

I am writing today to the Independent Review Panel about my three very different experiences with WHSCC.

My first experience as an injured worker was when I was working in a mill as a general laborer. I injured my knees which required me to have minor surgery on my knees (one immediately and one two years later). I was required to be off six to eight weeks and my case manager at WHSCC was very supportive and encouraging. When I was able to return to work after 6 weeks, my case manager told me to make sure that I was truly ready to return to work and to take the additional weeks if I felt that I needed it. I was so amazed at how this person truly seemed to be concerned for my personal well being. Needless to say I returned to work after the six weeks without incident. My second surgery, I didn't bother to inform WHSCC because it was day surgery and I was attending school and did not miss more than ½ a day.

My second experience is as the employer (so to speak). I worked as the human resource manager for the very same company where I was injured as a laborer mentioned above. My view from the other side really opened my eyes. We had a number of employees at various stages of injury. While the majority of injuries were legitimate, there were a number of cases where the original legitimate injury resulted in opportunities to defraud both the employer and WHSCC. In one instance, we had a man claiming child care for when he was going to therapy and he didn't even have children! It wasn't WHSCC who caught this glaring error it was us.

As for the legitimate injuries that had happened in this workplace; if it was a short term injury both the company and WHSCC were supportive and the employee's recovery and return to work went smoothly. To my horror, the long term injuries, however, were another story. The employees were accused of trying to rip off both the company and WHSCC. Other employees were asked to spy on their fellow workers and even offered incentives such as raises, advancements, etc. this was all supported or suggested by the case managers for the workers. The return to work percentages always seemed to be what was most important for the case managers. We were often reassured that once the employee returned to the work force in gradual return, we only had to keep them a "respectable" amount of time before we phased out their position or supervisors were encouraged to make the job unbearable so that they would leave. I was constantly fighting for the employee, pushing for better health and safety measures, reporting unsafe practices and equipment to the WHSCC inspector only to be told some things are better left alone or "You wouldn't want to be responsible for us shutting you down would you?"

My third and final experience was when my husband injured his back. My husband had the same case manager that I had so I thought everything would go as smoothly as my case did. Boy was I wrong! Anyone suffering any type of injury involving chronic pain seems to have a target on their back. After weeks of bed rest he was sent back to work which resulted in him going to the hospital in an ambulance. After that incident, he was shipped off to Grand Bay for Rehab. He was constantly told that he had to feel pain to get better. After a couple more return to work efforts that resulted in trips back to the hospital, he was sent home. We were then informed that he was being investigated for WHSCC fraud and his money immediately stopped. His case manager wouldn't take his calls, wouldn't even let him know why he was being investigated. We once called the case manager's supervisor to complain of the treatment that he was receiving which only resulted in an angry call from the case manager. We contacted the worker's advocate

who put us on a list (at the time there were only two in the province) and when he finally was able to look at the case he informed us that the complaints were from my husband's employer and written statements were given from a supervisor and a neighbor/coworker testifying to my husband installing windows in our house, carrying groceries, etc. We later found out that my husband's own nephew was pressured by his supervisor to set up his Uncle so that he could be reported. Long story short, we were fortunate to have a receipt from the person who installed the windows and it was proven that the statements were false and his claim was reinstated.

When my husband was deemed unable to continue his previous job he was sent for upgrading in order to make him more employable. On his first attempt, he didn't successfully get his GED diploma and WHSCC was not willing to send him again. His employment councilor found him a job as a security guard which paid minimum wage and they topped his pay up \$80 per month even because they don't take into account overtime pay or production bonuses. My husband convinced WHSCC and EI to send him for retraining as a truck driver even though the doctors were against it. My husband couldn't stand not being able to provide for his family any longer. Once his training was complete, WHSCC cut him off completely. During this time we continued fighting with WHSCC and finally hiring a lawyer who told us to apply for a PPI (the case manager never once told us of this option). Once we got a copy of my husband's file we were shocked to see notes through out stating that he wasn't displaying the normal amount of pain for the type of injury that he had so therefore, he was faking. He was sent by WHSCC to see a doctor and was classed over 50% permanently disabled and received a lump sum payment. Our family went a number of years hand to mouth, treated like criminals and made to feel like second class citizens all because he suffered a workplace injury.

WHSCC is the only organization where you are guilty until proven innocent. It only takes an anonymous phone call for them to withhold your disability payments while you need to compile evidence of your innocence. Doctor's don't want to work with WHSCC because their advice is not often taken and with the doctor shortage, they don't have the time to spend fighting to be heard. Lawyers don't want to deal with WHSCC unless they expect you to get a huge settlement, because of the limitless resources WHSCC has and are able to keep cases tied up in litigation for years. To deal with the frustration of a life changing injury is difficult enough but to add to the little or no free support or information adds to the burden. Who in their right mind would put themselves and their families through years of pain and stress just to defraud WHSCC of \$80 per month? People have filed bankruptcy, marriages ending in divorce, developed drug dependencies and the list goes on. How has this corporation been able to continue delivering this abuse?

This corporation should have an external board who do not answer to WHSCC consisting of a practicing doctor, physiotherapist, employer, worker or representative and an employee of the province so that any concerns may be addressed impartially and injustices may be addressed in a prompt manner.

Thank you for realizing that there is a problem that needs to be addressed and for giving hope back to the hopeless. The only concern that I have is the low response to the inquiry. There are many injured workers who have been taken advantage of who do not have computer skills or the level of education to feel that they can articulate clearly enough. There should have been open forums in communities around the province. I

only found out about this through being a volunteer fire fighter and I logged on to write my support for the A. E. MacDonald Insurance Services Brief that was submitted, and I pride myself in being informed.

Sincerely,

An injured worker