

# Workplace Safety and Insurance System Strategic Plan 2010

April 2010

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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) consist of the organizations and stakeholders that are responsible for, or have an interest in, workplace health and safety and insurance in Nova Scotia. The WSIS provides a framework for collaboration of activities between independent agencies that supports the establishment and achievement of broad goals/objectives for the entire workers' compensation and occupational health and safety 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 2010 WSIS Strategic plan is to present the overall strategic direction of the System by identifying key collaborative initiatives that will be the focus of System activity in 2010 in an effort to make progress towards achieving the above goals.

The 2010 plan is both forward looking and reflective in its approach. For the System to effectively identify and subsequently deliver on its collaborative efforts, it's useful to provide context on where the System has been, where it stands currently and where it is going.

It is important to remember that the WSIS continues to evolve as progress and development is made. This plan is the next step in that evolution as WSIS agencies who share an interest in workplace safety and insurance work together for a common purpose.

***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 individual 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 2009 Year End Report, which can be obtained online at [www.wsis.ns.ca](http://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 2009, the injury rate continued to decrease and at year-end stood at 2.3 versus a 2008 year-end rate of 2.5. 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 2010, 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 parties. The percentage of workers returning to work at 100% pre-injury earnings increased from 93% in 2008 to 95% in 2009. The ongoing collaborative efforts of System agencies, Aligned Organizations, workers, employers, and service providers within the System help make this progress 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 will be administered again in the Fall of 2010. It is expected that results will improve overtime as the System continues to focus on collaborative activity and implements stakeholders' suggestions for System enhancements.

### **% 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 2008, the System was 60% 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 2009 performance results, refer to Appendix C.

Table 1: System Scorecard – 2009

Measure	2009	2008
<b>OUTCOMES</b>		
Composite Duration	98	95
% Labour Force Covered	70	71
% Return To Work	95	93
Injury Rate	2.26	2.48
Injury Rate, Claims > 26 Weeks	0.11	0.12
<b>SERVICE DELIVERY</b>		
Stakeholder Satisfaction Index		
Injured Worker Satisfaction Index for WCB Program Delivery	72%	73%
Employer Satisfaction Index for WCB Program Delivery	78%	79%
Workers’ Advisers Program Client Satisfaction	90%	88%
Occupational Health and Safety Division Client Satisfaction:		
Publication Mail-Out, Overall Satisfaction	4.6/5	4.5/5
Injured Worker Satisfaction, claims > 26 weeks <sup>1</sup>	65%	66%
Stakeholder Awareness of Importance of Workplace Health & Safety	89%	84%
Decisions Overturned On Appeal	36%	39%
<b>EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</b>		
*Stakeholder Engagement Index	n/a	45
<b>FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
Benefits Comparison	Appendix D	
% Funded	62%	60%
Average Assessment Rate	\$2.67	\$2.68

\* 2008 is the first year for the Stakeholder Engagement Index

## 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). One significant stakeholder engagement occurred during the summer of 2009 when a small stakeholder working group recommended changes to the WSIS Statement of Principles and Objectives (SP&O) document, the key document that sets out the governance and accountability framework of the System. The WSIS Coordinating Committee received these recommendations in August of 2009. At the 2009 WSIS Fall Stakeholder Discussion, Coordinating Committee consulted more broadly with stakeholders on the implementation of those recommendations where it was believed that opinion may vary. This spring a revised SP&O will be released by the System that is reflective of the Working Group's recommendations and stakeholder input. This revised SP&O accurately reflects the evolution of the System and focuses increased efforts on agency collaboration.

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 Direction

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

# GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE: Strategy

This section of the report describes the key System-level initiatives and activities to be undertaken in 2010, 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

Together the Occupational Health & Safety Division and the Workers' Compensation Board through the work of the Joint Committee of the WSIS will continue to target high risk employers by providing complementary and aligned services including: compliance guidance, enforcement, prevention consultation and education, awareness through social marketing, and online tools and information.

In 2010, both agencies will discuss opportunities for joint agency planning and developing a common and collaborative approach to reducing workplace injury and continue focus on its four strategic pillars: education, ergonomics, targeting and Internal Responsibility System.

