



**Bulletin - September 30, 2009**

**CEU calls on management to address membership needs**

***Board silence following Voice of the User results in union demands for action on CMS-related system barriers and employee hardships***

On September 28, 2009, the union demanded the employer take immediate action to address the decline in employee health resulting from CMS related change. These human factors affecting employee health include psychological injury and are the byproduct of massive change and ongoing uncertainty.

During the meeting, CEU President, Sandra Wright, directed her comments to Pam Cohen, Diana Miles and Ian Munroe noting there were several things the Board can do to correct problems with psychological injury in the workplace, including:

- Acknowledge there are ongoing workload concerns
- Establish the “appropriate” workload given the new model
- Seek professional advice and develop a plan to address the lingering health issues relating to the loss of control over the work and feelings of helplessness
- Hold off on introducing new change, including the planned performance management

These points touch on some of the human factors the union has concerns about. Now is the time to address human factors rather than focusing on production to the exclusion of the people who do the work.

At this meeting the Board committed to taking the following actions:

- they will send out a communication on employee health and remind people of the resources available. They asked that this communication be a joint one, and the Union declined. This is likely the e-mail you have seen from Pam Cohen.
- They will debrief with an EFAP counselor who has visited a number of offices in the province and who has expressed concern to a Union director about the health of the employees. This EFAP counselor may have some ideas on how to assist people. They will also consult with John Dorwood, a psychologist that did some change management sessions with staff pre-CMS.
- Diana will be meeting with the management group to discuss coaching vs. performance management. The Board has committed that they will focus on coaching to assist with job skills and this coaching will not have a disciplinary focus.



As you all know, “the proof will be in the pudding” on these commitments. The union remains concerned that the Board still has not addressed the issue of having more work on your desk than you can perform due to system processes. They remain optimistic that this will change over time and that they will achieve the efficiencies promised under CMS.

## **Background**

On September 2, 2009, the union sent out a 17 page Special Bulletin: *The Voice of the User*. With startling clarity, members expressed their frustrations with the new system. Members were frustrated because they could not deliver quality service to the customers, the workload was too high to complete in a day, and new work processes and technology were having a deleterious affect on health.

In the days following the release of the Special Bulletin, many of you called the union to add more details to those expressed in the bulletin. Despite all of these concerns, management did not respond to the CEU Executive so the union set-up a meeting with WES to discuss the memberships’ ongoing health concerns and other CMS issues. We don’t believe members feel there has been an improvement in the frustrations they expressed over the summer.

On September 23, 2009, Ian Munroe delivered a presentation to the union noting July/August was a “stabilization” period while September until year end will be a “normalization” period. The Board of Directors received a similar presentation.

During the meeting Mr. Munroe said CMS is providing them with statistical information that clearly shows there are a percentage of employees who are performing well above average, a percentage that are average, and a percentage that are struggling. He implied the Board would start "dealing" with those who are not performing and perhaps find them jobs that are a "better fit" for their skills.

In addition to what was stated in the meeting, the union has obtained a copy of a letter Mr. Munroe sent to an employer stating, "...we expect to return to pre-implementation service levels before year end. We are making strides in reducing adjudication queues and to return to normalized claims management practices and return to work services. Our staff has returned from summer vacations. Our overall productivity is returning to pre-cutover levels."

## **President Wright responds**

It would be an understatement to say the union was dumbfounded by the comments made during the September 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. I was astounded to hear the Board completely ignored the mental health issues we described in *The Voice of the User*. I am disheartened by the fact the Board has moved to "you are the problem" rather than considering the evidence the union has put before them about workloads and employee health. The CEU strongly believes that it is the system causing the problems for the users.



We told Mr. Munroe it was much too soon to be jumping to conclusions that people are poor performers. They do not have accurate work load measures in place for this new technology. They are not considering the mental health of members who have come through a stressful implementation period. The Board's first step should not be we need to deal with poor performers, it should be, we need to check and make sure people are okay.

It should also be obvious that when an individual has more work than they can complete in a day; has problems navigating through the new system, or can navigate through the system but the work takes longer to complete; is experiencing sleep problems due to workplace demands, or has other health issues; they may NOT be doing their job well!

The Board is responsible for the health and safety of its employees and now they must address this unhealthy work environment.

### **Next steps**

- Please continue sending your emails describing both positive and negative issues relating to this subject and we will forward your concerns to WES with identifiers removed if you wish.
- Union executive and staff will be visiting all area offices this fall to discuss these and other issues – a schedule will be circulated shortly
- The union will send out a separate bulletin on the upcoming “coaching” program

