

WCB FUNDS INTERIOR HEALTH AUTHORITY TO PREVENT INJURIES TO HEALTH CARE WORKERS

KELOWNA, BC, June 19, 2003 – The Workers' Compensation Board today presented the Interior Health Authority with a cheque for \$329,000 to help fund the purchase of ceiling lifts and other transfer assist devices, as well as staff training and education and program delivery. Total funding for the project will total \$994,580 and be paid out over the next two years.

“The installation of lifting systems for clients for use in the home care environment reinforces the leadership position of the Interior Health Authority,” said Roberta Ellis, Vice President of Prevention for the Workers' Compensation Board, who presented the cheque to Interior Health Authority CEO Murray Ramsden at Cottonwoods Extended Care facility in Kelowna.

The Interior Health Authority has the highest level of ceiling lift coverage for high-risk beds in the province and now, in partnership with the WCB, will explore the most cost effective options for using lifting equipment in clients' homes. Ceiling lifts and other transfer assist systems have been proven to be an effective way of protecting workers from back and shoulder injuries caused by patient activities involving bending, lifting and other awkward postures.

Health care workers experience a higher percentage of back strain claims than other workers do in BC. For the years 1998 – 2002, BC's health care workers sustained 40,000 injuries at a cost of \$296 million to health care employers. The WCB, in partnership with health care employers and workers, is committed to reducing the number and severity of those injuries.

“Since the installation of ceiling lifts here at Cottonwoods the workers have experienced 53 percent fewer injuries in the first six months. With this partnership we will be able to extend this benefit to many more of our community health workers, said Interior Health Authority CEO Murray Ramsden.”

Serving nearly two million workers and more than 170,000 employers, the Workers' Compensation Board of BC is a provincial statutory agency governed by a Board of Directors. The WCB is committed to a safe and healthy workplace, to providing return-to-work rehabilitation and legislated compensation benefits to workers injured as a result of their employment, and to being responsible, accountable and financially sustainable.



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