

WCB Nova Scotia Report to the Community



RECORD TIME LOST DUE TO INJURY DESPITE LOW INJURY RATE

Return-to-work major focus of 2021-2023 Strategic Priorities

With a new Strategic Plan on the heels of a financial milestone, and with a mission to support the workers and employers making a post-pandemic vaccinated Nova Scotia “roar back,” WCB Nova Scotia aggressively tackled one of the biggest challenges facing our economy in the first quarter of 2021 – the amount of time lost to workplace injury.

In Nova Scotia, people injured on the job tend to take more time to return to work than in almost any other jurisdiction. There are a number of reasons for the trend and they're not all in the control of any one group – which is why the WCB calls upon all stakeholders to do what they can to reduce the thousands of days lost every year.

It's a tide that will take some time to turn, says WCB Chief Executive Officer Stuart MacLean. He notes that the WCB's operational results tell a mixed story.

On the one hand, more time is being lost from work than ever before, at 356 time-loss days per 100 covered workers, including many long-term claims from years past.

On the other hand, newer measures introduced as part of the WCB's new Strategic Plan – the number of workers who no longer need earnings replacement benefits after six months – are trending positively.

“Like employers, health care providers and the workers we serve, we have a lot of work to do to improve this outcome, and there are plenty of opportunities ahead,” says Stuart. “In the first few months of this year we have tackled this challenge like never before, and I'm optimistic we're seeing early signs things might be headed in the right direction.”

Earlier in 2021, a new executive structure made a dedicated VP position responsible for return to work and prevention, filled by long-time WCB leader Dennita Fitzpatrick after a national search.

“All of us must work together across the province to help reduce the very real human and economic impacts when workers disconnect from work,” says Dennita. “We have

a shared responsibility to support our valued Nova Scotia workers from the onset of an injury, working together to help them continue to be productive contributors in their workplaces as they recover. Together we can prevent work disability.”

A number of other changes are underway – like testing new roles to support workers and employers earlier in a claim, new ways of supporting workers suffering traumatic psychological injury, and a refreshed onboarding and learning model to support WCB caseworkers.

Other measures in the WCB's new Balanced Scorecard include a focus on long-term care and home care, where injury rates are higher than in other sectors. In Q1, 4.64 and 7.62 workers out of every 100 we cover in these sectors were hurt on the job, respectively. The overall injury rate was 1.56 per 100 covered workers, up from 1.53 at the end of 2020.

Following the elimination of the unfunded liability at the end of 2020, financial results declined in Q1 as a result of flat investment income.

Stuart MacLean says the long-term view for WCB Nova Scotia – like the rest of the province – is one defined by optimism and opportunity. Not surprisingly, return to work is a major focus of the WCB's new Strategic Plan – but as we “roar back” after the pandemic, he adds that we need to continue our momentum in injury prevention, in supporting employees in new ways as they work differently, and in looking forward to a different, more inclusive future for workers' compensation and the benefits it offers.

“We cannot ever forget just how deep our commitment was to take care of each other in 2020 and throughout the pandemic,” Stuart says. “This province was one of the safest places in the world from COVID-19 – workplace safety culture was a huge part of that. It's on all of us to keep that momentum moving into the future.” **Q1**

Visit annualreport.wcb.ns.ca for more on our corporate performance measures and operations in Q1.

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

WCB Nova Scotia evolves executive team with a view to the future

In February, CEO Stuart MacLean announced additions and changes to WCB Nova Scotia's [executive team](#), renewing the organization's emphasis on the importance of injury prevention, while focusing its sights on enabling earlier return to work.

Two new roles were added to the team, with long-time WCB leaders Dennita Fitzpatrick named Vice President, Prevention and Return to Work, and Marcy Dalton named Associate Vice President, Strategy and Technology after national searches.

In a reorganization of portfolios, Wendy Griffin became Vice President, Service Excellence, and Shelley Rowan became Vice President, People and Strategy.

Honouring those lost on the Day of Mourning

WCB Nova Scotia marked the International [Day of Mourning](#) on April 28 — a day for people around the world to remember and honour those who have died or been seriously injured at work, and renew their commitment to improve health and safety.


In lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony, WCB Nova Scotia CEO Stuart MacLean joined several other leaders in sharing [video remarks](#), calling on Nova Scotians to reflect on the losses we endured in 2020, and resolve to prevent future workplace tragedies.

Supporting Nova Scotia's workplaces through COVID-19

Amid both climbing case numbers and optimism from the province's vaccine rollout, the WCB continued to support Nova Scotia's workplaces as they made safety a priority through the third wave of the pandemic.

Through new and refreshed resources at worksafeforlife.ca/COVID19, we challenged Nova Scotians to apply the same discipline they have demonstrated to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to prevent all types of workplace injuries and illnesses, long after the pandemic is over.

In partnership with the Government of Nova Scotia, the WCB also extended the option for employers to defer [premium payments](#) until July as they endured the financial challenges of another lockdown.



New strategic priorities establish foundation to tackle challenges, seize opportunities

Following the milestone elimination of the unfunded liability at the end of 2020, [WCB Nova Scotia's new Strategic Priorities for 2021-2023](#) establish a crisp, optimistic focus for the future and set the stage for unprecedented value proposition for workers' compensation in our province.

