



MFUR
Manitoba Federation
of Union Retirees

**Submission to the Standing Committee on
Social and Economic Development Re: Bill (No.29)
The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act
Presentation by Paul Moist, President
Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees (MFUR)**

I am pleased to speak this evening on behalf of MFUR. We are retired union members and the Manitoba affiliate of the 500,000 member Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC).

CURC is affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress and MFUR is affiliated with the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Just last week I attended the annual Day of Mourning Ceremony in Memorial Park, where we observed a moment of silence in remembrance of all workers killed over the past year. On average we have about 20 Manitoba workers who die on the job or from ailments related to workplace exposures to hazardous substances. In addition, about 25,000 workers are injured on the job annually in our province and we have a collective responsibility to do better.

Bill 29 contains some important new provisions. We support language to ensure workplaces are safe from psychological hazards, including the new definition of what constitutes a psychologically safe workplace.

We support the new penalty for employers who disregard their obligation to immediately report a serious incident to the Workplace Safety and Health Branch. We also support the new definition of what constitutes a serious incident.

We also support fully expanded legislated protection for workers to recover payment of lost wages in reprisal situations.

Bill 29 also clarifies that when workplace improvement orders are posted in the workplace, they must remain posted for seven days or until compliance with the order has been achieved, whichever is longer, and important new provision which we support.

The Bill before you also helps to clarify what constitutes “dangerous work” in the context of a worker exercising their right to refuse dangerous work, an important clarification that further protects workers.

In the important area of risk assessments, Bill 29 requires that such assessments be performed by a person who is “competent”, which under the Regulations means that the person has the “knowledge, skills and training” to properly do such risk assessments. We support this amendment.

The expansion of the Chief Occupational Medical Officer’s authority, to require employers to implement and maintain a health surveillance program in instances where workers have been hover-exposed to a harmful substance, is an important amendment that we support.

We also support the proposal to replace the word “accident” with “incident”.

Bill 29 is a positive piece of legislation, and we commend the government for bringing it forward.

We also join with the MFL in calling for further consideration to bring forward legislation to deal with the following workplace safety and health issues:

- Safety training on asbestos.
- Workplace violence incidents and competencies to investigate same.
- Measures to recognize and address the unacceptable high rate of workplace injury in health care workplaces and the public sector.
- Improved protections for workers working in extreme temperatures.

In closing, we support Bill 29 and thank you for bringing it forward and we will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

