

# 2023 Operational Plan

Emerging from challenge, embracing opportunity



# 2023

## EMERGING FROM CHALLENGE, EMBRACING OPPORTUNITY

As a post-pandemic economy meets high rates of inflation and volatile markets given global events, any plan for the future is one that comes with a measure of resilience, flexibility, and openness to adapt and change. Like so many other organizations around the world, these principles underline planning for WCB Nova Scotia.

In our role as the province's provider of workplace injury insurance, we see particularly poignant realities with labour shortages, investment returns, and the impacts of an economy ramping up after a pandemic, but still feeling its impacts, both in terms of COVID-19 itself and the impacts of stress and burnout – especially in health care.

In 2023, the final year of the *WCB Strategic Plan 2021-2023*, our operational plan focuses on efforts to meet our balanced scorecard outcomes, especially in return to work and in a safer long-term care and home care sectors. The ongoing impact of psychological injury – its prevention, and our work to support the workers and employers it impacts – requires investment, as part of an overall re-focus on the fundamentals of the return-to-work process.

At the same time, the operations of the organization itself need investment. We need to support our continued sustainable operations, as key systems, data and business intelligence, and other technological infrastructures require updating and security improvements.

And, we also must look forward, and begin work to create the next strategic plan, and to prepare the organization to respond to possible changes in the nature of workers' compensation overall, should there be changes to the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

Overall, the 2023 Operational Plan and Budget attempts to strike the right balance of mitigating key organizational risks, investing in innovative ideas to advance return-to-work outcomes, ensuring delivery of strategic plan commitments, and providing sufficient flexibility to prepare and respond to key legislative decisions pending later this year.

### STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In the final year of the *WCB Strategic Plan 2021-2023*, the WCB remains committed to reducing the human and economic impact of workplace injury on Nova Scotians, and continues to focus on the plan's five strategic goals:

- 1. INJURY PREVENTION**
- 2. RETURN TO WORK**
- 3. SUPPORTING SYSTEM REFORM**
- 4. FUNDING OUR FUTURE**
- 5. OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR SERVICE**

As always, almost all of the WCB's work focuses on supporting the 325,000 covered workers, in more than 20,500 workplaces across the province. We believe deeply in the principles of workers' compensation coverage, and that our work plays an important role for the workplaces we cover, and for our province.



2023 marks the first complete year of a hybrid work model, with all WCB employees working a combination of remote and in-office, in a flexible, dynamic, productive work environment.

*Cover: WCB Case Manager Justin Spurdakes speaks with Karen Butterworth, Occupational Health and Safety Manager for Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM). In 2023, the WCB will continue to support employers like CBRM to ensure their employees who require support for psychological injuries are able to access the services they need, especially through the Traumatic Psychological Injury (TPI) Program.*

## OPERATIONS AT A GLANCE

### Supporting our Core Business

The human impact of workplace injury continues to change, and the nature of injury is ever-adapting – psychological injury is a fundamental part of our approach to injury and claims management.

There are investments in 2023 to allow continued progress in our work to support workplaces, including both partnership with our closest partners at the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration on a Mental Health Strategy, and ongoing work to support workers with traumatic psychological injury. We will also continue to prepare for new types of psychological injury in the future, as we build our capacity in supporting workers and employers in what has been called the “next pandemic.”

We will continue our work to reduce the amount of time lost to workplace injury in our province, by building on and implementing learnings from trials in early intervention and contact, which were successful and showed potential in 2022. We will invest specific effort in our long-term benefits team, improving our support to the province’s most vulnerable workers.

The long-term care and home care sectors are well along the journey to safety culture change, as they emerge from an unprecedented pandemic and begin to embrace a safer future. Our work to support these initiatives, together with government partners and many others, will continue in 2023, with a new and refreshed focus. In particular, we will explore the evolution of our Safety Certified audit program, and the Practice Incentive rebate programs to these sectors, along with continued investment and partnership in a strong, effective safety association in the sector.

As we learn from the pandemic, we will also invest in trials for virtual, online workplace coaching services, to bring learning and support to workplaces from a distance, building on experience gained through a number of webinars in recent years.

We’ll also invest in our people, with new approaches to internal training through experiential learning approaches, and capacity for the outcome of collective bargaining. All we do will be underlined by a refreshed, growing understanding and development of a diverse, welcoming, inclusive culture – both within our own walls, and in the way we deliver service.

