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Workplace innovations

GOAL FIVE

Employers, employees and unions will work together to build healthy, productive, innovative workplaces.

To fully capitalize on Alberta's knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce, it is essential to maintain a stable labour relations environment and productive, healthy workplaces. Our goal is to encourage the development of collaborative employer-employee relationships which foster innovation and minimize time lost to injury and work stoppage.

M A K I N G T H E M O S T O F

Actions and Results

Strategies

Accomplishments

Examine pension and benefit issues arising from changing work arrangements.

A discussion paper on the Employment Pension Plans Act was released in August 1998. Input is being incorporated into draft legislation designed to improve flexibility and portability in employer-sponsored pension plans. Preliminary research and consultation on the pension and benefit needs of non-traditional workers is nearing completion.

Labour/Treasury

Assist government employees in their return from long-term illness.

The Employee Support and Recovery Assistance program was developed in partnership with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees in 1997 to assist employees on long-term illness leave with their return to work.

Personnel Administration Office

Work with industry associations, employers, unions and others to recognize excellence and promote positive workplace change.

A workplace innovation component was developed and added to Alberta Labour's website in 1998. The site, located at www.gov.ab.ca/lab, is designed as a resource centre for stakeholders looking for ideas, information, contacts or services to help them develop innovative workplace and human resource practices.

Labour

Information on collaborative problem solving, building effective workplace relationships, 360 degree feedback, behaviour-based safety, alternative dispute resolution, collective bargaining, contingent workers, employee recruitment and retention, open book management, the changing workplace and a variety of other topics was developed for industry clients during 1997/98. The information can be accessed through the Alberta Labour website.

Labour

Consultation was initiated with labour and employer organizations in targeted industries to explore development of new sectoral initiatives.

Labour

Actions and Results

Strategies

Work with industry associations, employers, unions and others to recognize excellence and promote positive workplace change. (cont.)

Accomplishments

Information sharing was enhanced in the construction industry. Construction best practices information is now included on the Alberta Labour web page through a link to the Construction Owners Association of Alberta site at www.coaa.ab.ca.

Labour

A roster of designated mediators was developed in 1997 with participation from workplace stakeholders.

Labour

In the municipal sector, a partnership was formed with the City of Edmonton to develop a collaborative approach to labour and employee relations across all City departments. Relationship building and problem solving training has been underway since fall 1998.

Labour

With input from stakeholders across Alberta, a Strategic Plan for the Partnerships in Health and Safety Program was developed in 1997. Work has been initiated to clarify stakeholder roles, complete standards for health and safety audits, and develop quality assurance standards. Through the Partnerships Framework, Alberta Labour works with 80 Partners (including large employers/owners, associations, education institutions and community-based initiatives) to encourage employers to build effective health and safety programs and have them audited for quality. Certificates of Recognition have been issued to 2,200 employers whose programs meet the audit standard.

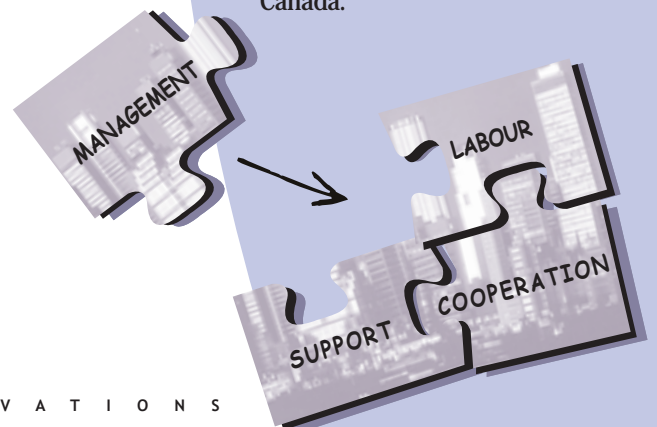
Labour

Transforming labour/management relations...

W

hile Alberta's construction industry continues to be a leader in promoting collaboration, best practices and innovation, 1998 also saw significant developments in other sectors. For example, the City of Edmonton and the unions and associations representing City employees launched an ambitious process to transform their labour/management relations. The City's senior management team and the union and association presidents developed a working relationship agreement that commits them to work together for common goals - delivering best value services, satisfying customers and supporting employees.

New initiatives for improving workplace relationships, communication and problem solving are helping the City achieve its goal of becoming a leader in positive labour relations in the Canadian public sector. The initiative is supported by Alberta Labour, which is providing extensive facilitation support and relationship building training, and by financial assistance from Human Resources Development Canada.



Actions and Results

Strategy

Work with industry associations, employers, unions and others to recognize excellence and promote positive workplace change. (cont.)

Accomplishments

Alberta Health provides \$750,000 funding per year to the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research. The mission of the Centre, which opened September 1998, is to reduce the frequency and optimize the treatment and rehabilitation of injuries in Alberta by providing coordination and support for injury control programming, research, information sharing and education.

Health

Discussions were initiated with some workplace stakeholders on programs for recognizing workplace excellence. Initial feedback suggests that this is considered to be a long-term rather than short-term priority.

