



Fredericton Chamber of Commerce Urges Progressive Conservatives to Follow Through Implementing Recommendations of the WorkSafeNB Task Force

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FREDERICTON, NB

The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce continues to be alarmed at the skyrocketing WorkSafeNB premiums, which will see a third consecutive jump in 2019 - this time dwarfing the increases for 2017 and 2018.

“The WorkSafeNB fund and associated rates have been spiraling out-of-control from the moment legislative changes were made in 2015 that in effect gave the Workers Compensation Appeals Tribunal policy-making authority,” said Fredericton Chamber CEO Krista Ross. “The problem with that situation is that the appeals tribunal has stated it cannot be concerned with the financial stability of the system - that’s the job of the WorkSafeNB board of directors, who now have very few tools to control costs and ensure the sustainability of the system as a whole.”

Without legislative intervention by the provincial government, there is no reason to think that the trend will subside in years to come. This is critical to ensuring a sustainable, reliable system that protects workers now and into the future while providing a system that is affordable to employers.

“The increase for 2019 will be \$1.22 per \$100 of payroll - bringing the average rate to \$2.92 and this single-year increase is more than the entire rate of \$1.11 before the 2015 changes were implemented,” added Ryan Boyer, Fredericton Chamber President. “I don’t think anyone can look at these increases and think that the system is working properly, so we are very encouraged by hearing Premier-Designate Higgs say his government will get legislation tabled this fall.”

Workplaces in New Brunswick are becoming safer - as they are in every other province in Canada. According to WorkSafeNB documents, Severe and external Injuries are down 47% since 2002, stable since 2013; bruises and contusions are down 32% since 2002, stable since 2011; and sprains, strains and pains - fairly steady in most years with modest recent increases. Since 2016, all provinces, with the exception of New Brunswick, have seen their workers compensation rates decrease. The average decrease for the other nine provinces is 8.3% (2016-2018). New Brunswick, however, saw a 53% increase (\$1.11 to \$1.70) in the same period – this is not a national trend, New Brunswick is an anomaly and the increase for 2019 to \$2.92 exacerbates the problem.



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“It’s obvious from WorkSafeNB’s data that injuries are declining and workplaces are becoming safer, so I don’t think anyone can reasonably say that these are driving the premium spikes,” added Ross. “It’s reasonably clear what the issues are - the employer/employee task force spelled it out, WorkSafeNB CEO Doug Jones has clearly articulated the same and the government appears to understand it also. Now it’s just a matter of following through and getting the system back on track.”

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The Fredericton Chamber of Commerce, a nationally accredited organization with nearly 1,000 members, is an active business organization engaged in policy development and advocacy that affects the competitiveness of our members and the Canadian business environment. The Chamber’s vision is ‘*Community Prosperity Through Business*’.

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