

WSIS

Workplace Safety
and Insurance System

Workplace Safety and Insurance System Strategic Alignment Report for 2011

April 2011

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***Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.***

Henry Ford

INTRODUCTION

The Workplace Safety and Insurance System (WSIS) is the result of coordinated efforts between four agencies: the Workers' Compensation Board, the division of Occupational Health and Safety (Department of Labour and Advanced Education), the Workers' Advisers Program and the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Other organizations and stakeholders that are responsible for, or have an interest in, workplace health and safety and insurance in Nova Scotia are also included in the System. The WSIS is the arena where all these organizations can come together and collaborate and work towards advancing the goals of the System.

The collaborative efforts are in support of at least one of the four core WSIS goals:

1. Improve outcomes for workers and employers;
2. Improve service delivery;
3. Ensure effective governance of the System; and
4. Ensure financial sustainability of the System.

The purpose of the 2011 WSIS Strategic Alignment report is to present the collaborative initiatives between the four WSIS agencies and other organizations for the coming year.

The 2011 Report is both reflective and forward looking in its approach. The current state of the System is summarized by reporting on key performance indicators and stakeholder engagement efforts from the past year. A list of collaborative initiatives between agencies and other organizations then follows which demonstrates the collaborative focus for the System in the coming year.

It is important to remember that the WSIS continues to evolve as progress and development is made towards its goals and objectives. It is also important to realize that the System is large, complex and never static as agencies and organizations continue to work towards achieving their individual strategic goals and objectives, while at the same time advancing a System's perspective.

Mission of the Workplace Safety and Insurance System

Working together to help keep people healthy and safe at work, to insure against loss and to support workers' rehabilitation.

We strive to be fair, open and responsible in everything we do.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY:

The State of Workplace Safety and Insurance in Nova Scotia

What is the state of workplace safety and insurance in Nova Scotia? Is there a concern about the number and severity of injuries and fatalities? Are the efforts of the four partner agencies tasked to administer the System achieving the desired outcomes? Are workers and employers doing their part to build and maintain safe, healthy workplaces? The System strives to answer these questions through two primary sources of information: (1) by monitoring WSIS performance and (2) by obtaining the opinions of and feedback from those that the System is intended to serve – workers and employers.

System Performance

Performance of the WSIS is monitored on an on-going basis, using as its benchmark a scorecard of key performance indicators – indicators that have been developed in partnership with System stakeholders. While no single agency or organization can take full responsibility for the successes or short-comings of the System, the scorecard enables us to gauge how we as a province are performing in reference to other Canadian jurisdictions, and whether workplace health and safety outcomes are trending in the desired direction.

A comprehensive look at performance can be found in the WSIS 2010 Year End Report, which can be obtained online at www.wsis.ns.ca or from any of the partner agencies. Provided below is a synopsis of those indicators that provide a snapshot of the System's progress towards achieving its desired outcomes.

Injury Rate

Workplace injury rate represents the number of time-loss injuries that occur per 100 workers. In 2010, the injury rate continued to decrease and at year-end stood at 2.13 versus a 2009 year-end rate of 2.26. Progress is due, in part, to the efforts of a number of parties: employers for their focus on the health and safety of their workers, workers for taking steps to protect themselves and their co-workers, the Occupational Health and Safety Division for the awareness and enforcement roles they play, the Workers' Advisers Program for their on-going efforts to help workers and employers be more aware of workers' compensation and occupational health and safety issues, the Workers' Compensation Board for their promotion of workplace health and safety and efforts to help employers recognize opportunities to improve health and safety conditions, the System Stakeholder Counsellors for their continued work in promoting injury prevention to workers and employers; and safety, industry and worker associations for the support they provide to employers and workers.

Throughout 2011, the Occupational Health and Safety Division and the Workers' Compensation Board will maintain efforts to increase awareness and further strengthen the province's workplace health and safety culture. In support of this, the two agencies will continue their collaborative efforts with an aim of further reducing the number of workplace injuries.

