

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–2020

# INTRODUCTION

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In 1910, Sir William Meredith was appointed to a Royal Commission to study workers' compensation. His final report, known as the Meredith Report was produced in 1913.

The Meredith Report outlined a trade-off in which workers relinquish their right to sue their employers over a workplace injury in exchange for compensation benefits. There were five basic cornerstones to the original workers' compensation laws; cornerstones which have survived across Canada, to a greater or lesser extent, as follows:

- 1. No-fault compensation:** Workplace injuries are compensated regardless of fault. The worker and employer waive the right to sue. There is no argument over responsibility or liability for an injury. Fault becomes irrelevant, and providing compensation becomes the focus.
- 2. Collective liability:** The total cost of the compensation system is shared by all employers. All employers contribute to a common fund. Financial liability becomes their collective responsibility.
- 3. Security of payment:** A fund is established to guarantee that compensation monies will be available. Injured workers are assured of prompt compensation and future benefits.
- 4. Exclusive jurisdiction:** All compensation claims are directed solely to the compensation board. The board is the decision-maker and final authority for all claims. The board is not bound by legal precedent; it has the power and authority to judge each case on its individual merits.
- 5. Independent board:** The governing board is both autonomous and non-political. The board is financially independent of government or any special interest group. The administration of the system is focused on the needs of its employer and worker clients, providing service with efficiency and impartiality.

In keeping with these Meredith Principles, the WCB's strategic plan is a direction-setting document that will guide and inform our planning from 2016 through to 2020. The plan describes broad strategies and actions over this five-year period to ensure we are directing and aligning our efforts and resources toward the important goals that we have established.

In so doing, the strategic plan is an evolution and builds on significant progress the WCB has made over the past number of years and confirms our continuing focus on preventing workplace injury and helping injured workers return to work in a safe and timely manner. Reaching our goals will involve continued emphasis on creating and strengthening key partnerships and ongoing collaboration and engagement with workplaces across the province using a variety of approaches.

A key element of this plan is a significant investment in modernizing the WCB, with a particular focus on enhancing technology. With the passage of time, the WCB is no longer meeting service expectations of employers and workers with regards to online accessibility and external connectivity. Keeping abreast of the speed of technological change will be an ongoing challenge as we develop services that workers and employers want and need.

# VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

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## VISION

Nova Scotians – safe and secure from workplace injury.

## MISSION

We set the standard for workplace injury insurance. We inform and inspire Nova Scotians in the prevention of workplace injury, but if it occurs, we support those whose lives it touches by championing a timely return to safe and healthy work.

## VALUES

### **Can-do Attitude**

We will deliver on our promises and provide top-notch service.

### **Safety Champion**

We will be a champion for workplace safety through our relationships and innovative solutions, and by keeping prevention and return to work at the heart of our business.

### **Caring and Compassionate**

We will strive to walk a mile in workers' and employers' shoes. We will serve as we like to be served and provide those we serve with the respect and support they need to be successful.

## SERVICE PRINCIPLES

As a WCB team member, I am focused on delivering the best service I can to help others succeed. I provide great service when I:

- **Act respectfully.**  
Treat people with dignity and sincerity.
- **See the person first.**  
Approach every situation with an open mind and patiently consider other perspectives.
- **Communicate with purpose.**  
Achieve understanding through clarity in words and actions.
- **Find the best solution.**  
Approach challenges with enthusiasm and creativity.
- **Own my work.**  
Stand by the service I provide and take pride in my work.
- **Keep getting better.**  
Take action by being proactive and innovative.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

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Working in collaboration with workers, employers and our partners, the WCB's goals are to:

- > Build a **workplace safety culture**;
- > Improve outcomes for **safe and timely return to work**;
- > Be **financially stable and sustainable**;
- > **Expand strategic relationships** to enhance the commitment to workplace health and safety and return to work across the province;
- > Provide **excellent and efficient service**, leveraging technology to meet worker and employer expectations.



# AREAS OF FOCUS

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This strategic plan is an evolution of previous plans. It builds on past achievements to meet the challenges expected in the coming years including an aging population in Nova Scotia, growing concerns regarding mental health issues and the continuing high number of workplace fatalities. These issues pose challenges for both injury prevention and compensation.

