

2004  
ANNUAL REPORT

Workplace Safety & Insurance Board

Narrative

# *Our vision:*

## The elimination of all workplace injuries and illnesses

Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) plays a key role in the province's occupational health and safety system. The WSIB administers no-fault workplace insurance for employers and their workers and is committed to the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses. The WSIB provides disability benefits, monitors the quality of health care, and assists in early and safe return to work for workers who are injured on the job or contract an occupational disease.

The WSIB envisions a future when injuries and illnesses have been eliminated from all Ontario workplaces.

Workplace safety and insurance will always be an important consideration for every worker and employer in Ontario. But we see a future when all Ontarians can go to work secure in the knowledge that every possible measure has been put in place to ensure their safety.

The WSIB is working together with its partners to build a future for our children in which workplace injuries and illnesses are a thing of the past.

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Young workers are found in all kinds of Ontario workplaces, from major utilities to ski schools.

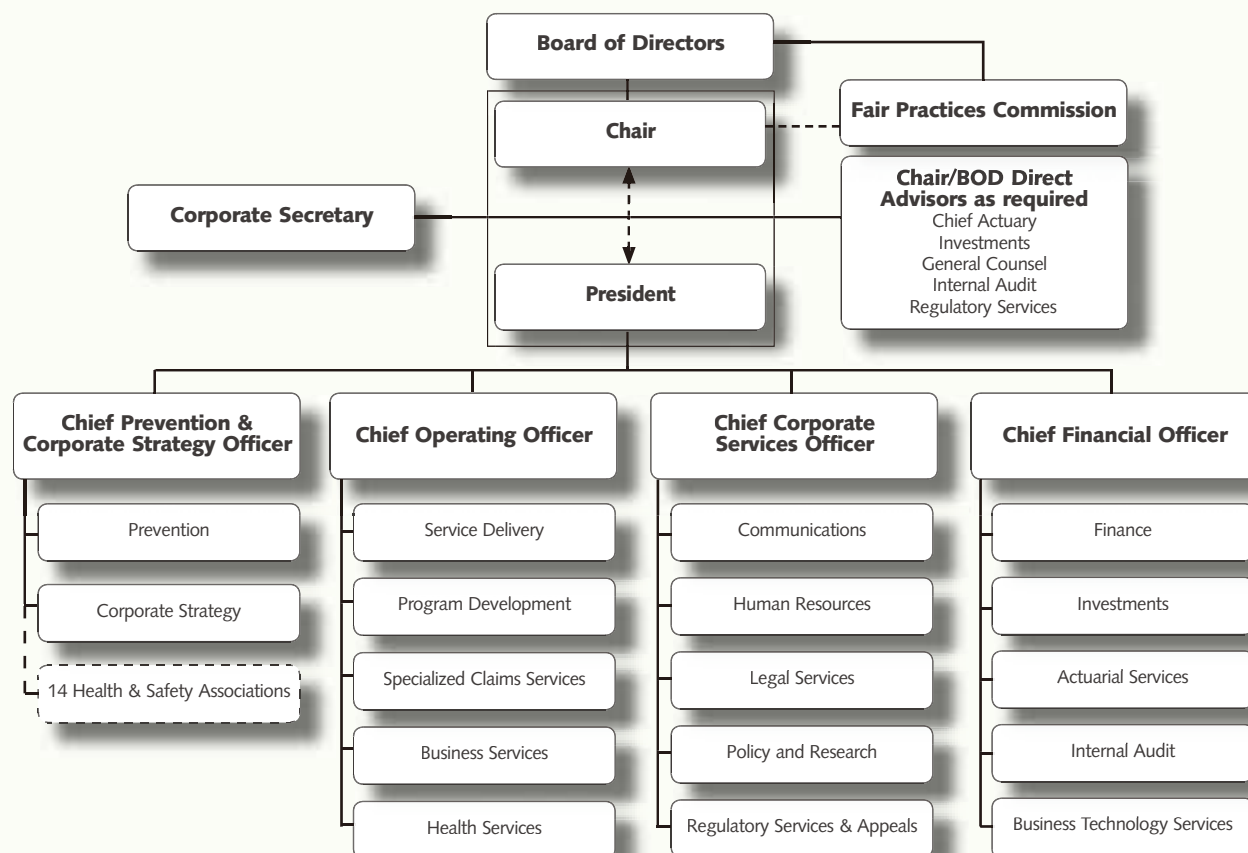


## About the WSIB

The WSIB helps workers deal with the consequences of workplace injuries and illnesses – providing insurance benefits and helping them recover and return to work. The WSIB is committed to the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses, playing a key role in Ontario’s occupational health and safety system. The WSIB:

- Administers no-fault workplace insurance for employers and their workers
- Provides benefits for injured and ill workers, and benefits for dependants of workers who have died as a result of a workplace injury or illness
- Monitors the quality of health care
- Assists in early and safe return to work.

The WSIB administers the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* and the *Workers’ Compensation Act*.



## WSIB offices

The WSIB is an organization of 4,411\* people. It has a network of offices across Ontario – in Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener, London, North Bay, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Toronto and Windsor.

