



Corporate Report

NO: R128

COUNCIL DATE: July 14, 2008

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: July 7, 2008
FROM: General Manager, Human Resources FILE:
SUBJECT: Occupational Health and Safety – WorkSafe BC

RECOMMENDATION

The Human Resources Department recommends that Council:

1. receive this report as information; and
2. authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to the President, CUPE Local 402.

INTENT

This report responds to Council's request for a report following a presentation on April 28, 2008 by the President of CUPE Local 402 on behalf of the New Westminster and District Labour Council in relation to the official Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job.

BACKGROUND

April 28, 2008 is recognized as the Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job. CUPE Local 402, in association with the City of Surrey, organizes an annual memorial on this date to remember those workers who have been killed or injured on the job. Typically the President, CUPE Local 402, also appears before Council to make a presentation on behalf of the New Westminster and District Labour Council. Laurie Larsen, President of CUPE Local 402, made such a presentation before Council on April 28, 2008. During the presentation it was noted that the *Compensation Amendment Act* of 2002 has significantly reduced the number of claims that have resulted in loss of earnings pensions and that pensions paid for those claims, which are successful, are significantly reduced. At the conclusion of the presentation Council adopted the following resolution:

“That staff forward a report regarding the Worker’s Compensation regulations to ensure fair and comprehensive benefits to workers.”

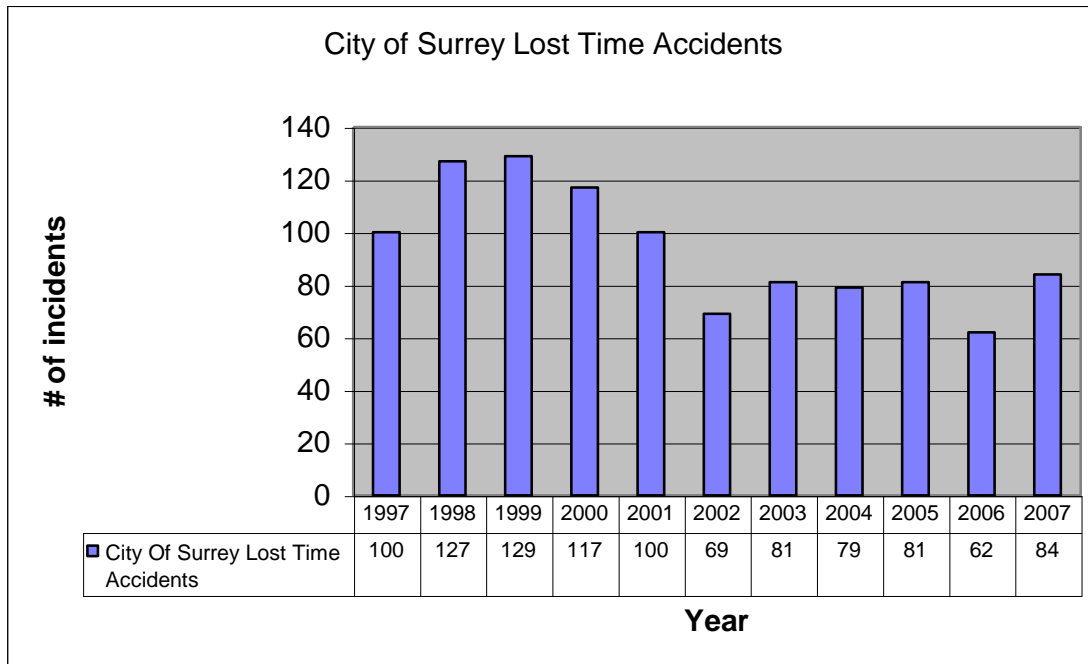
This report responds to that request of Council.

Background on City of Surrey Experience and Practices

In 1996, City Council approved the establishment of an Occupational Health & Safety program for the City and in 1997 a Safety Advisor was hired. In 2000, Council established an Occupational Health & Safety Policy. The City has five (5) Joint Worker-Management Occupational Health & Safety Committees, an Employee Wellness Committee and an Employee Family Assistance Program Committee.

Over the last 7 years the City has been able to reduce its lost time injury rate by 30% as illustrated in Graph 1.