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

Return-to-work success is influenced by many factors, including the state and availability of health care. In 2009, the WCB established a stakeholder working group to begin to address stakeholder concerns regarding the implementation of some elements of the physiotherapy program. To date, this has been very successful in bringing stakeholders together to address concerns and seek mutual understanding and improvements to the program. This work will continue in 2010.

In 2010, the WCB and the Department of Labour and Workforce Development's Skills and Learning Branch to continue to work together to explore opportunities related to skills training and labour force reattachment, in an effort to further improve return-to-work outcomes. This initiative will better enable stakeholders to leverage safe and timely return to work resources and expertise available throughout the System.

## Improve Service Delivery – Accessibility of Information and Information Sharing

In 2009 a group of stakeholders came together to discuss the WSIS SP&O document. Resulting from those discussions was a set of recommendations for Coordinating Committee's consideration in revising the WSIS SP&O to reflect the current situation. Overall, Coordinating Committee accepted the recommendations in principle. Some of these recommendations focus on opportunities for increased accountability and information sharing throughout the System.

In 2010, an updated SP&O will be approved by Coordinating Committee with an emphasis on accountability and sharing of information through System consultation. The SP&O sets out the framework for System consultation with a particular emphasis on the purpose and focus of the Annual General Meeting and the Fall Stakeholder session. Also, a new stakeholder body, the Stakeholder Liaison Committee, has been struck and will advise Coordinating Committee on these two key stakeholder touch points.

## Improve Service Delivery – Issue Resolution

The Issues Resolution Working Group (IRWG), with members from the WCB, WAP and WCAT; for the past several years has worked to identify opportunities for process improvement within the workers' compensation appeal system. Activity resulting from this working group includes the establishment of joint training, joint appeals scheduling, and establishment of an appeals issues discussion group.

In 2009, the IRWG released an Issues Resolution Strategy Framework for stakeholder consultation. In 2010, the System will conduct a small face-to-face consultation with a small selected group of stakeholders to gather additional input, finalize the strategy and identify key priority areas for future collaboration with respect to issue resolution.

Further, a key focus area in 2010 will be the implementation of the WSIS Liaison Officer (WLO) initiative. In early 2010, a new System resource, the WLO, was created to facilitate early resolution at the first level of appeal in the compensation system. This initiative is similar to the early resolution process piloted at WCAT in 2009. Based on the experience and lessons learned from the WCAT pilot, it was decided to move the process earlier in the appeal process. It is anticipated that the WLO pilot findings will help to identify potential future areas of issue resolution opportunity.

## Ensure Effective Governance of the System – Formal Accountability Structure

The revised SP&O document will provide an accountability and governance framework for the System. The revised SP&O identifies the agencies comprising the WSIS and their subsequent accountability to stakeholders of the System. In 2010, this accountability will be realized through the System Coordinating Committee who will

oversee the implementation of the 2010 revised SP&O, including exploring opportunities to further enhance joint strategic planning between the WCB and the Occupational Health and Safety Division.

## Ensure Effective Governance of the System – Stakeholder Consultation

At a minimum there are two annual opportunities for System stakeholder consultation: the WSIS AGM and the Fall Stakeholder Discussion. The focus of the AGM is a reporting out process whereby stakeholders are informed about the performance of the System during the previous year. The focus of the Fall Stakeholder Discussion is a listening process whereby stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input into the direction of the System.

In 2010, a new Stakeholder working group body will be established, the Stakeholder Liaison Committee (SLC). This group will advise Coordinating Committee on agenda topics and other important terms of engagement for the two annual consultation sessions.

Also in 2010, the WCB and the Occupational Health and Safety Division will jointly consult stakeholders on a proposed strategic approach for combating musculoskeletal injuries – the most common injury in the System.

## 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 2008, the System was 60% 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.

### GOVERNMENT

There are two departments that play a role in the Workplace Safety and Insurance System, the Departments of Labour and Workforce Development (LWD) and Justice. LWD 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 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 Workforce Development***

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 representing workers and the other representing employers. The two programs will run initially as pilots, each providing navigation support to their respective stakeholders. The employer program is currently administered through the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and 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 Workforce Development 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 Workforce Development.

### **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.

## **System Governance**

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 Workforce Development. 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 System Performance Advisory 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 Workers' 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.