
Overview:

The Employers’ Advisers Office, continued to provide exceptional service to BC’s employers in Q1 of fiscal 2016/17, despite an uncharacteristic amount of turnover during the reporting period. We saw the retirement of 3 advisers, with another 2 going on parental leave. Currently we have 16 fully trained advisers. Typically we have 21. Despite being short staffed, we are on track to exceed our work goals set for 2016 which is a testament to the professionalism and work ethic of everyone at the Employers’ Advisers Office.

Outreach:

The Branch was part of many high profile events the last quarter including:

- WorkSafeBC InterOrganizational Seminar and EAO Training Session May 15-16,
- Western Conference on Safety 2016,
- Upper Island Health and Safety Conference May 29-30,
- Canadian Home Builders Conference May 26,
- Salmon Arm School District Conference June 3,
- Neskonlith First Nations HR Symposium May 25,
- ENFORM Ft St John Workshops April 14-15, 2016.

At all of the sessions, EAO staff spoke to employers and associations to answer questions and promote awareness of our Branch and the services we offer.

Consultation:

On the policy side, EAO provided substantive review and comment in WorkSafeBC Law & Policy. Policy items addressed by EAO included:

- Prevention Compliance Agreements
- WorkSafeBC’s 2016-2018 Work Plan
- Teacher Claim Adjudication
- Assessable Payroll Policies
- Regulatory changes to Joint Health and Safety Committees.

For all of these issues, EAO provided written feedback to WorkSafeBC, drawing from our experience advising and representing employers. Additionally, EAO’s staff met with WorkSafeBC to improve a number of operational issues, including Discriminatory Actions and the Employer Incident Investigation Report (EIIR).

Employer Education:

Q1 also saw a lot of work on the development of new materials for employers. We updated all of our OHS seminars to accurately reflect all of the recent legislative changes and new processes for investigating and reporting incidents. We also finalized draft materials for a new training session on the changes to OHS enforcement that have occurred in the past 18 months. We will be delivering this session in person – and by webinar - in the coming quarter.

Service by the Numbers

As detailed below, we have seen increases in all of our key advising and representation statistics, most notably in the number of oral hearings. Given that we are currently operating with 25% few fully trained advisers, we have deliberately scaled back the number of educational sessions conducted across the province. Nonetheless, as can be seen above we are training more participants per session than we did in the last year. This is illustrative of our attempts to use our resources to the fullest extent possible

We are also tracking how personally and how timely we are managing our incoming calls. In Q1, **99.5%** of our incoming client calls were personally answered by a Client Service Representative (CSR) rather than being routed to voicemail. In cases where clients were transferred by our CSRS to an adviser for advice, assistance or representation, the average time these clients had to wait before being connected to an adviser was **65 seconds**. These numbers show that the EAO is continuing to provide personal and rapid service to employers who call on us for assistance.

Q1	Percentage of Calls Triaged by CSRS	A&A Calls	Submissions	Oral Hearings	No Merits	Appeals Deflected	Seminars Conducted	Seminar Participants
2015	9.2%	1624	377	40	66	63	195	3198
2016	15.7%	1765	381	57	71	65	125	2347
% change	+6.5%	+ 8%	+ 2%	+ 30%	+ 8%	+ 3%	- 35%	- 27%

(Roll mouse over [blue text](#) for a description of each service category)

Sampling of Representation Services:

Some highlights from the many representation files worked on in this quarter included EAO staff representing:

- A non-profit Recycling Society who challenged how WorkSafeBC had classified them. This challenge resulted in lower assessment premiums for the Society.
- A multi-national hotel in challenging an assessment decision that denied this hotel's request for a divisional account. The divisional account was ultimately granted, allowing the hotel to better manage its operations and assessment premiums in BC.
- An employer on a compensation appeal, where a worker alleged he re-injured his back after carrying 100-150lbs of weight. The actual weight of the objects being carried (obtained and submitted by the EAO as evidence) was less than 20lbs. After considering this evidence, the workplace incident was determined to not be a significant factor in the worker aggravating a pre-existing back condition.
- A property owner who received Orders from a Prevention Officer in respect to the property owner removing an old trailer from the property. The Orders were rescinded.

As can be seen from the foregoing, there is a lot of activity ongoing at the EAO! Our Leadership Team continues to work to backfill all of our vacancies, and we expect to be fully re-staffed by December of this year. That said, we know that training our new hires to provide the extensive services EAO offers is a lengthy process- meaning that our seasoned staff will continue to carry a higher proportion of our workload than usual. All EAO staff are to be commended for their ongoing commitment to service and professionalism, especially during this time of attrition and recruitment.

William Boyte, Executive Director, Employers' Advisers Office