



Ever evolving, WCB-Alberta turns 100

Where we've been, where we're going

By: Jamie Hall

Alberta's workers' compensation system has evolved through the decades, each time with the goal of enhancing and improving how the system serves the workers and employers of Alberta.

Most recently, in December 2017, Bill 30, an *Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans*, received royal assent and, throughout 2018, a number of new provisions were introduced. The legislative changes include expanded psychological coverage, interim relief, an extended appeal window, as well as enhanced benefits for severely injured young workers and surviving spouses.

Through these changes, the system's principles continue to be rooted in the tenets of Sir William Meredith, a chief justice who in 1910 recognized a major flaw in compensation laws of his day—the attempt to place blame for a workplace

accident on either the injured worker or the employer.

No-fault insurance is born

Sir Meredith recommended that workers' compensation be considered part of the cost of doing business; that employers bear the cost of workplace injuries; that employees in return for this no-fault approach waive their right to sue for damages; and that the compensation process and adjudication be handled by an independent board.

And so it was that on April 13, 1918, *Alberta's Workmen's Compensation Act* was given royal assent and came into effect on

August 1 of that year. The three-man commission that proposed the legislation became the first board of directors for what was then known as the Workmen's Compensation Board.

Always improving to support Albertans

Over the past century, the province's workers' compensation system has continued to evolve. Change has always been a constant as we strive to deliver a system that continues to meet the needs of our province's employers and injured workers. >>

Highlights, milestones and turning points of the past century

Alberta's *Workmen's Compensation Act* was given royal assent, enacting **no-fault compensation principles** introduced by Sir William Meredith.



In an effort to encourage better accident-prevention measures, a "super-assessment" was introduced, a **financial penalty for employers with poor accident records**. This today is known as a "poor performance surcharge."



Employers started **paying medical aid contributions** that were previously borne by employees.



A Claim Review Committee was established to **hear cases where workers or employers were dissatisfied with claim decisions**. Today, the *Workers' Compensation Act* provides for an internal review and an external appeal for both adjudicative and employer-account decisions.

1918



Maximum compensation increased for the first time to \$16 a week.

1933

A financial incentive to reduce accidents through safety programs was introduced. Over time, this has evolved into what is today known as **Partnerships in Injury Reduction (PIR)**, designed to encourage injury prevention and the development of effective workplace health, safety and disability management systems.

1944



Construction was completed on the treatment and administration wings of the Rehabilitation Clinic. This would eventually become known as Millard Health, which has become a **leading provider of rehabilitation and disability management services in Alberta**.

1969



Learn more about the 2018 legislation changes to the workers' compensation system at wcb.ab.ca/2018updates.



1973

The provincial government created a **new ministerial portfolio** with the appointment of the Minister Responsible for Workers' Health, Safety and Compensation.

1988

Changes were introduced to the *Workers' Compensation Act* through Bill 26, including the creation of what we now call the **Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body (DRDRB)**, which encourages the worker, employer and WCB to resolve issues together. **Medical panels** were also implemented to resolve differences in medical opinions.



2006

WCB offers **Occupational Injury Services (OIS)** to expedite timely medical services for injured workers.



2018

1979

The *Workmen's Compensation Act* was changed to the *Workers' Compensation Act*—and the organization to the Workers' Compensation Board—to reflect the fact that not all people injured on the job were men.

2002



The **Appeals Commission** was established. This external body has exclusive jurisdiction to hear appeals on decisions made by WCB.

2008



The first version of **online services** was launched. Today, with *myWCB*, employers can submit injury reports, access statistical reports, or modify their company information.

New legislation introduced a number of changes based on the recommendations of the WCB review panel, including **employers' responsibility to reinstate injured workers** after a workplace injury, as well as **enhanced coverage for psychological injuries.** WS