\* As at December 31, 2004

# Message from the Chair

Great strides are being made in young worker safety in Ontario. Statistics indicate that the number of young workers injured or killed on the job is declining. While this is positive news, the death or injury of even a single worker is one too many. The WSIB's vision is to eliminate all workplace injuries and illnesses. Anything less is unacceptable.

Results from our sixth annual public awareness campaign in 2004, directed at young workers under the age of 25, support this downward trend. It is clear from the hundreds of young people surveyed across the province that our prevention messages are not only being heard but that young workers' attitudes and behaviours regarding occupational health and safety are changing in a positive way.

While these statistics are encouraging, there is still a lot more work to be done to make Ontario workplaces safe for the youth of our province and all workers. As you'll read in this report, the WSIB continues to partner with a number of organizations such as the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and health and safety associations on a variety of prevention initiatives.

Supporting and funding research that identifies effective prevention strategies, programs, and practices is another important way the WSIB strives to make Ontario workplaces safer and healthier. A good example of this is the *Solutions for Workplace Change Conference* we hosted in November that highlighted the exciting and innovative research conducted through our *Research Advisory Council (RAC)*. Internationally recognized researchers from a variety of universities across Ontario gathered with employers, injured workers, health and safety association representatives, WSIB senior leaders and other organizations. They met to learn how our research is providing better evidence to drive better decision-making about health and safety in the workplace.

As the first-ever RAC chair, our thanks go to *Dr. Robert Norman*, whose term formally expired at the end of November. I know that his replacement, *Dr. Jean-Yves Savoie*, will continue the same kind of commitment that led to many innovative solutions to workplace safety issues under Dr. Norman's strong leadership.

Another critical initiative is the work we started in October on **road safety**. An alliance of representatives from the *WSIB*, the *Ministry of Labour*, *Ministry of Transportation*, the *Insurance Bureau of Canada*, and the *Transportation Health and Safety Association* brought together a variety of experts from across North America to discuss ways of raising awareness about the risks of work-related driving, as well as tactics to make our roads safer and reduce motor vehicle incidents.

In 2004, we also began working together as system partners with the *Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)* in launching a joint registration campaign to ensure all required employers are registered with our two organizations. Through the sharing of information, employers who are registered with one organization, but not the other, are being contacted and asked to register with both the CRA (for the remittance of

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## Message from the Chair (cont'd)

payroll deductions) and the WSIB (for the remittance of WSIB premiums). This initiative will help level the playing field for Ontario employers and ensure that all injured workers receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

Another way we are leveling the playing field is through our partnership with the *Ministry of Labour* and Ontario's *Health and Safety Associations* to **reduce workplace injury rates by 20 per cent by 2008**. By focusing more resources on high-risk firms, we will ensure that the companies with the poorest health and safety records meet their responsibilities.

All these initiatives are being conducted within an enhanced governance structure at the WSIB. A third-party audit of our administrative and financial activities commissioned by the provincial government provided a number of recommendations in this regard.

In the fall we welcomed four new members to our Board of Directors: *Loretta Henderson, Marlene McGrath, Jim O'Neil* and *Mark Smith*. Together with the current members, *Patrick Dillon, Chris Griffin, and Dorothy Pringle*, they bring a depth of skill and experience to the table that will be invaluable in helping move the organization forward.

The WSIB will also build on its successes by including the input and advice of employers, workers, healthcare professionals and health and safety partners as the organization makes decisions on such things as **health care, return to work** and **prevention** initiatives. Our commitment to **transparency** and **openness** is reflected in a series of **information sessions** we will be holding with employer, worker and other stakeholder groups in the first quarter of 2005.

Of course, none of our accomplishments could be realized without the dedication and hard work of our employees, which is being recognized by employers and workers. Results from our 2004 *Ipsos Reid survey* show that there has been continued improvement on several fronts dealing with service to employers and workers. Overall satisfaction with the WSIB is up among injured workers. And employer satisfaction in many service levels has also improved overall.

All of our staff continue to pursue new and innovative ways to improve service to injured workers and employers, and to reach our goal of eliminating all injuries and illnesses in the workplaces of Ontario. Their ongoing commitment is greatly appreciated.



Jill Hutcheon  
President and Interim Chair



# The WSIB Board of Directors



A new Board of Directors convened on November 3, 2004. A diverse range of skills and backgrounds are represented, from a professional firefighter to an executive director and general counsel with 3M—to a CAW national secretary. From left to right are: **Patrick Dillon**, **Jim O'Neil**, **Dorothy Pringle**, **Jill Hutcheon**, **Marlene McGrath**, **Chris Griffin** and **Mark Smith** (not shown: **Loretta Henderson**).

***Patrick Dillon*** *Member*

(July 17, 1996 - July 16, 2007)

Business manager, Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario

***Chris Griffin*** *Member*

(July 8, 1998 - July 7, 2006)

Fire captain and qualified director of training, with more than 28 years of experience

***Loretta Henderson*** *Member*

(October 14, 2004 - October 13, 2007)

Former vice-chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal

***Jill Hutcheon*** *Interim Chair, WSIB*

(March 11, 2004 - until new Chair appointed)

President of the WSIB, from October 14, 2004 until January 23, 2006

***Marlene McGrath*** *Member*

(October 14, 2004 - October 13, 2007)

Executive director, Corporate Services and general counsel, 3M Canada Co.