Graph 1: Number of Lost Time Accidents - 1997-2007



The reduction in the number of lost time claims and the utilization of an early intervention disability management program has positively impacted the City’s Experience Rating Assessment (ERA), the WCB premiums paid by the City and the Long Term Disability Costs that are paid by the City.

Although the number of lost time incidents has decreased the overall number of City of Surrey Accident/Incident reports has slightly increased as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1- Surrey Accident/Incident Reports

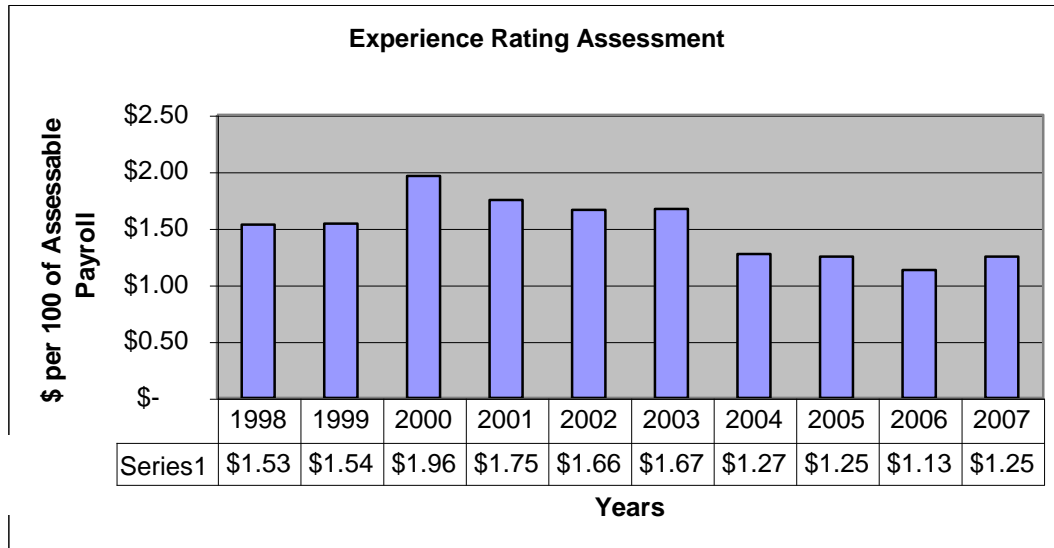
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*	2005	2006	2007
Report only	219	256	173	183	15	287	288	264
Health Care	76	77	85	83	14	67	70	74
Lost Time	101	69	85	72	79	83	65	85
Total	396	402	343	338	108*	437	423	423

* Switchover to PeopleSoft

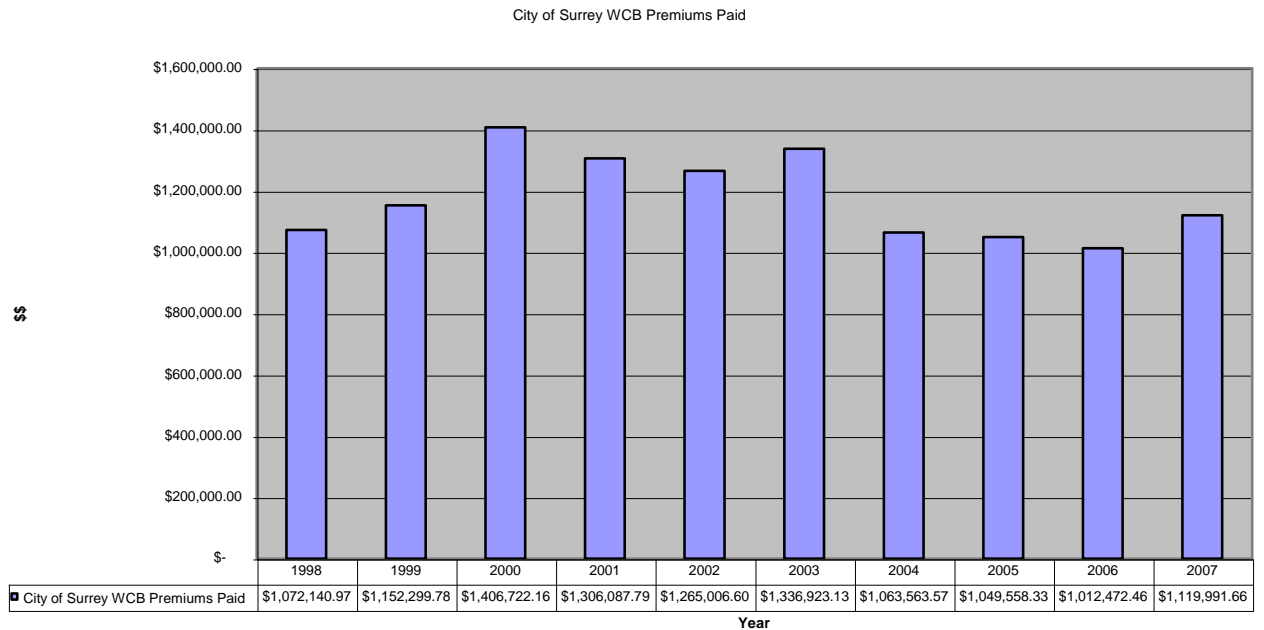
The number of reported incidents has increased by 7% from 2000-2007.