Return to Work at 100% Pre-injury Earnings

It is generally accepted by all System partners and stakeholders that the sooner an injured worker is able to return to safe and meaningful work the better it is for all parties: worker, employer and the province of Nova Scotia. When a worker is able to rejoin the labour force and return to meaningful work it creates less hardships for them and their families, the employer and the economy. To return a worker back to employment is often a collaborative effort involving a number of System partners. In 2010, the percentage of workers returning to work at 100% pre-injury earnings was maintained at the 2009 level of 95%. The ongoing collaborative efforts of agencies, aligned organizations, workers, employers, and service providers within the System help make this possible.

Stakeholder Satisfaction with Governance

System agencies engage key stakeholders representing injured workers, labour and employers to seek their input on various issues and activities on an ongoing basis. In 2008, a Stakeholder Engagement Index measure was established to gauge the overall satisfaction of a targeted group of stakeholders who are actively involved in the System. Out of a possible 100%, these targeted stakeholders rated their engagement in the WSIS at 45%. The 2008 results form a baseline for determining progress and development in the area of stakeholder engagement for future years. The WSIS Stakeholder Engagement Survey was administered in the fall of 2010 and stakeholders rated their engagement at 56%. This represents an increase of 11% in two years.

% Funded

The ‘% funded’ measure gauges the overall financial health of the System. As the global economy recovers, the funding outlook of the System will be monitored closely. As of year-end 2010, the System was 64% fully funded.

System performance is monitored on an on-going basis. The results are used by stakeholders and agencies alike to gauge the health of the System and measure the progress towards achievement of the System’s goals and objectives. For a comprehensive description of our performance measurement methodology refer to Appendix D.

Table 1 depicts the System Scorecard, and measures within each quadrant. For more information on 2010 performance results, refer to Appendix C.

Table 1: System Scorecard – 2011

Measure	2010	2009
OUTCOMES		
Composite Duration	98	98
% Labour Force Covered	72	70%
% Return To Work	95%	95%
Injury Rate	2.13	2.26
Injury Rate, Claims > 26 Weeks	0.12	0.11
*Stakeholder Engagement Index (WCB)		
Injured Worker Satisfaction Index for WCB Program Delivery	73%	72%
Employer Satisfaction Index for WCB Program Delivery	77%	78%
Workers’ Advisers Program Client Satisfaction	92%	90%
Occupational Health and Safety Division Client Satisfaction:		
Publication Mail-Out, Overall Satisfaction	4.4/5	4.6/5
Injured Worker Satisfaction, claims > 26 weeks ¹	66%	65%
Stakeholder Awareness of Importance of Workplace Health & Safety	87%	89%
Decisions Overturned On Appeal	42%	36%
*Stakeholder Engagement Index		
	56%	45 %(2008)
% Funded		
	64%	62%
Average Assessment Rate	\$2.68	\$2.67

*Measured bi-annually

Stakeholder Input

Stakeholders (workers and employers) are the reason the WSIS exists, and their opinions on 'how we're doing' are critical to the System's overall success. Throughout the year, stakeholders are provided with a number of opportunities to share those opinions (i.e. on-going regular meetings of agency staff and stakeholder representative groups, formal consultation on pertinent issues).

The Stakeholder Liaison Committee (SLC) plays a vital function within the System, particularly in advising on System consultation opportunities at the request of the System Coordinating Committee. Members of the SLC provide a link to System activity for stakeholders throughout the System. In 2010, the SLC played a key role in determining the direction and topic for the Annual Fall Consultation. The SLC recommended that injury prevention be the focus because it is so important and touches on every aspect of the System. The SLC will continue to perform this advisory function in 2011.

Stakeholders' ***Vision*** for the
Workplace Safety and Insurance System

Safe, healthy workplaces for Nova Scotians, and sustainable safety and insurance services.

