



Business Plan 2019-20



Message from the Fair Practices Commissioner



I am delighted to present our first business plan.

This plan tells readers who we are, what our job is, and how we do our work.

This plan is written with injured workers, their dependants, and employers (our clients) in mind. It is intended to allow our clients, the Minister and workers' compensation system partners to hold us to account.

This plan also manages expectations. The fact is that the Fair Practices Office is brand new as of December 2018. Much of our first year will be about establishing our own procedures and programs so that we can consistently model the highest standards of fairness in the work we do. This is not to say that the FPO will develop rules with a view to being totally fixed and rigid in our approach. The opposite is true. Great organizations are nimble, adaptable, and focused on people. The FPO will invest in our employees, giving them the right training and tools so they continue to innovate, add value and lead positive change internally and externally.

In leading change, the FPO recognizes that the vast majority of workers' compensation claims are handled by the system well and usually resolved within two weeks. The challenge is to rebuild trust where it has broken down. To do this, the FPO will carefully listen to injured workers, their dependants, employers, the Minister, system partners and stakeholders about the ways we can work together to restore and strengthen trust in the workers' compensation system.

We welcome your input.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by]

Harold Robinson, LLB
Fair Practices Commissioner

Outcomes, Strategies and Measures of Success

Outcome 1: The FPO has the people, resources and procedures required to deliver excellent programs and services.

Context

The FPO is new. It opened its doors (in temporary spaces in Edmonton and Calgary) on December 3, 2018. The expectation is that the FPO will deliver excellent programs and services even while building them.

The FPO's first year of operations will involve getting to know each other, our clients, the Minister, our system partners and stakeholders. We will identify key roles and operational needs. We will test new systems and refine old ones to deliver on our mandate of providing excellent navigation services, independant advisory services for workers' compensation appeals, fairness reviews, and to facilitate constructive dialogue between system partners.

Key Strategies

- 1.1 The Commissioner will identify the resources and establish procedures required to deliver on our mandate.
- 1.2 The Commissioner will establish procedures to safeguard personal information in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
- 1.3 The Commissioner will clarify the FPO's roles and responsibilities as they related to the Minister and the Department of Labour through a Mandate and Roles Document.
- 1.4 The Commissioner will develop and implement an outreach strategy that informs and engages workers' compensation stakeholders in the work we do

Targets

- Assess human resource needs
- Assess of capital requirements
- Assess of data-base requirements
- Develop full suite of FOIP policies
- Complete Commissioner procedures and operational policies
- Execute Roles and Mandate Document
- Engage with Minister, system partners and stakeholders

Outcome 2: Help make the workers' compensation system easier to navigate for injured workers, their dependants, and for employers.

Context

*The workers' compensation system serves most injured workers, their dependants, and employers very well. However, it is a big system and people sometimes need help orienting themselves or their businesses in relation to the system's appeal processes and about who to speak to about fairness concerns. The FPO's navigation branch is here to help injured workers, their dependants, and employers (**our clients**) figure out where they are in the system, next steps and where and how to connect with potential resources.*

Key Strategies

- 2.1 The FPO navigation branch will establish outreach strategies and tools to educate our clients, stakeholders and the public about the FPO's mandate and the workers' compensation system.
- 2.2 The FPO navigation branch will continually monitor and assess its interaction with FPO clients to determine how our communication strategies and messages can be improved.

Targets

- Outreach plan and materials
- Assess intake services needs and wants of our clients
- Identify baseline targets for customer satisfaction with navigation branch services

Outcome 3: Injured workers, their dependants, and employers have independent FPO appeal advisors who continue to provide excellent help with their appeals at no additional cost.

Context

Albertans value the workers' compensation system. A significant majority of the people who are assisted by the system have relatively uncomplicated health matters that resolve quickly, and this trend is likely to continue. However, this is not always the case. Where matters are under appeal, or claims involve complex health matters, they tend to become more complicated. This is where the FPO's worker and employer appeals advisory branches come in.

The worker and employer appeals advisory branches operate separately from one another. Collectively, though, they help injured workers, their dependants, and employers by providing independent advice concerning appeals and by attending workers' compensation hearings (including Appeals Commission hearings) at no additional cost to the worker, their dependants, or the employer.

Key Strategies

- 3.1 Ensure the FPO worker and employer appeals advisory branches have manageable caseloads and the tools, methods and training to support clients through the appeals process.
- 3.2 Develop and apply quality assurance audits to measure the quality of each branch's services leading up to and through the workers' compensation appeal processes.
- 3.3 Demonstrate transparency and client focus by developing and publishing service standards.

Targets

- Identify optimal caseloads for worker and employer appeals advisors and acquire human and other resources to maintain service excellence.
- Identify the percentage of our clients who feel that their worker or employer appeals advisor was efficient, respectful, and helpful in advancing their issues on appeal (win or lose) with view to improving it in subsequent years.

Outcome 4: Conduct reviews of the workers' compensation decision-making processes and identify ways to improve the fairness of those processes for injured workers, their dependants, and employers.

Context

The FPO fairness review branch and Commissioner serve an ombudsman-like function with a special focus on how decisions are made (but not on the decisions themselves). The fairness review branch and the Commissioner can also review alleged breaches of the WCB Code of Rights and Conduct. Put simply, the FPO helps to ensure decisions are made in a fair manner (administrative fairness) and that workers and employers are treated with dignity respect (WCB Code of Conduct).

Acting in an ombudsman-like fashion means facilitating progress, not dwelling on the lack of it. Whenever feasible, we will work collaboratively with the parties to facilitate solutions that work for all sides. Furthermore, through regular and timely reporting to the Minister and our workers' compensation system partners, the FPO will identify trends and opportunities to improve the system—to ensure and build trust that the system is putting the health and well-being of injured workers at the centre of decision-making.

Key strategies:

- 4.1 Establish procedures and programs for fairness reviews.
- 4.2 Ensure regular and timely communication between the FPO and the Workers' Compensation Board, Appeals Commission, and the Medical Panels Office to discuss trends and issues.
- 4.3 Scan other jurisdictions for ideas and approaches that help to prevent unfairness or poor treatment in other workers' compensation systems before lapses occur and model new methods of resolving lapses in fairness when they do occur.
- 4.4 Contribute to the implementation of recommendations outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Targets

- FPO worked to resolve issues early on and informally.
- Fairness reviews identify lapses in fairness and conduct and FPO processes afford parties opportunities to resolve them.

Contact

For more information about the Fair Practices Office, or if you have any questions about this business plan, please contact our Navigation Branch Manager at:

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