0%
	Mostly fair	Count	88	408
		Column %	56.1%	42.2%
	Mostly unfair	Count	6	34
		Column %	3.8%	3.5%
	Completely unfair	Count	2	8
		Column %	1.3%	.8%
Don't know	Count	58	275	
	Column %	36.9%	28.4%	
Total	Count	157	764	
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How familiar are you with the way employer assessment rates are set by the Board?	Very familiar	Count	10	37
		Column %	6.4%	4.3%
	Somewhat familiar	Count	67	289
		Column %	42.7%	33.4%
	Not very familiar	Count	44	246
		Column %	28.0%	28.5%
	Not at all familiar	Count	30	287
		Column %	19.1%	33.3%
Don't Know	Count	6	4	
	Column %	3.8%	.5%	
Total	Count	157	863	
	Column %	100.0%	100.0%	
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How familiar are you with the services and programs the Board provides to employers?	Very familiar	Count	6	21
		Column %	3.8%	2.5%
	Somewhat familiar	Count	75	242
		Column %	47.8%	28.6%
	Not very familiar	Count	57	293
		Column %	36.3%	34.7%
	Not at all familiar	Count	16	288
		Column %	10.2%	34.1%
Don't Know	Count	3	1	
	Column %	1.9%	.1	
Total	Count	157	845	

Appendix 5 cont'd

			2005	2001
Since you've handled WCB/Health & Safety issues for your business would you say that the service you've received has...	Improved	Count	23	151
		Column %	14.6%	15.6%
	Become worse	Count	4	15
		Column %	2.5%	1.6%
	Remained about the same	Count	87	609
		Column %	55.4%	63%
	Don't know	Count	43	127
	Column %	27.4%	13.1%	
Total	Count	157	902	
As an employer, would you be interested in accommodating the early return to work of an injured worker if the worker was supported financially and otherwise by the Board?	Yes	Count	94	602
		Column %	59.9%	74.1%
	No	Count	12	94
		Column %	7.6%	11.6%
	N/A	Count	10	49
		Column %	6.4%	6.0%
	DK	Count	41	65
	Column %	26.1%	8.0%	
Total	Count	157	810	

Appendix 6 Employer Advisers in Canada

Five provinces currently feature some form of employer adviser program in support of their workers' compensation system. They include British Columbia, Ontario, New Brunswick, PEI and Newfoundland. Ontario was the first jurisdiction to launch the program about 1970; BC followed in 1974 and the remaining three were established since 1990. Workers' adviser or workers' advocate programs are established in all jurisdictions in Canada.

Most workers' compensation boards in Canada feature an internal staff member or office with responsibility for assisting employers. The above-mentioned programs are distinct from these internal functions in that they are established under legislation as independent from the Board. Programs are typically delivered through an office attached for administrative purposes to a provincial ministry such as labour. An exception to this delivery format is Newfoundland, which contracts with the Newfoundland Business Council in a similar arrangement to the recent trial contract between the YWCH&SB and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

A significant trait of these provincial programs is that employers' and workers' advisers are considered equal in all material ways, both under the legislation and in practice. Newfoundland, for example, sets identical budgets for the two programs and links them – either both or neither are funded. The BC Act establishes both programs under the same clause (Sec. 94) although BC does not link their respective budgets. In all cases, program costs are recovered from the WCB by the government.

The authority and duties for the workers' adviser are for claims issues only. Issues related to assessments and occupational health and safety (OH&S) are employer-related and do not usually concern a worker. The BC Act states the employers' advisers assist employers with any issue that may affect an employer. This goes beyond a claim. Workers' advisers do not get involved in assessment or OH&S issues because they are not related to a claim and the WCB does not make any decisions or take any action on workers related to assessments or OH&S.

The BC Employers' Advisers Office (EAO) is a mature program that has withstood the test of time in proving its value to the province. It has survived largely intact over 30 years of changes in government, amendments to the Act, a Royal Commission into the WCB, and a recent (2002) core review of provincial government services. The latter two events specifically recognized the value of and the rationale for such a program. The EAO Director in BC frequently speaks to other provinces about the role of employers advisers, and has done so with the YWCH&SB.

The BCEAO operates on an annual budget of \$3.2 million and features a staff of 28; it operates eight regional offices around the province from its headquarters in Richmond. There are approximately 175,000 employers in the province, although the EAO works almost entirely with smaller employers – about 90% of its time is directed at employers with less than 10 workers.

Key points that relate to the EAO's role and value include:

- > Because it is established by legislation, it is protected to a degree from changing political preferences, budget purges, core reviews and the like. Hence, the office does not spend extraordinary time and resources either watching its back or justifying its existence.

- > The EAO is seen by employers as independent from the WCB, an invaluable asset in gaining the confidence of employers and Board representatives alike. Employers cite the ability to “call someone for help” as a major benefit from the Office.
- > The EAO role is clear and focussed: to help employers comply with the law as it pertains to workers’ compensation, health and safety issues. It provides advice and assistance; it is not an advocate of employers’ positions and so is not a “stakeholder” to any issue.
- > Additional roles the EAO performs include (1) prevention of workplace injuries, recognizing that employers are generally more responsive to this Office than they are with health and safety regulatory staff; and (2) as a “deemed employer” for appeal situations in which an employer has ceased to exist.
- > It has full access to all WCB files and information in the same manner as Board employees and workers’ advisers (the office has direct connection to the WCB computer network). All advisers are, of course, subject to secrecy laws.
- > The employers’ and workers’ adviser offices staff work closely together on relevant issues and have an open, positive working relationship. Their offices are located in the same building to facilitate interaction.
- > The EAO approach with assessment and OH&S issues centres on negotiation rather than confrontation. In claims matters, the EAO advises and may accompany and assist employers in statutory appeals procedures. Just as they do with the workers’ advisers, EAO staff has developed positive working relationships with Board staff.
- > A major function of the Office is training and education for employers. It offers at least one session a day year-round in the province; these include both standardized workshops and customized sessions for individual groups. The EAO also explains legislation changes to employers; on three occasions in the past three years, it has staged information sessions regarding amendments to the Act.
- > The EAO makes a significant contribution by acting as a buffer for the Board in its dealings with employers. It saves a great deal of Board time in releasing and editing information to employers by acting as intermediary; it heads off potential appeals; and it “takes a lot of noise out of the system,” according to the Director.

The BC Employers’ Advisers Office appears to function effectively and is recognized as such by both employers and workers’ groups alike. It is frequently cited as a model for similar programs in other provinces.

Additional information can be found at the EAO website: <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/eao/>