

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

LABOUR/ADVANCED EDUCATION/WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD--New Strategy to Improve Workplace Safety

Workers and employers are coming together to make Nova Scotia the safest place to work in the country.

The new workplace safety strategy, led by the province and the Workers' Compensation Board, aims to ensure every Nova Scotian returns home safely from work each day.

"No family should have to suffer the loss of a loved one, and no worker should have to face the risk of a serious injury or worse when they are on the job," said Public Service Commission Minister Marilyn More, on behalf of Labour and Advanced Education Minister Frank Corbett. "We spent the last year talking and meeting with hundreds of workers, employers and partners who deal with the struggles and benefits of workplace safety every day, and this strategy is influenced by their views, goals and desires.

"I want to thank the many people who had a hand in developing this important plan. It is now time for all of us to get to work together and bring this plan to life."

Ms. More and Stuart MacLean, CEO of the Workers' Compensation Board, joined about 500 workers, employers and safety leaders at a safety services conference in Halifax, today, March 20, to discuss how employers and employees can get involved in the five-year strategy.

"When Nova Scotians move from knowing about safety to caring about safety, we elevate the culture of workplace safety," said Mr. MacLean. "It's in everyone's best interest to keep safety a top priority at all times. This new strategy will help guide us as we work towards eliminating injuries and become a leader in workplace safety."

Many businesses around the province are already leading the way.

"We have a very strong health and safety program that works to protect all our employees, whether they are on the shop floor, in their vehicle, or on a work site," said Ian MacNeil, general manager of Lynk, a leading contractor in Sydney. "We are focused on preventing incidents by providing employees with education and training, and getting employees involved as part of our safety committee. Encouraging our workers to get interested in safety is how we can do our part to start changing the safety culture across the province."

John Gazzolla, an instrument technician in Lynk's controls and automation division, is pleased with the new strategy.

"The thought of losing one of our staff to a workplace incident is a scary thought; unfortunately in our industry, it happens all too often," said Mr. Gazzolla. "I am happy with the safety practices my employer has put in place, and I look forward to getting more involved with the rollout of this

strategy so I can ensure my colleagues and I always get home to our families every day."

Some strategy highlights include:

- focusing on incident prevention through employee education and training
- increasing access to tools that will help small- to medium-sized businesses
- promoting better safety practices through inspection and enforcement
- identifying leaders to champion and advocate safe workplaces
- implementing detailed safety policies and procedures to help measure workplace safety more effectively
- integrating health and safety awareness and training in public school and post-secondary curriculum

The province has already begun work on some of the key elements of the strategy. All Nova Scotians will soon be able to take free online safety training. And the province is also consolidating workplace health and safety regulations to make it easier to access and understand information and rules.

The province has consulted Nova Scotians about administrative penalties. The goal is to find ways to make the system more consistent and fair.

For a copy of the new strategy, visit www.gov.ns.ca/lae and follow the workplace safety strategy link.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

Workers and employers are coming together to make Nova Scotia the safest place to work in the country.

The new workplace safety strategy, led by the province and the Workers' Compensation Board, will aim to keep every Nova Scotian safe on the job.

Public Service Commission Minister Marilyn More, on behalf of Labour and Advanced Education Minister Frank Corbett, says hundreds of workers, employers and partners who deal with the struggles and benefits of workplace safety every day, were consulted over the past year and their views, goals and desires are reflected in the strategy.

Ms. More says no family should have to suffer the loss of a loved one, and no worker should have to face the risk of a serious injury or worse when they are on the job.

For more information, visit w-w-w dot g-o-v dot c-a slash l-a-e and follow the workplace safety strategy link.

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