***Jim O'Neil*** *Member*

(October 14, 2004 - October 13, 2007)

National secretary treasurer, Canadian Autoworkers (CAW - Canada)

***Dorothy Pringle*** *Member*

(April 19, 2000 - April 18, 2005)

Professor of nursing, University of Toronto, and senior fellow, Massey College; former dean, University of Toronto

***Mark Smith*** *Member*

(October 14, 2004 - October 13, 2007)

Chair of Kensington Capital Corp.

## *Committees of the Board of Directors*

The **Audit and Finance Committee** advises on financial and other reporting practices and internal controls.

The **Health and Safety Committee** advises on workplace health and safety policies, performance objectives, and measurement criteria.

The **Human Resources and Compensation Committee** advises on the health and safety of WSIB employees and the human resources function.

The **Governance and Policy Committee** advises on governance and policy matters.

The **Investment Committee** provides counsel on investment policy, monitors investment returns, and reviews the performance of investment managers and their compliance with applicable laws and regulations and their respective mandates.

# Young Worker Awareness: *Getting the message across*

The leaders of tomorrow are the young workers of today. Making safety an integral part of young workers' lives is the single most important thing we can do to make Ontario workplaces safer.

There is growing evidence that awareness about health and safety among young workers is starting to take hold. Between 2000 and 2003, lost-time injuries among workers aged 15 to 24 decreased by 21 per cent. Fatalities among young workers dropped by 37.5 per cent.

Since the WSIB started its youth-focused campaign six years ago, young people have become increasingly more comfortable with reporting workplace safety issues.

Through partnerships with the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, health and safety associations and other organizations throughout the province, the WSIB continues to work towards sustaining these improvements and building on them. Some of the initiatives and personal stories

in the following pages are examples of how our contribution to these partnerships is helping to ingrain our safety message in young workers.

Focusing on young workers is just one of the ways the WSIB is working to make Ontario's workplaces safer. The WSIB is committed to preventing workplace injuries and illnesses, and plays a key role in the province's occupational health and safety system.



WSIB Account Manager **William Cunningham** (right) discusses prevention initiatives for young workers with **Kathy Wall** (left), while youth are busy trimming roses in the background at a greenhouse near Sarnia. Like many account managers, William spends a large portion of his time on the road visiting employers, working out of the Agriculture Sector office in Guelph. He makes more than two hundred site visits a year. These visits are an important part of stakeholder relations and a key part of building worker (and young worker) safety programs across the province.





## Five years after his son's tragic death, Rob Ellis keeps safety message alive

It's February 11, 1999, and 18-year-old David Ellis is working alone cleaning an industrial dough mixer at an Oakville bakery. There is no safety bar, no supervision, and little training. David reaches in to clean out dough and the mixer turns on — dragging him in, and taking away one man's eldest son.

David's dad Rob misses his son every day. It was only David's second day on the job when this lack of training and supervision led to a workplace fatality that could have been prevented.

Since that fateful February day, Rob has focused his efforts on educating other young workers, parents, and employers throughout Canada about the importance of workplace safety. A former small-business owner, Rob sold his company shortly after David's death, and started the non-profit association, *Our Youth At Work*. The goal of this association is to build bridges of knowledge in the workplace.

The model begins by speaking to adults as employees of a corporation. Adults are then encouraged to be champions of workplace safety both at work and at home. Corporate executives accompany Rob to a local college, high school or elementary school and participate as champions directly involved with the future leaders of our country. A special emphasis is always centred on asking about O.T. — orientation and training — before work begins.

In 2004 alone, Rob spoke to 100,000 parents and students face-to-face through approximately 150 speaking engagements at high schools, universities and colleges. He was also featured as part of the WSIB's *Parental Awareness Safety Campaign* targeted specifically at other fathers and mothers to educate them to ask the right questions when talking to their children about their jobs.

Getting a call that your child has been seriously injured or killed in a workplace accident is a nightmare that no parent should have to face. While this nightmare is Rob's reality, he has taken this tragedy and turned it into his life's mission — retelling David's story over and over again, with the hope that no other family will have to face what Rob and his family did.



Rob Ellis's son David was killed by a bread mixer on his second day of work. Here, Rob speaks to co-op students at Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School in Brampton — one of hundreds of engagements every year, which often move young audiences to tears. He's sometimes joined by executives from nearby companies who also believe that safety is a priority, adding local impact to his presentations.



## Social Awareness campaigns hit home



The WSIB's *Social Awareness campaigns* in 2004 hit home with young workers, employers, parents, and the general public.

In addition to its general Social Awareness campaign aimed at Ontarians aged 25 to 54, the WSIB launched its first awareness initiative geared specifically towards **parents of young workers**. For five weeks, the WSIB got its message out about workplace safety, and rights and responsibilities to parents by asking: “How safe are your kids at work?”

