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www.sgeu.org

1011 Devonshire Drive North,
Regina, SK S4X 2X4
(p) 522.8571
1.800.667.5221
(f) 352.1969

Suite 201,
1114-22nd Street West,
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0S5
(p) 652.1811
1.800.667.9791
(f) 664.7134

33-11th Street West,
Prince Albert, SK S6V 3A8
(p) 764.5201
1.800.667.9355
(f) 763.4763

SGEU welcomes changes to help workers with psychological injuries

SGEU welcomes proposed legislative changes that will make it easier for workers suffering from psychological injuries to access benefits from the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB).

"We know that many frontline workers suffer from psychological illnesses, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of the stressful, dangerous, and sometimes violent nature of the work they do," says SGEU President Bob Bymo.

"Emergency medical workers, corrections workers, social workers, crisis workers, and many others who confront dangerous and disturbing events in the course of their work lives need and deserve a wide range of supports. The legislative amendment to *The Workers' Compensation Act* appears to address some of those concerns," according to Bymo.

"It is noteworthy that the proposed changes will recognize a range of psychological illnesses and injuries, which we hope will ensure that all those who need help are able to get it," he adds.

"It is also important that the amendment includes corrections workers, because of the high-risk environment they face on a daily basis," adds Bymo.

Research has identified significant levels of PTSD in provincial corrections staff. A 2003 study, *PTSD in Corrections Employees in Saskatchewan*, uncovered a widespread exposure to trauma. Over 25 per cent of corrections employees reported symptom levels suggesting a probable clinical diagnosis of PTSD. This is a rate much higher than in the general population, and comparable to the rates identified in other groups at high risk of PTSD, such as combat veterans, prisoners of war, disaster survivors, and emergency first responders.

"It is likely that exposure to traumatic events, and the damaging consequences to corrections workers, has increased over the past decade, because facilities have become more violent, dangerous places as a result of issues like overcrowding and gang-related violence," Bymo says.

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All workers who are subjected to trauma as a result of their employment should have ready access to the benefits, treatments, supports and services that will help them to heal, Bymoen says.

We will be looking at the proposed amendment in more detail in the days ahead, and will be working to ensure that the best possible options are available to those who suffer from PTSD and other psychological injuries as a result of their employment, he concludes.

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For more information, contact:

Bob Bymoen
SGEU President
306.539.0030

Susan Dusel
Communications Officer
306.775.7249