



For Immediate Release

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**Injured Workers Pay the Cost Once Again, for Employer Reduction in
Workers' Compensation Assessment Rates**

St. John's, NL - The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) is outraged at yesterday's news release from WorkplaceNL, to once again lower the workers' compensation assessment rates for employers. President Mary Shortall sees no sign from government to increase the percentage of earnings benefits for injured workers, despite many years of appealing to government to act upon the recommendations of the 2013 Statutory Review; especially the recommendation to increase injured workers' compensation benefits to 85% of net earnings, from 80%.

"Employers and injured workers both paid to offset the funding shortage in the early 1990's," states Shortall. "For five straight years now we have seen employers' fees reduced substantially, meanwhile injured workers continue to suffer with reduced benefits, despite the fact that they have been shouldering a greater portion of that deficit since then. Despite a healthy injury fund of 126%, our compensation rates remain the lowest in Canada."

Shortall says that it is time workers' compensation focused its attention on injured workers, who she believes continue to be victimized by the same system that is meant to protect them..

The NLFL has met with multiple Ministers in government, responsible for WorkplaceNL, to request legislative action on the recommendations of the 2013 Statutory Review; and especially those dealing with injured workers' compensation benefits. Minister Gambin-Walsh, like all previous ministers, has said government is considering the recommendations; but to date, there has been no legislative changes put forth.

WorkplaceNL's 2016 Annual Report highlights that the lost-time injury rate is at a historic low, but acknowledges that "Despite the historic increase in safety performance, on average 14 workers are injured at work every day in Newfoundland and Labrador - and one of these workers will likely sustain a permanent injury. " 1.

Across Canada there are six jurisdictions (provinces and territories) that provide 90% of net earnings to workers' compensation claimants. Two other provinces provide 85% of net earnings. Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) has the lowest income replacement rate at 80% of net earnings.

As President Shortall explains, "No one goes to work thinking they will get injured or sick. However, the reality is that over 200 workers in our province are seriously injured each year. These workers, and their families, are forced to rely on Workers



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Compensation; to provide adequate compensation, and to help them recover and return to work. They deserve to be treated and compensated with dignity and fairness no matter what province they live in, but in fact here in NL, they are sinking further into poverty.”

“For far too long WorkplaceNL has acted like a private insurance agency,” stated Shortall, “concerned more about managing claims and lowering assessment rates, than putting workers’ well-being at the heart of the system. The injured workers’ fund exists to address both employers’ and workers’ concerns. This corporate culture is being supported by the Liberal government in their failure to respond to the need to increase workers’ benefits.”

Shortall concludes that the NLFL, representing 65,000 workers and their families, will make this a political issue until injured workers in NL receive the compensation that the **Workers’** Compensation System was designed to provide.

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1. WorkplaceNL Annual Report p. 39