

WCB FUNDS PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY TO PREVENT INJURIES TO HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Vancouver, July 25, 2003 – Today the Workers' Compensation Board of BC (WCB) and the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) announced a joint \$645,000 program that will result in fewer health care workers being injured while lifting and transferring patients.

About 70 percent of the funding will be used to purchase specialized equipment for patient handling and lifting at Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC, BC Cancer Agency's Vancouver Centre and Riverview Hospital. The remaining funds will provide for the development and implementation of new policies and procedures and for the training of almost 1,100 staff.

While presenting the cheque at Children's & Women's, Betty Pirs, Director of Industry Services for the WCB acknowledged the Authority's successful implementation of ceiling lifts at Riverview Hospital. "Based on the Health Authority's experience with ceiling lifts at Riverview, the Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC and the BC Cancer Agency should very quickly see a reduction in injuries to workers resulting in lower WCB claims cost. At the same time patients will be moved more comfortably and easily."

"The Provincial Health Services Authority is an organization that employs thousands of people who move patients every day as part of their jobs. Protecting these employees from injuries in the workplace is extremely important," said PHSA Executive Vice President Michael Marchbank. "The new program will benefit our employees and their patients and we thank the WCB for making it possible."

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.

As part of its mandate to plan, manage and evaluate specialty and province-wide health care services, the PHSA operates provincial agencies, including Children's & Women's, Riverview Hospital and the BC Cancer Agency. With 10,000 employees and an annual budget of more than \$1 billion, the PHSA works closely with the five geographic health authorities to meet local and regional needs for specialized health care services.

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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