While the WCB will continue to support all industry sectors to improve injury prevention and return to work outcomes, we will enhance focus on improving the performance of high risk sectors such as health care and fishing. Specifically, we will advance our goals by focusing in the following key areas:

## INJURY PREVENTION

The WCB concentrates on promotion and education to advance Nova Scotia's workplace safety culture. In collaboration with workplaces we are striving to create safer workplaces and eliminate workplace injuries and fatalities so all Nova Scotians can live in a province where being injured at work is a thing of the past.

The WCB collaborated with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education and stakeholders to create the *Workplace Safety Strategy for Nova Scotians 2013-2017*. This strategy, which calls for action from all workplaces, will guide the WCB's injury prevention efforts until its completion. In essence, the Workplace Safety Strategy is a sub-strategy that complements and supports this strategic plan.

The best outcome for workers, employers and all Nova Scotians is that no one is injured or dies on the job or as a result of their work.



Over the next five years we will: >

- Complete the WCB's commitments in the *Workplace Safety Strategy for Nova Scotians 2013-2017*. This strategy was developed based on discussions amongst hundreds of workers, employers, safety associations, educators, partner agencies and others who are determined to make Nova Scotia the safest place to work in Canada.
- Continue to strengthen our relationship with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and collaboration with workers and employers, as we live up to the commitments we have made in this strategy.
- Collaborate with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education and stakeholders to define further actions that are needed to advance Nova Scotia's workplace safety culture beyond 2017.

## RETURN TO WORK

Workers and employers benefit from safe and timely return to work. Early intervention and maintaining the worker-employer relationship help speed recovery, while helping employers retain trained and skilled staff. Work itself can be therapeutic – physically, psychologically and socially.

Some best practice workplaces in Nova Scotia have moved beyond the more traditional return to work model and now focus on “stay at work”. Others are still growing in their understanding and adoption of return to work principles and practices. For some workers, the nature of their injury means returning to work may not be an option. For these longterm benefit recipients, the WCB provides compassionate, caring services to support injured workers in maintaining their quality of life and meeting their specialized needs.

Regardless of where a worker or employer falls on this return to work spectrum, the WCB is there to assist in achieving a successful and appropriate outcome following a workplace injury.

Over the next five years we will: >

- Analyze our return to work program, and how it is implemented, to ensure our programs and services reflect best practices and appropriately address emerging issues such as mental health and an aging population.
- Work with workplace parties to continue to advance the focus on return to work in Nova Scotia.
- Continue to support our employees to enhance their skills and competencies.
- Ensure caseworkers deliver high quality and consistent decisions that are easy for workers and employers to understand.
- Advance collaborative approaches to resolving appeals more quickly.
- Explore how to leverage social marketing to inspire cultural change within workplaces with regard to return to work, as we have seen with injury prevention.



## PROGRESS TO FULL FUNDING

The end date for this strategic plan is 2020, at which point the WCB's funding strategy anticipates the Accident Fund will be closer to a fully funded position.

Stakeholders have patiently been waiting for the WCB to achieve financial stability so a conversation regarding increasing benefits for injured workers and/or lowering assessment rates for employers may begin. Lowering claims costs through injury prevention and return to work, along with prudent financial management of the WCB's investment portfolio are critical components of the funding plan.

Toward the end of this strategic plan we will: >

- Engage stakeholders in defining and agreeing to what “financial stability” for the WCB means. Through this discussion, we will determine when it may be appropriate to recommend changes to workers' compensation benefits and employer assessment rates.
- Once the timing is established, collaborate with government and stakeholders to define a process to identify and prioritize which changes to benefits and rates may be possible and appropriate.



## STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

By collaborating with organizations who are interested in advancing Nova Scotia's workplace safety culture, the WCB helps to share and leverage ideas, resources and expertise. By working together, we can achieve much greater outcomes than any one organization working alone.

Establishing strong strategic relationships will help to create new opportunities to expand the commitment to workplace health and safety and return to work across the province.

Over the next five years we will: >

- Continue to strengthen relationships with key partners such as the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education, employers, industry and safety associations, unions and the OHS Advisory Council; and
- Engage more partners in workplace health and safety and return to work through intentioned outreach to the community.

## MODERNIZATION

Like many organizations, the WCB is faced with the complexities associated with keeping pace with employer and worker service expectations. Some of our systems are paper-based and outdated.

