



April 7, 2020

Ms. Erna Ference
Board Chair
Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta
9912 107 Street
Edmonton AB T5K 1G5
legislative.relations@wcb.ab.ca

Mr. Trevor Alexander
President
Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta
9912 107 Street
Edmonton AB T5K 1G5
legislative.relations@wcb.ab.ca

Dear Ms. Ference and Mr. Alexander:

RE: Presumptive Coverage for Essential Workplaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic

I write to you on behalf of the largest worker advocate organization in Alberta about our concerns with how the workers compensation system should respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is our understanding that the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) is attempting to resolve how workers who contract COVID-19 during their course of work can be supported by the WCB, to get healthy and return to work or whose families can be supported in the event of a worker death.

It is concerning that seemingly contradictory information has been released by WCB at this point. This serves to confuse workers and employers, creating uncertainty around which workers have coverage if they contract COVID-19 at their workplace and which employers need to report COVID-19 cases to WCB.

It is our belief that any confusion, or lack of clarity, is a disservice to hardworking Albertans. It is causing unnecessary stress, time, and costs for all parties. We are becoming increasingly concerned that this ongoing confusion will continue into the claims process.

To resolve this, we believe the WCB needs to adapt to support workers and employers during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing presumptive coverage to all workers that are deemed essential by the provincial government. These workers are at greater risk of being exposed to COVID-19 than the general population.

Presumptive status means that, barring evidence to the contrary, the injury or illness is assumed to have arisen from and occurred in the course of employment. Presumptive coverage would provide some certainty for workers and employers during this challenging time. It would help to correct and clarify some of the contradictory information that is currently being told to workers and employers.

The reality is that most Albertans, or our organizations, have never faced a global pandemic before. Most of our policies and operating procedures never fully considered the consequences of a global pandemic entering Alberta's workplaces. Alberta is in unprecedented times that are rapidly changing. Our social programs and services must adapt alongside, including our Workers Compensation system. We hope to work with you to ensure we do just that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gil McGowan', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gil McGowan
President
Alberta Federation of Labour

cc: Honourable Jason Copping
Minister of Labour and Immigration
labour.minister@gov.ab.ca

Christina Gray, MLA, Alberta NDP Critic for Labour and Immigration
edmonton.millwoods@assembly.ab.ca