The campaign included hard-hitting radio and print advertisements featuring parents talking about the effect the work-related death of their child had on their families. Parents told their stories in a direct and personal way, emphasizing the emotional and human dimensions of workplace safety, while raising awareness of the importance of promoting safe work practices.

Results from the campaign were encouraging. Seventy-eight per cent of parents surveyed reported awareness of one or more elements of the campaign. In addition, 67 per cent of parents took the next step and discussed workplace safety with their children before they started a new job.

In its campaign aimed primarily at young workers under the age of 25, the WSIB also saw positive results. The campaign, which included radio, transit, print, and outdoor advertising, resulted in a positive shift in young workers’ attitudes and behaviours around the importance of occupational health and safety.

One of the most encouraging results of the campaign was that 71 per cent of youth said they believe that workplace injuries and illnesses are unacceptable and preventable.

The parental and youth campaigns promoted the *Young Worker* website address: [www.youngworker.ca](http://www.youngworker.ca), along with a toll-free number: 1-888-921-WSIB, as sources to obtain additional information or resources. The Web site contains health and safety information for parents, young workers, educators, and employers, including a page that outlines “seven things you’d better know” to stay safe in the workplace.

Through its Prevention and Operations divisions, the WSIB continues to develop and implement other effective strategies aimed at accomplishing our ultimate goal of eliminating all workplace injuries and illness.

Evaluations of WSIB *Social Awareness* campaigns indicate that the messaging is effective. 2004 campaigns included those aimed at young workers (above), as well as at parents (right).





## Health and Safety 101

In 2004, the WSIB won national and international awards for *Health and Safety 101*, an innovative computer e-learning program for young workers.

Health and Safety 101 provides young workers with basic health and safety information on workplace rights and responsibilities, hazards, and staying safe. In addition to teaching young workers about workplace safety, the program also prepares them for the Passport to Safety Challenge, in which young workers can earn a certificate to show employers they have a basic knowledge of health and safety (see Passport to Safety article on next page). The WSIB is working with other provinces such as Nova Scotia and Manitoba that want to use this product.

The young worker e-learning program is available on the Health and Safety 101 Web site at [www.hs101.ca](http://www.hs101.ca). This site also contains a resource booklet that can be downloaded and links to important workplace health and safety information.

Health and Safety 101 is another example of how the WSIB is implementing innovative solutions that are helping to make workplaces safer and healthier for workers and employers in Ontario.



*Health & Safety 101* was developed internally at the WSIB. It uses interactive modules tailored to young audiences to teach key concepts in health and safety.



Staff from several divisions of the WSIB gather after winning one of several prestigious awards for *Health & Safety 101*, a training program aimed at youth.

## Passport to Safety

*Passport to Safety* is a national safety awareness program designed to prepare young people to receive workplace and job-specific training. It is not a substitute for workplace training, but ensures that young people are safety-conscious and hold their new employers accountable for delivering required job and workplace safety training.



Co-op students at **Manitouwadge High School** in Northern Ontario show off their *Passport to Safety* certificates they won for having the highest participation rate in the province. They were led by Yvonne MacNeill (not shown), who was motivated by WSIB presentations and the memory of a student killed at a local pulp mill.

In 2004, Passport to Safety issued 80,083 memberships, of which 52,364 were sponsored by the WSIB.

The WSIB has supported the Passport to Safety program since its launch in 2003. The initiative began as a pilot in Peterborough, Ontario, and was started nationally by **Paul Kells**, who lost his 19-year-old son **Sean** in a workplace explosion, and vowed to help make sure others do not suffer the same tragedy. Additional information on Passport to Safety can be obtained at [www.passporttosafety.com](http://www.passporttosafety.com).

On a broader scale, supporting Passport to Safety demonstrates how the WSIB is working with health and safety partners across the province on prevention initiatives that not only benefit young workers but all Ontario workers.



Hockey players pause for a group photo after the **First Annual Sean Kells Memorial Hockey Night** – organized by Sean's friends and held on November 20, 2004, on the 10th anniversary of his death in an industrial explosion. All proceeds went to the Safe Communities Foundation, established by Sean's family in 1996. At centre are (l to r) Sean's father Paul Kells, sister Robin and mother Judi. Inset: Sean Kells.

The following is Sarah Goodhope's advice to young workers about workplace safety based on her experiences. The 26-year-old is currently employed with Passport to Safety as a client service co-ordinator. Sarah is also the Ontario representative on the cross-Canada Young Worker Advisory Committee and sits on the Ontario Young Worker Health and Safety Advisory Panel. She volunteers as a Young Worker Awareness Program presenter with the Industrial Accident Prevention Association — making presentations to at-risk youth in the Hamilton area. Previously, Sarah worked with youth at the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington on the Career Cruiser, a mobile career employment resource centre.

## My advice to youth on workplace safety



As a young teenager, I focused on getting a job that would give me my first taste of independence. The job that I found through a friend was working in a kitchen. I received no safety training at all from my employer. I also hadn't had much information on the subject in high school, except for a WHMIS unit in science class (and science class was the furthest thing from my mind when I left school at exactly 3:15 p.m. to make it for my 3:30 p.m. shift). Unfortunately, my first "real" job was also the job that provided me with my first (and only) workplace injury. Amazingly, while it was serious enough to send me to the hospital, it didn't make a real impact on me until years later.