Finally, we will build capacity to respond operationally to possible change in the compensability of chronic stress, as appeals related to this matter work their way through the system, along with being ready for other possible impacts of ongoing conversations about system reform. We will also include capacity to respond to possible outcomes of the Appeals System Review.



*Nova Scotia’s first responders will be a focus in 2023, as our work continues to support all workplaces with better tools, resources and prevention and return-to-work approaches to manage the impact of workplace psychological injury and trauma.*

## OTHER PROJECTS

Beyond the investments in our core business, a number of other projects, mostly related on ongoing system improvements and maintenance, are required in 2023.

### Software upgrades

Guidewire, the cloud-based insurance software suite that powers our claims and assessment systems, requires an upgrade to the next version to ensure we are capitalizing on our investment in this new system and are well positioned for the future.

The same is true for other systems that support our operations, digital fax software and a software that connects and integrates various other systems. Just like our smartphones require regular software updates, support for current versions expire and updates are needed.

Our new payroll system, implemented in 2022, will require some ongoing support in the early days of its implementation. This work is planned for 2023.

### Adapting to our digital world

As we adapt to a hybrid work environment, and as more of our services are driven by integrated cloud-based systems, our planning, processes and evolution must keep pace.

We will review and refine our processes and plans for ongoing operations in the event of a disaster, as well as continued investment in information technology security.



*(L-R) Keval Goti and Het Patel are two members of the ITS HelpDesk who provide support to WCB employees every day.*

We will implement improved administrative processes for electronic financial processes.

Finally, we will continue our journey to improve our data, and the immense potential for its application in predictive analytics and to better support our core business through improved, on-demand reporting.

