



Information. Intervention. Prevention.

Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador uses automated claims registration and web services to shorten response times, improve stakeholder collaboration and enhance client service.

It was around the year 2000 when the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador (the Commission) decided that the increase it was seeing in workplace injuries was no longer acceptable. An employer-funded organization that promotes safe, healthy workplaces across the province, the Commission also provides no-fault insurance as part of services supporting 16,700 employers, 220,000 workers and approximately 12,000 injured workers.

Key issues of concern to the Commission were increasing injuries, lengthening recovery times, and rising recovery costs. “It was taking longer and costing more to get people back to work,” says Tom Mahoney, Executive Director of Worker Services at the

Commission. At the root of the problem, he says, was a lack of prevention. “There wasn't proper promotion of a safety culture. It tended to be a culture focused on getting work done—not getting it done safely.”

The Commission recognized that if circumstances remained unchanged, the Commission could face bankruptcy within 15 years. Moreover, changing the situation would require the involvement of all stakeholders. “We knew we couldn't do this on our own,” says Mahoney. Everyone—workers, employers, health care providers, along with the Commission itself—would need to be part of the change.



The Solution

xwave has played an integral role in bringing that change about. Contracted through a competitive RFP process and now serving as a strategic business partner and a key technology provider, **xwave** is helping the Commission roll out three overarching initiatives:

- a claims-management model designed to improve adjudication efficiency, case planning and internal quality control
- a data-warehousing solution to improve the quality and timeliness of information, helping to support the Commission's goals around prevention and safety
- an eBusiness strategy to improve communication among stakeholders and encourage joint responsibility for workplace safety

Together these initiatives are intended to:

- improve early and safe return to work
- lower health care costs
- shorten the duration of claims
- increase overall stakeholder satisfaction

One of the first deliverables was a data-warehousing solution implemented in 2005. Supporting the Commission's goals around prevention, the solution enables the Commission to intelligently mine and analyze important data related to workplace injuries and trends. Research and reporting that previously took days or even weeks to complete now takes minutes and hours, with results that are not only more timely but also more accurate.

More recently, **xwave** has teamed with the Commission's Information Technology Department and the Commission's business departments to deploy a claims registration system and enhanced web services that together are delivering further improvements in efficiency and service delivery.

Claims Registration

The Commission receives about 100,000 injury-related forms annually from workers, employers and health care providers. Using the claims registration system custom built by the joint Commission/**xwave** team, the Commission is able to improve the capture of injury-related data, efficiently data enter injury/incident reports, then validating and matching them to register over 7,000 claims per year. Claims registration staff have ready access to an array of templated electronic forms that, when fully phased in, will include:

- Worker's Report of Injury
- Employer's Report of Injury
- Physician's Report
- Chiropractor's Report
- Physiotherapist's Report
- Worker's Report of Hearing Loss
- Dentist's Report

The system integrates tightly with an existing database of over 800,000 claims and four million document images. It has been designed for easy navigation, and includes features such as event triggers and waiting table monitoring that help ensure more proactive claims management.

The claims registration system incorporates over 60 different services and over 500 functions, all supported by multiple platforms, databases, and over 15 different software applications from various vendors.

Web Services

The Commission's eBusiness strategy, established in 2005, is fundamental to the Commission's goals around improved service and more inclusive stakeholder ownership of workplace safety. The strategy provides for electronic delivery of nearly 100 different on-line services, from clearance letters and subcontractor's good standing to medical documents and injury reports.

It's all accessed through a designated eBusiness portal, *connect*. Specific functionality includes the ability to:

- register occupational health and safety committees
- register and update worksites

- ❑ submit occupational health and safety minutes
- ❑ request certificate of clearance (letter of good standing)
- ❑ view clearance request history
- ❑ view employer cost statements or employer PRIME cost statements
- ❑ monitor subcontractor's good standing

The outcome: increased employer satisfaction and an improved response time in registering claims

The claims registration system went live in October 2008. What previously was a sequential, paper-based registration process (receive the mailed claim, stamp it, physically send it to another department to register it) is now automated and accelerated, significantly shortening the Commission's response time.

“The claim registration application has benefitted our staff greatly in prioritizing their work,” says Andrew Manuel, Team Lead - Claims Registration at the Commission. “Prior to the launch, the CR Clerks would work from paper documents stored in file jackets. This made it very difficult to ensure the claims that required action received the required response. The CR application automatically prioritizes the work queue so that claims requiring attention are efficiently processed. This system design effectively supports the corporate objective of early intervention and decreased claims duration.”

“One of the key questions we asked ourselves when we started is 'Are we getting health care intervention early enough in the claim?’” says Tom Mahoney, pointing out that early intervention is essential to improving and shortening recovery and, in turn, reducing the cost of a claim.

The Commission measures the time from when the injury reporting forms are received to when a claim is opened. The stamp-to-open metric has been reduced by 50% to 1.02 days in June 2009, which is a significant improvement in response time from an average of 2.87 days in 2007.

"By shortening the stamp-to-open metric we can intervene earlier in the claim and meet our number one priority: identifying necessary health care needs," says Tom Mahoney.

The Commission's web services, meanwhile, are delivering improvements such as:

- ❑ increased employer satisfaction, with more than a quarter of employers surveyed in 2008 reporting that they use the on-line services
- ❑ more flexible (after-hours) access to standardized information
- ❑ earlier participation from stakeholders such as health care providers
- ❑ increased compliance with requirements related to privacy and security, and early and safe return to work
- ❑ streamlined workflows within the Commission

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Executive Director of Worker Services,
WHSCC*

Tom Mahoney says these successes are directly attributable to the expertise and continued support of **xwave**. “We have an experienced IT department,” he says, “and to compliment our resources, **xwave** have worked with us to deliver on these kinds of projects. We’ve been working with **xwave** for four years now, and I’ve been amazed at the dedication of their resources. Their commitment to our needs and goals has made a tremendous difference in our ability to fulfill them. As well their ability to work alongside our staff has been a key driver of success.”

The Commission's research shows that in 2008, workplace injuries across Newfoundland and Labrador decreased by seven percent compared with 2007. Since the year 2000, injuries have declined a total of 38 percent.

Clearly, the Commission's goals are being met.

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About **xwave**

xwave, a division of Bell Aliant, is an Information Technology company that provides clients with Advanced Technology Solutions and IT Professional Services, including leading eHealth solutions. Through highly-skilled IT professionals, **xwave** plans, designs, builds, and delivers technology solutions that meet clients' business needs. **xwave** employs over 900 people in offices in St. John's, Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Fredericton, Summerside, Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. More information can be found at www.xwave.com.

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