Luckily, the next few jobs I had were for larger, more responsible organizations. I worked for government, a chemical company (where I received the best safety training of my life), and eventually my university. As I progressed through my teens and into my 20s, I picked up workplace safety education piece by piece from these employers.

After graduating from university, I started working as a youth employment counsellor. It was only at this point that I became aware of the staggering number of young workers who are injured every day at work. Suddenly, it was my job to talk to my clients about safety in the workplace and their rights and responsibilities. This was something that I struggled with every day — convincing people in desperate need for work to support their children, pay their rent, and provide basic necessities of life that, in addition to finding a job that pays more than minimum wage, they also needed to consider safety on the job. I'm not sure that I was always successful in doing this, but I did make sure that at the very least my clients had the benefit of the knowledge that I didn't have in my teens — that they have a right to safety training and the right to refuse unsafe work.

My advice to young people today is this: Find out as much as you can about safety before you enter the workplace; it's just as important as learning how to create a great resumé. If you're learning about health and safety in school, pay attention! It could be the most important class you ever take. If you're older and have already started your job or career, make sure, for yourself, that you understand your responsibilities with respect to safety in the workplace, as well as your employer's obligations. A great place to start is by taking the online *Passport to Safety* test.

Start a safety dialogue with your employer right now, so when issues come up, you're comfortable talking about them.



Many disabled youth are doubly challenged when searching for work — having fewer jobs open to them, as well as not knowing the right questions to ask about safety. *SafeAbility* is a program funded by the WSIB and jointly developed with agencies assisting the disabled to provide knowledge and teach questions for potential employment situations. **Navin Ramoutar**, a *SafeAbility* participant, is shown here talking about his experiences.



**Sarah Goodhope**, in her advice to youth, tells young people to find out about safety before they start their jobs, and to understand their responsibilities. Here **Adnan Zaffino** gets some important instruction from **Tony Duarte** about the operation of meat-wrapping equipment.



## Michelle Isaacs shares her tragic story to keep fiancé's memory alive

August 23, 2002, is a date **Michelle Isaacs** will never forget. What began as a normal Friday evening — waiting for her fiancé **Mike Barrasso** to return from work — quickly turned into the WSIB employee's worst nightmare. The engaged couple were poised to get married in 2005 and were filled with hopes and dreams of a future life together.

At 6:13 p.m., these hopes vanished when her fiancé's uncle rushed into the kitchen at the Barrasso's home, crying uncontrollably. Michelle went outside to find a police officer in the garage talking to her future in-laws. She was told that there had been an accident at work and her fiancé was dead. In that split second, her life changed forever.

Mike was a 22-year-old electrical apprentice who was sent off to work alone on a fluorescent light fixture. He was told that the power was off, but it wasn't. He was electrocuted and died on the way to the hospital.

Michelle's fiancé was one of 14 workers under the age of 24 killed at an Ontario workplace in 2002. While Michelle's dreams were shattered more than two years ago, the 24-year-old has found a way through this tragedy to use her story to help prevent this type of loss from happening to other families.

By telling her story to other young workers, she hopes she can prevent others from having to go through the pain and grief that she has endured. In 2004, Michelle was featured telling her story as part of the WSIB's sixth annual summer *Youth Awareness* campaign. She stresses that it's important that young workers know their rights and that they need to make health and safety a focus.

Michelle misses her fiancé's voice every day. Nothing can bring Mike back, but she feels that if his tragic tale can inspire others to ask the right questions to prevent future injuries and fatalities, his death was not in vain.



**Michelle Isaacs** is a microfiche file clerk with the WSIB, but also has a busy schedule speaking at workplaces about a personal experience: In 2002, her fiancé, an electrician, was killed fixing a fluorescent light. Here, she speaks to Toronto Hydro employees at a quarterly team safety meeting.

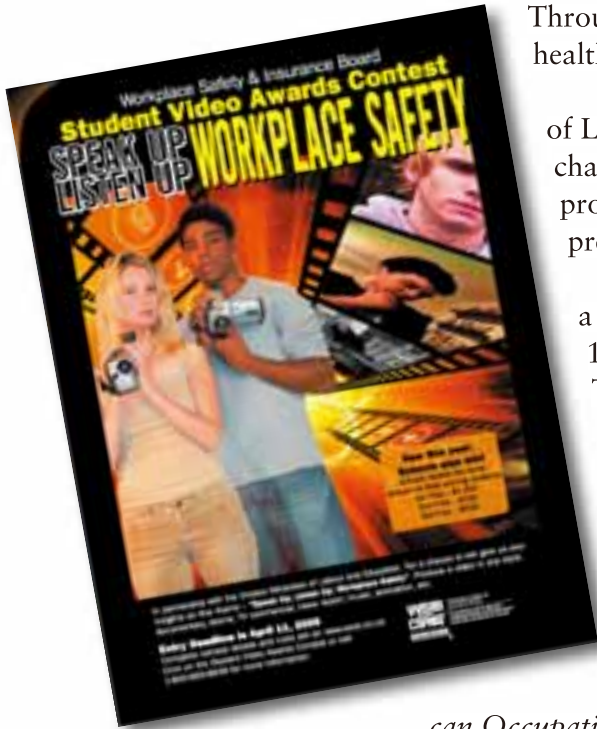
Inside an ore crushing mill at Onaping, near Sudbury, co-op student Ashley Smyth takes air quality readings, part of checking many sites for environmental quality. She has had thorough orientation and safety briefings since starting.

