

### **Backgrounder: Mainstay Awards**

The Mainstay Awards have been built on past awards initiatives offered by the former Department of Environment and Labour and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia. Previous awards offered from DEL and the WBC recognized best merit increases, return-to-work performance and the number of injury-free person hours worked. Although businesses and organizations were happy to receive these awards they often wondered why they received them and what the criterion was.

The creation of the Mainstay awards offers the opportunity to provide a consistent awards format with clear criteria and public recognition. In addition, the Mainstay Awards will also recognize small businesses, individuals and innovative safety programs that haven't been represented with an award in the past.

The Mainstay Awards will also support Nova Scotia's intent to focus on labour and skills development which was made clear when the government announced the separation of the Department of Environment and Labour and introduced the Department of Labour and Workforce Development. With the existing competitive labour market, more and more workers have the opportunity to be selective when choosing where they want to work. Now more than ever, recruiting, retaining, training and developing skilled workers in our province goes hand-in-hand with promoting a safe and healthy working environment.

With the development of the new Department and building on the momentum of the Work Safe for Life program, it made sense to establish a large-scale awards program that celebrated the great strides companies, organizations and individuals have taken in workplace safety.

Fifteen awards will be handed out in six different categories. One award will be given for the categories of: *Safety Award of Excellence*, *Safety Transformation* and the *Safety Award for Small Business*. Four awards will be given out for the categories of: *Individual Safety Champion*, *Employer Safety Champion* and *Return to Work Champion*. The final three categories (*Individual Safety Champion*, *Employer Safety Champion* and *Employer Return to Work Champion*) will have a winner in each the four regions of: Cape Breton, the HRM, the South Shore/Valley and the Central North Shore.

The *Safety Award of Excellence* will recognize the organization or individual who has the very best practice in the prevention of workplace injury and/or leadership in fostering timely and safe return to work, toward a culture of workplace safety in Nova Scotia. This award is the highest safety honour in Nova Scotia.

The *Safety Transformation* award will be awarded to an employer that has dramatically improved its performance and created an exceptional health, safety and return to work program.

The *Special Award for Small Business* will be awarded to a small business (fewer than 20 employees or full-time equivalents) that demonstrates an exemplary health and safety program, innovation, and proven injury prevention and/or return-to-work track record.

The *Individual Safety Champion* award will be awarded to an individual in each region whose contribution has made an exceptional difference to health and safety in their workplace.

The *Employer Safety Champion* award will recognize an employer in each of the four regions who has demonstrated an exemplary health and safety program and proven injury prevention track record in their workplace.

The *Employer Return to Work Champion* award will go to an employer from each region that demonstrates the implementation of an effective return-to-work program.

Members of the judging panel will visit the Award finalists to verify claims made in the proposals and gain further context.

The awards will be judged by a panel, with representation from the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, Department of Labour and Workforce Development and Human Resources Social Development Canada. The judging panel will be responsible for reviewing and evaluating nomination applications and selecting candidates worthy of the awards. A shortlist will be developed from the nominations and these candidates will be visited onsite.

Details about the awards program and full nomination process information can be found at [www.mainstayawards.ca](http://www.mainstayawards.ca).