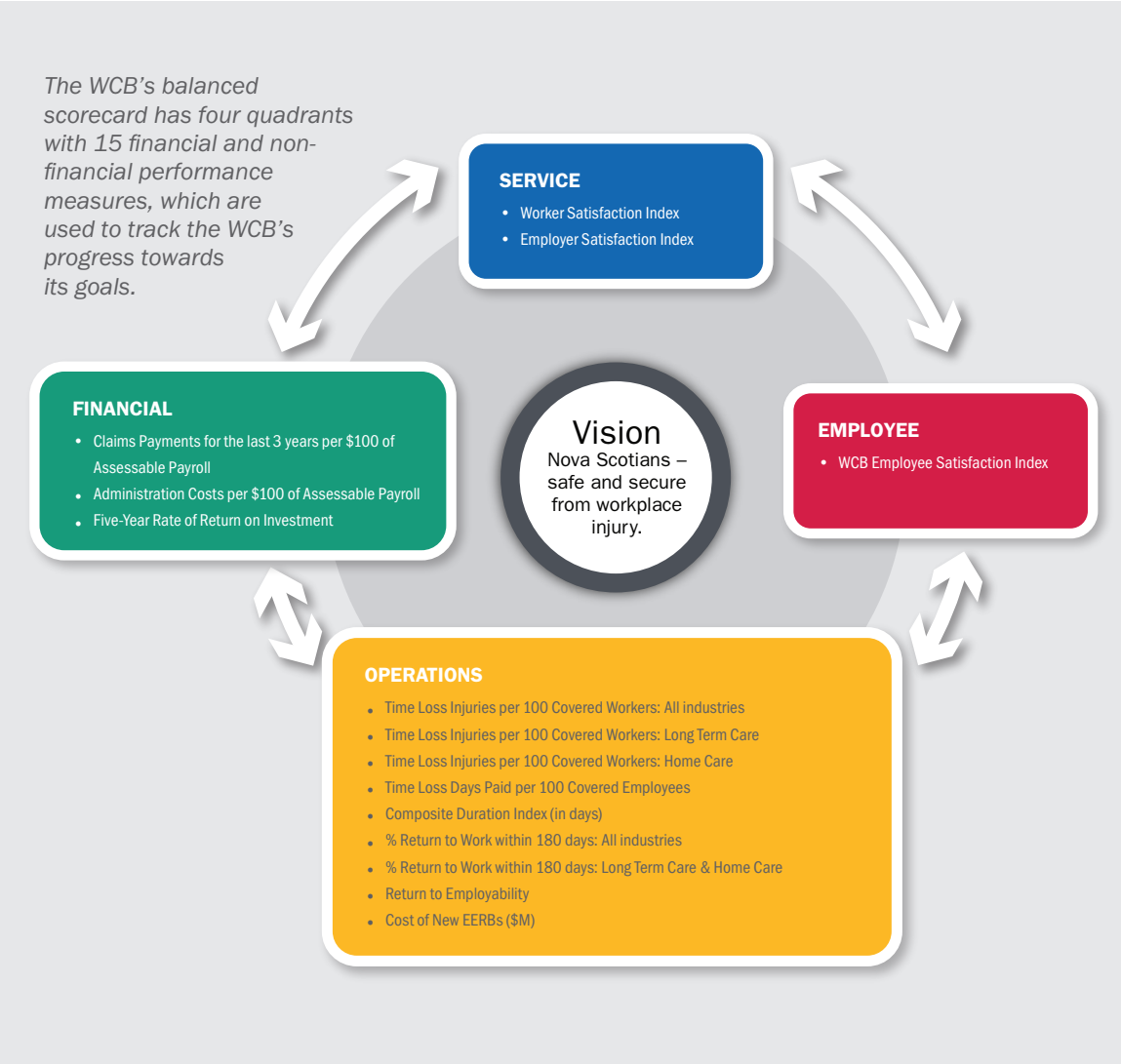


# OUR GOALS: INTEGRATED, STRATEGIC, AND FOCUSED

The WCB’s balanced scorecard has four quadrants with 15 financial and non-financial performance measures, which are used to track the WCB’s progress towards its goals.

In 2023, we expect injury prevention efforts to continue, including in long-term care and home care. We expect continued progress in return-to-work and recovery at work following injury, with declines in both the length of an average claim and the total number of days lost to injury.

As a result of this ongoing progress and efforts in previous years to ensure workers who require long-term benefits receive them, we expect fewer workers will require extended benefits in 2023.



## 2023: **RESILIENCE, FLEXIBILITY AND VISION**

As we complete one Strategic Plan and begin to create the next, the operations of WCB Nova Scotia, like the rest of the world, must move forward with a new level of adaptability and resilience.

The last several years have challenged all of us, in ways we never thought possible. We're operating in a new technological reality – still adapting to new core systems, while we plan for more changes to come. And all of it is in service of our core purpose of supporting the workers and employers we serve – a core purpose which is also evolving, as the realities of psychological injury and the challenges in key sectors begin to see progress.

At the same time, there has perhaps never been more optimism. Sustainably funded and as an economy recovers, we are confident in the long-term view: that our plan is the right one to guide the organization through challenges in the markets, around the world, and here at home.

In 2023, we will continue our work to contribute to a healthy, diverse, vibrant, and safer Nova Scotia, now and for tomorrow.

### **OUR VISION**

Nova Scotians – safe and secure from workplace injury.

### **OUR 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.

### **OUR GOALS**

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.

## MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

Performance Measure	Result 2020	Result 2021	Target 2022	Target 2023
<b>Service</b>				
Worker Satisfaction Index <sup>1</sup>	72%	74%	70%	70%
Employer Satisfaction Index	81%	79%	70%	70%
<b>Operations</b>				
Time-Loss Injuries per 100 Covered Workers: All Industries	1.53	1.58	1.58	1.47 – 1.58
Time-Loss Injuries per 100 Covered Workers: Long-Term Care	4.60	4.85	4.85	4.62 – 4.85
Time-Loss Injuries per 100 Covered Workers: Home Care	7.72	7.43	7.43	7.07 – 7.43
% Return to Work within 180 days: All Industries	78.0%	80.2%	81.8%	83.5% – 83.9%
% Return to Work within 180 days: Long-Term Care and Home Care	83.2%	85.3%	85.3%	85.3% – 88.7%
Time-Loss Days Paid per 100 Covered Employees	353	317	296	257 – 296
Composite Duration Index (in days)	178	175	165	149 – 165
Return to Employability	93.3%	89.8%	93.0%	94.1% – 92.2%
Cost of New EERBs (\$M)	\$72.6	\$144.4	\$120.4	\$101.5 – \$132.4
<b>Employee</b>				
WCB Employee Satisfaction Index	68%	72%	70%	70%
<b>Financial</b>				
Claims Payments for the past 3 years per \$100 of Assessable Payroll	\$0.723	\$0.785	\$0.747	\$0.672 – \$0.747
Administration costs per \$100 of assessable payroll (excluding prevention costs)	\$0.43	\$0.42	\$0.42	\$0.44
Return on Investment Five-Year Rate of Return	7.7%	8.3%	EXCEED BENCHMARK PORTFOLIO RETURN	
Five-Year Benchmark Portfolio Return	7.9%	8.2%		

<sup>1</sup> The Worker Satisfaction Index does not include workers on long-term benefits or those with claims with little or no time loss.