Balancing a long-term view with short-term action on challenges like return-to-work, the priorities chart a new course for a post-pandemic, sustainably funded WCB, as fewer Nova Scotians than ever are hurt on the job, but those that are hurt spend much more time away from work than ever before.

As we work toward our goals, we do so in a spirit of innovation, and with open minds to new thinking, and new solutions.

Strategic Priorities

- Injury prevention
- Return to work
- Our people and their service
- Supporting system reform
- Funding our future.

Safety & Health Week celebrated virtually for second year in a row

For the second year in a row, the WCB joined workplaces across the country in marking Safety & Health Week (formerly NAOSH Week) virtually.

Our external programming included [new resources](#) for workers and employers, with a continued focus on preventing COVID-19 and all injuries, safety leadership, and return to work, including the organization's first webinar for employers on how to build an effective return-to-work program, delivered to more than 100 registrants.

New approaches to enable safe and timely return to work

In 2020, more than 3,131 person years of work were lost to workplace injury — a challenge that will require the WCB, employers, workers and health care providers to work together in a spirit of innovation and optimism.

For its part, WCB Nova Scotia is introducing new approaches. For example, this past March, the WCB filled new Return-to-Work Specialist positions, dedicated to providing earlier support to workers whose injuries and circumstances may put them at a higher risk for prolonged claim durations.

The WCB is also introducing new ways to support workers suffering from traumatic psychological injury as part of its evolving service to those workers and their families.

The WCB has also launched a refreshed website for its [Working to Well Program](#), making it even easier for workers, employers and service providers to find the information they need to be an effective return-to-work team member.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

as at

	MARCH 31 2021 (Unaudited) (\$000s)	MARCH 31 2020 (Unaudited) (\$000s)	DECEMBER 31 2020 (Audited) (\$000s)
ASSETS			
Cash & cash equivalents	\$ 3,871	\$ 19,861	\$ -
Receivables	29,383	34,633	36,369
Investments	2,139,499	1,789,415	2,139,748
Property and equipment	5,213	6,226	5,613
Intangible assets	28,264	31,219	28,632
	\$ 2,206,230	\$ 1,881,354	\$ 2,210,362
LIABILITIES AND FUNDED (UNFUNDED) POSITION			
Bank indebtedness	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,740
Payables, accruals & lease liabilities	48,883	54,034	43,170
Post employment benefits	35,353	30,017	34,840
Benefits liabilities	2,087,563	2,049,412	2,067,519
	2,171,799	2,133,463	2,148,269
Deferred revenue	6,000	6,000	-
Funded (unfunded) position	28,431	(258,109)	62,093
	\$ 2,206,230	\$ 1,881,354	\$ 2,210,362

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

For the three months ended March 31 (unaudited)

	YTD MARCH 31 2021 (\$000s)	YTD MARCH 31 2020 (\$000s)
REVENUE		
Assessments	\$ 74,997	\$ 74,718
Investment (loss)	(57)	(167,651)
	74,940	(92,933)
EXPENSES		
Claims costs incurred		
Short-term disability	13,662	12,184
Long-term disability	26,462	23,548
Survivor benefits	525	685
Health care	14,296	15,036
Rehabilitation	154	209
	55,099	51,662
Growth in present value of benefits liabilities and actuarial adjustments and adjustment for latent occupational disease	34,213	20,038
Administration costs	14,265	14,478
System support	251	250
Legislated obligations	4,774	4,584
	108,602	91,012
Excess of (expenses over revenues), applied to (decrease) the funded position	\$ (33,662)	\$ (183,945)

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN THE FUNDED (UNFUNDED) POSITION

For the three months ended March 31 (unaudited)

	YTD MARCH 31 2021 (\$000s)	YTD MARCH 31 2020 (\$000s)
Funded (Unfunded) position excluding accumulated other comprehensive income		
Balance, beginning of period	\$ 72,516	\$ (66,962)
Excess of (expenses over revenues) applied to (decrease) the funded position	(33,662)	(183,945)
	38,854	(250,907)
Accumulated other comprehensive income		
Balance, beginning of year	(10,423)	(7,202)
	(10,423)	(7,202)
Funded position, end of period	\$ 28,431	\$ (258,109)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the three months ended March 31 (unaudited)

	March 31 2021 (\$000's)	March 31 2020 (\$000's)
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Cash received from:		
Employers, for assessments	\$ 85,383	\$ 84,664
Investment income (loss)	5,223	(1,827)
	90,606	82,837
Cash paid to:		
Claimants or third parties on their behalf	(68,504)	(62,121)
Suppliers, for administrative and other goods and services	(9,778)	(13,644)
	(78,282)	(75,765)
Net cash provided by operating activities	12,324	7,072
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Increase in investments, net	(5,034)	2,052
Cash paid for:		
Purchase of equipment and intangible assets	(679)	(345)
Net cash (used in) provided by investing activities	(5,713)	1,707
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	6,611	8,779
(Bank indebtedness), cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	(2,740)	11,082
Cash and cash equivalents, end of period	\$ 3,871	\$ 19,861

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