Labour

Starting in June 1998, Alberta Health is funding the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Alliance, over the next four years, to implement a comprehensive Tobacco Reduction Plan. Funding of \$750,000 is being provided for the first year, and \$1 million per year for the next three years. One of the multiple strategies of the Tobacco Reduction Plan is to increase the number of Alberta workplaces where tobacco related hazards have been eliminated or minimized.

Health

Performance

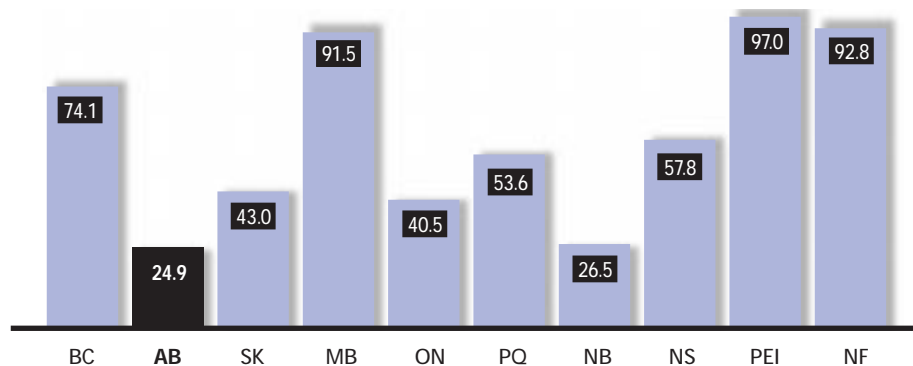
Alberta has the best occupational health and safety record in the country.

Performance measures for this goal include the number of person-days lost to workplace injury and diseases and the number of person-

days lost to work stoppage. The most recent findings are reported below.

Person-Days Lost to Workplace Injury and Diseases, 1996

Person-days lost per 10,000 Person-days worked



Workplace injuries typically rise with an increase in economic activity as a greater percentage of less-experienced workers are added to the workforce. The rate of person-days lost to workplace injury and disease increased

slightly in 1996. However, given Alberta's strong economic growth over this period, its performance relative to the rest of Canada is very favourable.

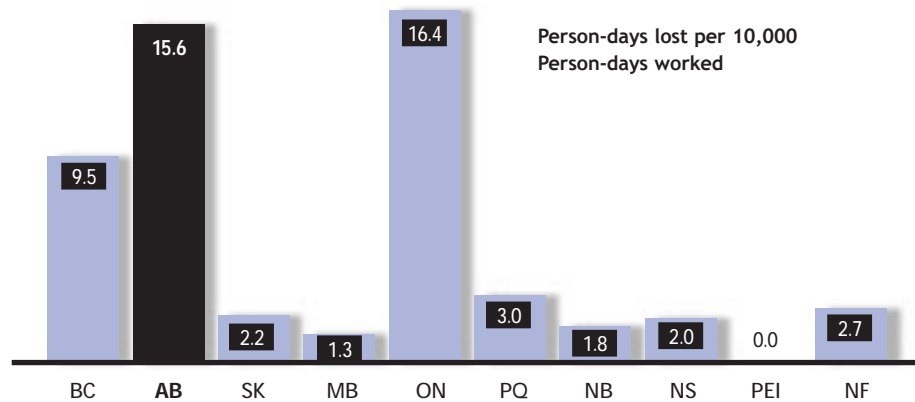
Sources:

Human Resources Development Canada; Statistics Canada: Labour Force Survey; Statistics Canada: Public Sector Employment, Wages and Salaries, 1996.

Performance

The 1997 Safeway strike had a dramatic impact on Alberta's national ranking with respect to work stoppage.

Person-Days Lost to Work Stoppage, 1997



Source:
Human Resources
Development Canada;
Statistics Canada: Labour Force
Survey; Statistics Canada:
Public Sector Employment,
Wages and Salaries, 1997.

In 1997, Alberta lost 15.6 person-days to work stoppages per 10,000 person-days worked, ranking second highest in Canada behind Ontario. This compares with an average of only 0.7 person-days lost to work stoppages in

each of the previous four years. The increase in the work stoppage rate was primarily due to the Safeway dispute, which accounted for over 90 percent of all person-days lost.

Opportunities and Challenges

A stable labour relations environment plays an important role in attracting businesses and new work opportunities for Albertans. The creation of healthy and productive work environments hinges on employer-employee cooperation and mutual recognition of the other's needs. The development and communication of innovative and flexible work arrangements typically leads to greater employee satisfaction and productivity gains.

Although Alberta's overall record with regard to workplace injury and disease is exemplary, youth aged 18 - 24 who have been with an employer for less than one year account for approximately 40 - 60 percent of injury loss claims. Safety training is, therefore, especially

important in the preparation of young Albertans for the workplace.

What opportunities are there to identify and adopt additional best practices in employer-employee relations and worker safety training? Our challenge is to ensure that Albertans, as employers and employees, continue to feel confident that they work in healthy and productive work environments, and that Alberta's record for safe and innovative workplaces continues to be recognized nationally and internationally.

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