

The British Columbia Workers' Compensation Board is under serious attack

The WCB exists to:

- Prevent workplace injury and disease
 - Provide fair compensation to workers suffering workplace injury or disease
 - Rehabilitate injured and ill workers so that they can return to work
- WCB services are extremely

important to more than 2 million workers and 165,000 employers in British Columbia – about 140,000 workers were compensated by the WCB for work-related injuries or diseases in 2001.

And, sadly, 180 workers died because of their work that same year while 4,000 workers became disabled for life.

But despite the importance of the services, the BC Liberal provincial government is forcing the WCB to make dramatic cuts – cuts that are hurting workers, employers and communities.

Services that prevent injuries and deaths in the workplace are being cut significantly.

The benefits paid to workers injured on the job

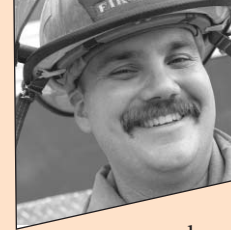
are being severely reduced.

Services to help injured workers recover are also being cut significantly.

And hundreds of Workers' Compensation Board employees – the people who provide these important services – are being permanently laid off.

WCB Cuts Hurt. They hurt workers, employers and communities.

And WCB cuts will only lead to more workplaces



deaths and injuries, more employers waiting longer for injured

workers to return to work and more injured workers living in poverty.

British Columbians need a Workers' Compensation Board that can save lives, prevent injuries, help get injured workers back on the job as quickly as possible and provide adequate services to those who, unfortunately, cannot return to work.

How WCB cuts hurt workers, employers and communities

The British Columbia Workers' Compensation Board has been preventing injuries, providing compensation benefits to injured workers and helping them with rehabilitation since 1917.

But today the Workers' Compensation Board is cutting services that prevent injuries, compensate injured workers and allow workers to go back to work.

These WCB cuts will hurt workers, employers and communities.

The BC Liberal provincial government significantly reduced compensation to injured workers by passing Bill 49, which cut benefits by about \$100 million a year.

Injured workers now just get benefits equal to 90 percent of their net pay instead of 75 percent of their gross pay, a cut of thousands of dollars in compensation for each worker.

The WCB is cutting 12 percent from its 2003 budget

and is changing its services, leading to the elimination of over 500 positions at the WCB. Further cuts are expected in the coming budget year.

And while the WCB administration claims these cuts in services to workers, employers and communities are due to an alleged \$287 million operating deficit, between December 2000 and September 2002 the WCB rebated \$431 million to some employers and wrote off \$210 million in assessment deficits.

These WCB cuts have led to devastating loss of services for injured workers including:

- Closing the WCB's highly-respected Rehabilitation Centre in Richmond, which served injured workers from around the province. The services of the Head Injury unit, the Hand Therapy unit for severe hand injuries and amputations, the Pain Clinic and Occupational and Medical Rehabilitation services are no longer available.
- Ending practicums for students training to be rehabilitation professionals.

Further WCB cuts have devastated services in several BC communities. This has been done by:

- Closing WCB offices in Vernon, Williams Lake and Campbell River and the WCB Prince George call centre. Positions are also being cut in Terrace, Courtenay, Nanaimo, North Vancouver, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Surrey, Abbotsford, Kelowna and Victoria.
- Eliminating all compensation and assessment services from the Cranbrook office, leaving only four prevention officers for the East Kootenay region.
- Eliminating more than 250 jobs in Richmond at the WCB's head office and the Rehab Residence building. Many of the services have been privatized.
- Cutting or reducing the number of safety and hygiene officers, ergonomists, prevention educators, audiologists, office support, radio frequency coordinators and business analysts in the Prevention Division.
- Eliminating First Aid Officer, certification support positions, and other services.



Cuts to the WCB's key functions - prevention of injury and illness, compensation and rehabilitation – will also hurt BC businesses.

WCB cuts hurt employers in several ways:

- According to the 2001 WCB annual report, each percent of reduction in the injury rate means \$12 million in avoided costs and about 36,000 productive days gained to the economy.
- Reducing the number of prevention officers in the province will result in more travel time for officers. This means that industry will wait longer for officers to respond to requests for assistance and urgent situations, resulting in longer production delays.
- Lack of inspection and enforcement will allow some operators with poor safety performance to continue to operate without penalty or correction, leading to an increase in assessment costs for all businesses registered in the WCB classification unit.
- Increases in the duration of claims increases employers' costs, which they pay through assessments. Closing offices and curtailing services in prevention, compensation and rehabilitation all negatively affect claim duration and early return to work programs. Every day added to the average total duration of claims increases short-term disability costs by \$6 million.
- The loss of WCB jobs due to office closures in several BC communities will hurt the local small businesses where those WCB employees lived and bought goods and services. For example, the loss of about 26 WCB jobs in Cranbrook means a payroll of about \$1.6 million disappears.



WCB CUTS HURT CAMPAIGN is sponsored by the Compensation Employees' Union, which represents unionized employees at the BC WCB and is fighting to protect these valuable public services for workers, employers and communities.



Check the www.wcbcutshurt.com website for more information and to send an email opposing WCB cuts to your MLA

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