WHERE WE ARE GOING: System Strategic Alignment

The WSIS vision is informed by four **goals**, each described in further detail by a set of objectives. The four goals are:

5. Improve outcomes for workers and employers;
6. Improve service delivery;
7. Ensure effective governance of the System; and
8. Ensure financial sustainability of the System.

Table 1 identifies the objectives set for each, unchanged from recent past years.

Table 1: Workplace Safety and Insurance System Goals and Objectives

<p><i>Improve outcomes for workers and employers</i></p> <p>Reduce Workplace Injury</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase worker and employer awareness and knowledge of rights, responsibilities, risks and best practice related to illness and injury prevention 2. Encourage positive health and safety attitudes and behaviours 3. Increase compliance with legislative standards and the adoption of best practice 4. Improve health and safety outcomes <p>Safe and Timely Return to Work</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure safe and timely return to work 2. Improve the satisfaction of injured workers and employers with their return to work experience 3. Increase awareness of the benefits of safe and timely return to work
<p><i>Improve service delivery</i></p> <p>Accessibility of Information and Information Sharing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase awareness and understanding of the system 2. Increase accessibility of service 3. Increase accessibility of information <p>Issue Resolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issue the correct decision the first time 2. Increase the understandability of letters and decisions 3. Increase the efficiency of issue resolution 4. Increase worker and employer involvement in decision-making 5. Increase the fairness of the System
<p><i>Ensure effective governance of the Workplace Safety and Insurance System</i></p> <p>Formal Accountability Structure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish an on-going agency committee to oversee the day-to-day implementation of the System plan 2. Produce agency quarterly reports and a semi-annual update on the System plan <p>Stakeholder Consultation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase stakeholders' understanding of how they can influence policy/corporate/government decisions 2. Improve stakeholders' level of satisfaction with the meaningful opportunities they have to provide input into the policy development process, including inter-agency consultation 3. Adhere to agreed-to consultation process for policy development 4. Improve stakeholders' level of satisfaction with the meaningful opportunities they have to provide input into corporate decisions for the Workplace Safety and Insurance System
<p><i>Ensure financial sustainability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance System</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full funding as outlined in the Funding Strategy 2. When long-term financial results are better than target, discuss gains sharing opportunities to increase benefits for injured workers, reduce employer assessment rates and/or expedite retirement of the unfunded liability

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE: Collaboration

This section of the report describes the key System-level initiatives and activities to be undertaken in 2011, toward achievement of WSIS goals and objectives. These activities are complemented by agency-level activities which are derived from individual agency business and strategic plans.

Improve Outcomes for Workers and Employers – Reduce Workplace Injury

Throughout 2011, the Joint Committee of WSIS, comprised of staff from the WCB, OH&S Division and HRSDC, will continue to focus on its key priority areas: Internal Responsibility System, ergonomics, targeting high injury workplaces, training quality and education. Joint committee members also identified three new priorities in 2010 that will carry forward in to 2011: communications alignment, return to work/ workforce development and leadership. Advancing the priority areas requires various forms of collaboration between members and the agencies they represent.

As stated above one of the priority areas for Joint Committee is leadership. In 2011, Joint committee will work on developing a framework for a leadership development project. The purpose is to focus on promoting workplace health and safety from inside industry. This will have a great impact in raising awareness of the importance of injury prevention and promote best practice.

Throughout 2011, the WCB and the OH&S division will continue the social marketing public service announcements promoting safe work practices, collaborating on Day of Morning awareness and further development of the Rod Stickman campaign.

Improve Outcomes for Workers and Employers – Safe and Timely Return to Work

Under the direction of Joint committee, staff from the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and the WCB formed a working group to explore the feasibility of sharing labour and employment readiness programs. Throughout 2011, the Return to Work Feasibility Working Group will share information on programs offered to clients and determine if there is an opportunity to engage injured workers in training and return to work options and and look at potential models of collaboration from other provincial jurisdictions.