Behind, from L to R are Jamie Beauchamp (shift supervisor), Claire Walker (Falconbridge, training/claims assistant) and, Catherine Anzil (WSIB mining team adjudicator).





## Student Video Awards contest



This poster was sent to most high schools in Ontario, part of a package to attract entries for the increasingly popular WSIB *Student Video Awards* contest.

Through its annual *Student Video Awards* contest, the WSIB is getting its health and safety message out to young workers.

The contest, which is a partnership between the WSIB, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, is now in its fourth year. It challenges students across Ontario to think about workplace safety and promotes their understanding of workplace rights and responsibilities to prevent injuries and fatalities on the job.

To participate, students create and submit a video based on a particular workplace safety theme. The videos are no longer than 10 minutes and can be produced in any style, including documentary, TV commercial, music video, news report, drama etc.

The WSIB offers three cash prizes for the best submissions: \$1,000, \$750, and \$500. Each school receives a certificate of recognition naming its participating students. In addition, the WSIB provides matching funds so that each high school receives the same amount as its winning students.

In 2004, the entries were so good the judges decided to award four prizes to schools in Kanata, Owen Sound, Barrie and Douglas, Ont. The presentations were made during the WSIB's *North American Occupational Safety and Health* (NAOSH) week activities.

The videos are used as part of the WSIB's prevention initiatives to promote health and safety. In addition to being used by employers and various organizations, they are shown at such events as *Take Our Kids to Work Day* and *Day of Mourning*. All the winning videos can be viewed on the WSIB Web site under the "Prevention Events" section.



A scene from the first-place student video "A Lot to Lose", by Jakub Racek of Kanata (Matt Racek shown). The submission tells the story of a young person having a flashback to when he was playing soccer prior to being injured at work.

## Live Safe! Work Smart!

*New resource for teachers of students with special learning needs launched in 2004*

The WSIB, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, came to the conclusion six years ago that there was an effective way to reach young workers through a new program they developed called *Live Safe! Work Smart!*

*Live Safe! Work Smart!* is a set of resources custom-designed to meet the health and safety-related learning expectations of high-school students. The resources, which are imbedded in Ontario's school curriculum, are for Grades 9 to 12, and for co-operative education students.

In 2004, the WSIB's Prevention Division, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, identified that students with special learning needs require a slightly different format than the previously published *Live Safe! Work Smart!* resource books. To meet this need, a new aid tailored specifically to teachers of students with special learning needs was developed. The resource book was designed to ensure that students who may be blind, deaf or have a learning disability get the same safety training as other students. Complex concepts are presented in a user-friendly and easy-to-understand format. The resource includes lesson notes, suggested learning games, and other activities that teachers can use to deliver the health and safety message to this specific audience. In creating the guide, feedback was received from a group of Ontario teachers who work with students with special learning needs.

The theme throughout the workbook is "Stop and Ask" or "GO. Be Safe." These two principles are designed to help students with disabilities make wiser decisions at work.

Living and working safely is a life skill, and teachers have the power to influence young minds by teaching them this valuable skill. *Live Safe! Work Smart!* is just one more way the WSIB, in collaboration with its health and safety system partners, is reaching our future workers to help ensure that there will be a day in the future when there are no workplace injuries and illnesses in Ontario.

The retail sector employs increasing numbers of young workers. As with other sectors, employers with proper health and safety training and good overall supervision have far fewer injuries for young workers and overall. Programs such as *Live Safe! Work Smart!* help teachers prepare students for their roles in the workplace.



## Skills Canada – Ontario



The WSIB helps promote workplace health and safety to Ontario youth, educators, parents, and employers through **Skills Canada – Ontario**. Skills Canada – Ontario is a not-for-profit organization that develops programs and initiatives aimed at encouraging young Ontarians to consider the skilled trades and technologies as viable, first-choice career options.

Each year the organization coordinates the *Ontario Technological Skills Competition* (OTSC), a three-day event that brings students together from across the province to showcase their talents and test themselves against industry standards in the skilled trades and technologies. The WSIB participated in the event in 2004.

The WSIB volunteered to implement the first-ever *Worksite Safety* contest offered at the OTSC. Secondary-level students took part competing in a theory exam, presentation and a workplace hazard investigation. Three mock work areas – a warehouse, a meeting room and a chemical storage room – were created, with a variety of hazards displayed. The competitors were judged through an evaluation of their skills in workplace health and safety.

