

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 4th, 2024

Gradual Onset Psychological Injury coverage, improved funeral benefits take effect, offering more protection to the Nova Scotia workforce

HALIFAX, NS - Two important amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act have taken effect, offering more protection against new types of injury, and making things a little easier for those left behind when tragedy strikes.

Gradual Onset Psychological Injury

WCB Nova Scotia is protecting working Nova Scotians from more types of injury as [gradual onset psychological injury \(GPI\)](#) coverage came into effect Sept. 1.

The change to the Act introduced last fall makes Nova Scotia the first of the Atlantic provinces to offer coverage for this type of injury.

It comes alongside a [bold new strategic plan](#) from the WCB and a [recent government review of the workers' compensation system](#), all with the aim of protecting more of Nova Scotia's workforce from injury while enhancing service delivery.

"This is an important step forward for working Nova Scotians," says WCB CEO Karen Adams. "As we offer new protection from the impact of injury, we're doing so with a whole new service offering that Nova Scotia's workers and employers deserve."

A gradual onset psychological injury typically results from significant workplace stressors that happen over time, like from bullying or harassment.

The WCB's new service model for this type of injury includes a team of Client Care Navigators – a new role within the GPI team – to help workers and employers navigate the claims process.

Workers and employers will be supported in a healthy, safe return to the workplace, sometimes even before a decision on their claim is even made. There will be supports from a [new team of mental health service providers](#). Throughout it all, the focus will be on keeping a person connected to work while they recover from their injury. Work is essential to their wellbeing and will ensure they can return to their regular job in a quick and safe manner.

WCB's service for GPI also includes a [new web section](#) and an [online self-assessment tool](#) that will help workers and employers understand the likelihood that what they are experiencing is a compensable gradual onset psychological injury.

The WCB has been raising awareness about the change throughout the past year, offering monthly webinars and launching comprehensive online injury prevention and safe, timely return to work tools and resources.

(Continued)

“Input from our customers has been invaluable as we set up this service model. People struggling with a mental health injury need support, regardless of their claim outcome,” Adams says. “That’s why our service model includes connecting workers with immediate resources to support their recovery, even before a claim decision is made. It’s about giving Nova Scotians the service they deserve from WCB.”

Funeral Benefits Increase

A compassionate change to assist bereaved families also took effect last week.

Included as part of the legislative change that made gradual onset psychological injury compensable last fall, funeral benefits will increase from \$4,000 to \$15,000.

The WCB Board of Directors also updated policy, so that the benefits can usually be paid right away, without the requirement to provide receipts from the funeral arrangements.

“A big part of our work is supporting people through some of the hardest periods of their life, including times of grief. This change lets families mourn the loss of their loved one without having to agonize over unnecessary paperwork,” says Adams. “It’s just the right thing to do.”

Additional Resources:

[New mental health service providers hired to support GPI claims](#)

[WCB’s new Psychological Safety Resource Hub](#)

-30-

About the WCB

The Workers’ Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB) is committed to keeping Nova Scotians safe and secure from workplace injury. The WCB provides workplace injury insurance for more than 20,000 employers, representing about 350,000 workers across the province. The WCB sets the standard for workplace injury insurance by informing and inspiring Nova Scotians in the prevention of workplace injury. If an injury occurs, we support those whose lives it touches by championing a timely return to safe and healthy work.

Media Contact:

Caitie Clark

Communications Advisor, WCB Nova Scotia
902.329.0556 | caitie.clark@wcb.ns.ca