Improve Service Delivery – Accessibility of Information and Information Sharing

In early 2011, members of Joint Committee will be reviewing a recent report from Ontario entitled, *Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety: recommendations to the Minister of Labour*. Members of Joint Committee will review the recommendations contained in the report and advise the Heads of Agencies Committee on any similar occupational health and safety issue that might exist in Nova Scotia.

Improve Service Delivery – Issue Resolution

The WSIS Liaison Officer (WLO) is a pilot program originating from the System's Issues Resolution Strategy. The WLO tries to resolve appeals before a hearing at WCB's internal appeals. Other WSIS agencies and organizations assist greatly in the process, specifically the Workers' Advisers Program (WAP). The WLO pilot will continue through 2011.

The Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal (WCAT) is working with staff from WCB and WAP to create a facilitation process at the tribunal. This process will allow appeal participants to come together and try and resolve issues on appeal prior to a formal WCAT Hearing. It is expected this working group will have a recommendation on how the process should occur by mid 2011.

Members of the Appeals Issue Discussion Group, a sub-committee of the Issues Resolution Working Group (IRWG), will continue working on reaching a common understanding on the adjudicative issues and challenges concerning noise induced hearing loss. Staff from WCB, WAP and WCAT will review multi jurisdictional research and international science in trying to reach a common understanding of all the issues involved when assessing the presence of noise induced hearing loss. A formal report of the review will be forwarded to IRWG in late 2011.

Ensure Effective Governance of the System – Formal Accountability Structure

Work continued in 2010 on finishing a WSIS Statement of Principles and Objectives document. After further consultation and refinement, a final version of the SPO will be released in mid 2011. The finalized SPO is the charter for the System, detailing the various components of WSIS and accountabilities among organizations and stakeholders.

A special working group of System organizations met in late 2010 to advise the System on how the SPO should define and formalize the relationship among different aligned

and 3rd party organizations. The results of their meeting will be taken under consideration when a final SPO is drafted.

Ensure Effective Governance of the System – Stakeholder Consultation

Following the 2010 Annual Fall Stakeholder Consultation, the SLC started a discussion on the merits of the annual consultation process. The committee was interested in finding new and more effective ways to engage stakeholders on System related issues. Throughout 2011, the SLC will provide advice to the System Coordinating Committee on future consultation opportunities.

Ensure Financial Sustainability of the System

As the global economy recovers, the funding outlook of the System will be monitored closely. As of year-end 2010, the System was 64% fully funded.

APPENDIX A:

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE SYSTEM – RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Nova Scotia's Workplace Safety and Insurance System is a collaboration of government, agencies, advisory councils, working groups and those that the System serves (workers and employers) - all working together toward a common vision.

System Governance

System Coordinating Committee

The System Coordinating Committee is comprised of the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Workers' Compensation Board and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Together, these two individuals are responsible for ensuring a legislative agenda exists, aligning the planning processes, where appropriate with shared goals and objectives, and ensuring consultation and linkages between the Heads of Agencies Committee and the Stakeholder Liaison Committee.

Heads of Agencies Committee

The Heads of Agencies Committee is comprised of the heads of the four System agencies, namely:

- Director of the Occupational Health and Safety Division;
- Chief Worker Adviser of the Workers' Advisers Program;
- Chief Appeal Commissioner of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal;
and
- CEO of the Workers' Compensation Board.

Members of the Heads of Agencies Committee are responsible for the ongoing delivery of service to workers and employers in the System, and for measurement and reporting of outcomes and progress in alignment with System goals. They are also responsible to coordinate strategic plan implementation.

GOVERNMENT

There are two departments that play a role in the Workplace Safety and Insurance System, the Departments of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) and Justice. LAE is responsible for Parts I and III of the *Workers' Compensation Act* and for the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. As per the *Workers' Compensation Act*, the Minister is responsible for the appointment of the Chair and the representative members of the Board of Directors of the Workers' Compensation Board and for appointment of the Chief Worker Adviser of the Workers' Advisers Program. As per the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* the Minister is directly responsible for the Occupational Health and Safety Division.