Technology is changing how Nova Scotians work, and the WCB must adapt to this change as well – stakeholders have said this is important and necessary. Technological advances will also allow the WCB to have greater agility and responsiveness and redefine how we deliver our services.

Over the next five years we will: >

- Modernize our organization by leveraging technology. This will mean increased options for how we deliver service, including new online services, to make it easier for workers, employers and service providers to connect with us.
- Recognizing that investments in technology can be costly and complex, we will prioritize initiatives to focus on areas that have the greatest impact on our long-term goals.







**STRATEGIC GOALS AND AREAS OF FOCUS 2016-2020**

# MEASURING PROGRESS

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To monitor the outcomes of this strategic plan, the WCB uses a balanced scorecard to measure progress towards our goals. The scorecard tracks our results according to financial and non-financial measures.

Each year, the Board of Directors reviews the recent performance of the WCB and establishes targets consistent with the strategic plan, current trends and anticipated events. Targets are established for each of the following measures and our progress in meeting these targets is reported in the WCB's annual report.

Over the next five years, we anticipate to progress the Balanced Scorecard as follows:

- **Injury Rate:** reduce the number of time-loss injuries per 100 covered workers
- **Duration – composite, in days:** reduce the average duration of short-term claims (number of compensable days) for injuries within the past 5 years
- **Time Loss Days Paid per 100 Covered Employees:** reduce the total number of days paid in the past 12 months per 100 covered employees for all injuries in all duration years
- **Return to Employability:** increase the percentage of claims where an extended earnings replacement benefit (EERB) was avoided i.e., the entire earnings loss was mitigated and the injured worker is either earning their pre-injury earnings or fully capable of doing so
- **Cost of New Extended Earnings Replacement Benefits:** reduce estimated long-term disability costs related to extended earnings replacement benefits (EERBs)
- **Worker Satisfaction Index:** maintain injured workers' satisfaction with the service they receive from the WCB
- **Employer Satisfaction Index:** maintain employers' satisfaction with the service they receive from the WCB
- **WCB Employee Satisfaction Index:** maintain employees' satisfaction with the WCB working environment
- **Claims Payments for the last three years per \$100 of Assessable Payroll:** reduce claims payments for injuries within the last 3 years per \$100 of assessable payroll
- **Administrative Costs per \$100 of assessable payroll (excluding prevention costs):** control administration costs per \$100 of assessable payroll
- **Five-year Rate of Return on Investment:** achieve the targeted level of return on investments i.e., the actual return (on a five-year moving average) exceeds the benchmark portfolio return

# LINKING GOALS AND INITIATIVES

The alignment of efforts and resources towards the specific goals of this plan is essential. However, the WCB's success at reaching our goals is dependent not only on that alignment but also on how well we engage all stakeholders in our future initiatives. The chart below illustrates how each initiative in this plan contributes to the strategic goals. Some linkages are very obvious while others are more indirect.

Initiatives	Goals				
	Build a workplace safety culture	Improve safe and timely return to work	Be financially stable and sustainable	Expand relationships to enhance workplace safety and return to work	Provide excellent and efficient service
1. Complete the WCB's commitments in the <i>Workplace Safety Strategy for Nova Scotians 2013-2017</i> .	✓		✓	✓	✓
2. Strengthen relationship with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and collaboration with workers and employers.	✓		✓	✓	✓
3. Define further actions to advance Nova Scotia's workplace safety culture.	✓		✓	✓	✓
4. Analyze our return to work program and how it is implemented.		✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Advance the focus on return to work.		✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Support our employees to enhance their skills and competencies.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Ensure caseworkers deliver high quality and consistent decisions that are easy to understand.		✓	✓		✓
8. Resolve appeals more quickly.		✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Explore how social marketing can inspire cultural change with regard to return to work.		✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Define "financial stability" for the WCB and when to recommend changes to benefits and assessment rates.			✓	✓	
11. Define a process to prioritize which changes to benefits and rates may be possible and appropriate.			✓		✓
12. Strengthen relationships with key partners.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Engage more partners in workplace health and safety and return to work.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14. Modernize the WCB by leveraging technology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Prioritize initiatives to focus on areas that have the greatest impact.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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