What We Heard

Summary

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) undertook stakeholder engagement in 2020 and 2021 to review options for modernizing the organization's pension system. Stakeholder engagement is an important part of any legislative development process.

The WSCC proposed revisions to the current pension system for workers left with permanent impairments resulting from workplace injuries. The proposed revisions would move the WSCC from:

Pension for Life

Provides pensions for life to permanently injured workers, based solely on their percentage of full body permanent medical impairment and earnings at the time of injury.

To

Dual System

A dual system that provides non-economic loss benefits, and long-term earning loss-benefits to permanently impaired workers.

WSCC is currently the only jurisdiction in Canada that operates a Pension for Life system.

Results

This engagement took place in November and December 2021 and builds off the previous initial engagement that occurred in 2020. Based on feedback received during the first engagement, WSCC developed policy-scoping documents to outline how the proposed pension system could operate, if approved to move forward.

WSCC engaged with four key stakeholder groups: employers, workers, Indigenous and Inuit Governments, Associations and Businesses, as well as the general public.

WSCC offered three methods of engagement: an online questionnaire, online public forum, and one-on-one conversations with stakeholders.

Continued on next page.

In total, 45 stakeholders participated in the second round of engagement. Of those that participated, 93% support WSCC's proposal to revise the pension system.

Highlights of what stakeholders shared about the proposed new pension system include:

- Feedback that the proposed new system is *fair*, *balanced*, and *equitable*.
- Strong support for the long-term earning loss benefit, as it ensures workers are provided with secure and long-term compensation based on need.
- Feedback that the benefit calculations are easy to understand.
- Support for the introduction of a retirement benefit that can be paid when old age security starts, or when long-term earning loss benefit ends.
- Support for how compensation for dependents can be allocated.
- Feedback that the WSCC should consider reviews for long-term earning loss benefits and changes to the severity of a permanent medical impairment throughout the lifecycle of a pension.
- Feedback that fairness needs to be ensured in decision-making for estimating capable earnings for determining the long-term earning loss benefit.
- Feedback for the consideration of how a workplace impairment could impact traditional lifestyles, like when a worker is no longer able to hunt, fish, or gather food from the land.

WSCC shared this feedback with the Governance Council in March 2022, who approved the decision to proceed with advancing a legislative proposal to the Northwest Territories and Nunavut cabinets for the new pension system. If approved, this new pension system will impact new pensions from the date the legislative amendments are enacted.

If you would like a copy of the full *What We Heard Report* and/or have it in another language, please reach out to: policy@wscc.nt.ca / policy@wscc.nu.ca.