The *Career Showcase* allowed students to see the relevant link between skills and jobs, to expand their thinking about the variety of career options within the skilled trades. The event was designed to test the students' skills at hands-on exhibits and to collect information for post-secondary education and apprenticeship opportunities.

The WSIB's main focus at the *Career Showcase* was to educate young people about their rights and responsibilities, and to promote occupational health and safety messages to youth, employers, teachers, and parents in Ontario.

The Grade 7 and 8 *Elementary Workshop* helped students learn about hazards in the workplace. The WSIB ran six workshops through which students gained an understanding that hazards exist in all workplaces and that they should ask questions and know their rights and responsibilities.



The annual *Technological Skills Competition* held in Waterloo is one of the many events that the **Prevention Division** is involved in. Students take part in competitions to test their knowledge of safety and workplace hazard assessment, along with other employment-related events.

## Young Worker Awareness program

Last year, more than 90,000 youth participated in a health and safety awareness program available to Ontario high schools.

The *Young Worker Awareness* program was created to give students information they need to protect their health and safety on the job. Available to any high school in Ontario, the program has two components – a general assembly presentation and a classroom instruction segment. Both the general assembly and classroom components emphasize student interaction and knowledge transfer.

Under the program, trained instructors, including WSIB staff, visit Ontario high schools to deliver the workplace health and safety message through video and other training materials. Students receive a resource booklet and other information. There is no charge to the student or school for the program.

The *Young Worker Awareness* program is offered by the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, the Ontario Service Safety Alliance and the Workers Health and Safety Centre, all organizations funded by the WSIB.

The program Web site – [www.youngworker.ca](http://www.youngworker.ca) – contains health and safety information for young workers, their parents, teachers, principals, employers, and others.

The WSIB's involvement in the *Young Worker Awareness* program demonstrates how partnering with organizations in Ontario's health and safety system can help spread the critical message of prevention to all workers and employers in the province.



## Council of Leaders makes prevention breakthroughs

Imagine a country in which our young people remain safe and healthy at work and are able to return home safe and healthy at the end of the day. That's the vision of the **Council of Leaders**. Its mission is to “galvanize the key players in prevention to bring the message of occupational health and safety to young workers, parents, employers, workers, teachers, and to all Canadians.”

The Council of Leaders in Prevention Breakthroughs is a cross-Canada organization made up of prevention leaders from across the country, representing governments, occupational health and safety organizations, and youth committees.

Its objectives are to facilitate education, analysis, and self-reliance, promote awareness, support best practices, and engage research. The council supports and champions innovations and breakthrough strategies from coast to coast. To date, the council has adopted three initiatives: *Passport to Safety* (see article, page 12), *Threads of Life*, and a *Cross-Canada Awareness Campaign*.

### Threads of Life

This is a Canadian not-for-profit organization providing family support to those affected by a workplace tragedy. Canadian family members and friends living with the outcome of a workplace tragedy are behind the development of this unique initiative. Representatives from corporate, labour and public-sector organizations are voluntarily working together on an advisory committee in support of strategic and organizational planning. This group is united in their belief that injuries in the workplace are completely preventable.

**Threads of Life** provides families with peer-support assistance and referral while promoting public awareness and accountability for workplace health and safety. Families have identified that this helps fill a gap in our country's social, health, and safety systems. The organization is supported by a tapestry of volunteers from across the country.

### Cross-Canada Awareness Campaign

In 2004, free cross-Canada air time was given by **MuchMusic** to *Passport to Safety* to broadcast a public service announcement it produced on health and safety. The announcement ran on MuchMusic for four weeks, reaching an estimated weekly audience of 6.4 million between the ages of 12 and 34 across the country.





In 2004, the WSIB published a five-year research report for the first time. It profiles some of the major grants, out of the dozens awarded every year. The program has become a major initiative and the publication was very well received by the research community.

## WSIB-funded research continues to make a difference

Research plays a valuable role in improving the lives of Ontario's residents. Over the past six years, the WSIB, through its **Research Advisory Council (RAC)**, has formed solid foundations for a sustainable applied research grants program that has engaged researchers throughout Ontario and produced cutting-edge results.

In 2004, the WSIB Board of Directors approved funding for 20 research projects under the 2004 *Solutions for Workplace Change* research grants competition. The main goal of Solutions for Workplace Change is to provide sound, research-based knowledge that will help Ontario workplaces become safer and healthier.

## Solutions for Workplace Change conference

In mid-November, the WSIB hosted a one-day conference called *Solutions for Workplace Change* that highlighted the exciting and innovative research that the WSIB funds. The conference was attended by more than 250 people, including workers, employers, researchers, and WSIB staff. The successful event promoted interaction among many different people, and spread vital information. Throughout the day, new solutions were proposed on how best to get the completed research into the hands of those who can most benefit from its findings.

## New RAC chair appointed

**Dr. Jean-Yves Savoie** – who is internationally known in the field of occupational health and safety – replaced **Dr. Robert Norman**, whose term formally expired at the end of November. This appointment is effective until the end of 2006. Dr. Savoie has served on the RAC board since January 2004. For many years he was director general of the Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail (IRSST). He also serves on a number of national research granting bodies, including Chair of the Advisory Council of the Population and Public Health Institute for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

As chair of the RAC, Dr. Savoie will build on the RAC's many successes and move the WSIB research program into new and innovative directions. He will continue his ongoing focus on defining research directions in line with the WSIB's and its partners' real needs.