The Minister of Justice is responsible for Part II of the *Workers' Compensation Act* and for the selection of the Chief Appeal Commissioner of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal.

AGENCIES

Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education

The mission of the Occupational Health and Safety Division is to establish, promote and enforce clear standards to reduce occupational injury and illness. The Division's objectives are to, with its partners, work to reduce the incidence of injury and illness of employees, improve the understanding of occupational health and safety standards by all workplace parties, and improve health and safety conditions in the workplace by means of research, compliance promotion, inspection, investigation and enforcement of legislation.

Workers' Advisers Program

The Workers' Advisers Program is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of a program to advise, assist and represent eligible injured workers who have been denied benefits under the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal

The Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal is the first level of appeal external and independent of the Workers' Compensation Board. It hears and decides appeals filed by workers or employers and may involve claims-related issues or employer assessment matters. The Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal also has exclusive jurisdiction to determine whether the *Workers' Compensation Act* bars a right of action against employers.

Workers' Compensation Board

The Workers' Compensation Board is a workplace injury insurance agency responsible for the administration of the *Workers' Compensation Act*, provide prevention education and to promote a culture of safety in the workplace.

STAKEHOLDER COUNSELLORS SYSTEM

The Stakeholder Counsellors System is comprised of two programs – one assisting workers and the other assisting employers. The two programs will run initially as pilots, each providing navigation support to their respective stakeholders. The employer program is governed by an Employers Advisory Council comprised of representatives of key employer groups. The worker program is currently run through the Federation of Labour.

ADVISORY COUNCILS AND WORKING GROUPS

Key to the success of the Workplace Safety and Insurance System is a collaborative approach. Through consultation, the System's administrators strive to involve stakeholders on an on-going basis in order to understand their needs, priorities and perspectives. Several standing advisory councils and working groups have been established to serve that objective. To name a few:

The Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Council is a stakeholder advisory group whose purpose is to advise the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education on occupational health & safety matters. The Prevention Subcommittee, a sub-group of the Advisory Council, advises council members specifically on prevention needs and priorities.

The Stakeholder Liaison Committee is comprised of representatives of the worker and employer communities, members of the Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Council, members of the Workers' Compensation Board's Board of Directors, the Office of the Employer Advisor and the Office of the Workers Counsellor and one staff representative from each of the four agencies acting in a support role. The role of the Committee is to provide input and make recommendations to Coordinating Committee on format and agenda items for the WSIS Annual General Meeting and the annual WSIS Fall Stakeholders Discussion meeting and other formal WSIS consultations as determined by Coordinating Committee.

Working groups are internal, operational groups, established as needed in line with identified System priorities. The Issues Resolution Working Group, comprised of representatives from the System agencies, for example, has been established to advise the Heads of Agency Committee on ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of issue resolution within the System.

INJURED WORKERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Injured Workers Associations are organizations that advocate on behalf of injured workers, providing a service beyond that provided by the Workers' Advisers Program. There are two funded associations, located in Cape Breton and Pictou County. These associations report to their members and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS

The System exists to serve workers and employers, and in turn their input and advice ensures that the System sufficiently balances their present and future needs.

A number of mechanisms exist to solicit the input and advice of workers and employers, including regular stakeholder satisfaction surveys. Also, the annual General Meeting (spring) and stakeholder consultation session (fall) provide forums for workers and employers to ask questions of the System agencies and to publicly share their views.

Workers and employers also serve on standing advisory councils and working groups, such as the Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Council and System Performance Advisory Committee.

More information about the Workplace Safety and Insurance System is available at www.wsis.ns.ca.

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA



NOVA SCOTIA
Labour and
Advanced Education



NOVA SCOTIA
Workers' Advisers Program



NOVA SCOTIA
Workers' Compensation
Appeals Tribunal