## Centres of Research Expertise mature

As announced in last year's annual report, 2004 saw the WSIB launch two new centres of research expertise: The Centre of Research Expertise in the Prevention of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders and Disabilities (CRE-PREMUS) and the Centre of Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CRE-OD).

The objectives of the centres of research expertise are to:

- Assist the WSIB in achieving research program purposes, objectives, and network goals.
- Increase research capacity in occupational health and safety (OH&S) in Ontario by producing highly qualified people at diploma, undergraduate, and graduate levels for the future and by attracting established researchers to centre activities.
- Help develop coordinated, coherent, province-wide programs of world-class OH&S research within the centre and via interactions with other centres in the network and the network chair.
- Build relationships with stakeholders and, together with these stakeholders, develop research projects and experimental (proof of principle) research transfer, exchange, and utilization vehicles.
- Help improve research-based knowledge transfer, exchange, and utilization, and promote development of a culture among stakeholders of using research to inform and evaluate interventions, including policy, intended to reduce work-related injury, disease, and disability.

CRE-PREMUS is located within the faculty of applied health sciences at the University of Waterloo. Sixteen researchers from eight universities are pooling their diverse expertise to generate new knowledge, implement and disseminate research, develop interventions, and evaluate workplace changes that aim to reduce the burden and severity of musculoskeletal disorders, also known as repetitive strain injuries (RSI), cumulative trauma disorders (CTD), or musculoskeletal injuries (MSI). In December, the centre held an informative one-day workshop to increase knowledge and to examine the effectiveness of job rotation in preventing musculoskeletal injuries.

CRE-OD focuses on the prevention and treatment of occupational diseases such as noise-induced hearing loss and allergic reactions in the workplace. **Dr. Linn Holness** is the director of the centre, which is being administered through the University of Toronto and St. Michael's Hospital.

Occupational diseases remain a significant issue in the workplace. Although we still see traditional occupational diseases (such as occupational asthma), new ones, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), are being identified. The number of claims submitted to the WSIB for these diseases is increasing. This is where WSIB-funded research can help make a difference to identify and find ways to reduce the hazards that lead to workplace disease. The centre hopes to increase the number of researchers active in this field through mentoring programs and training opportunities for MSc and PhD students.



The Research Advisory Council invites projects to study better safety practices. One of the dozens of successful projects in 2004 was the **automatic rebar tying machine**, which decreases forceful hand exertion, repetitive hand motion and improves ergonomics.

## Institute for Work & Health

The **Institute for Work & Health** (the “Institute”) is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conduct and share research with workers, labour, employers, clinicians, and policy-makers to promote, protect, and improve the health of working people. The Institute has been providing research and evidence-based practical tools since 1990. It operates with the support of the WSIB.

### *2004 accomplishments*

There is a strong interest among employers, insurers, and healthcare providers in Ontario to understand the elements of effective *return to work* strategies. At the invitation of the WSIB, Institute scientist **Dr. Renée-Louise Franche** and her team set out to find out what strategies work best and under what conditions. The researchers conducted a systematic review of the return to work literature published since 1990 and developed a summary with recommendations for successful return to work strategies.

Research has already shown that younger workers are more vulnerable to work injuries compared with adults. But crucial information about the potential causes and effects is lacking. Under the leadership of **Dr. Curtis Breslin**, the Institute continues to develop a strong research focus that will help the WSIB, employers, and other injury prevention partners in understanding and dealing with particular risks faced by young and new workers.

In 2004, **Dr. Emile Tompa** completed a systematic review of the effectiveness of occupational health and safety enforcement and experience rating. This work found strong evidence that when orders and fines are imposed on a firm as the result of an inspection, the frequency and severity of injury claims are reduced. Representatives of ministries of labour across Canada reported that this review has proved valuable in current policy development.

In March 2004, the WSIB funded the first year of a four-year pilot project at the Institute to conduct systematic reviews of the effectiveness of interventions to prevent workplace injury, illness, and disability. The institute looks forward to sharing the results of this work in 2005 and beyond.

The sustained support provided by the WSIB to the Institute for Work & Health and the *Solutions for Workplace Change* program overseen by the *Research Advisory Council* continues to strengthen research capacity in Ontario. The Institute is an active collaborator with the two centres of research expertise established in 2004, and they are committed to working together to strengthen research and knowledge transfer in Ontario.

Co-op student Ashley Smyth takes water quality readings at a water well near mines outside Sudbury. She is being checked by the Falconbridge training/claims assistant Claire Walker, and WSIB mining team adjudicator Catherine Anzil (L).







Lawrence Medas, an account manager with the WSIB, listens in on a safety briefing from Melanie Randell to young ski lift staff at Snow Valley near Barrie. Diligence in developing procedures, manuals and follow up reinforce the importance of prevention to new staff, and build a culture of health and safety.