WorkSafeBC’s Experience Rating Assessment (ERA) is based on weighted safety experience at the workplace. The ERA for the City of Surrey has decreased over the last 7 years (as illustrated in Graph 2), resulting in lower WCB premiums for the City (as illustrated in Graph 3). The ERA determines the rate that WorkSafeBC charges on the City’s assessable payroll.

Graph 2: Surrey Experience Rating Assessment

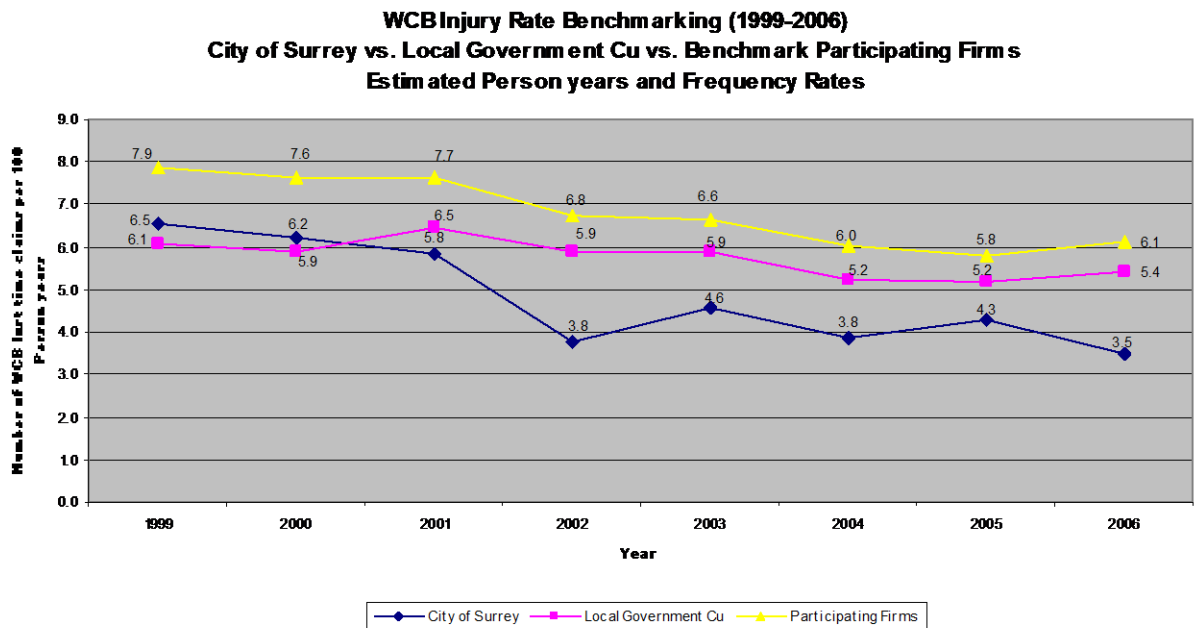


Graph 3 - Surrey WorkSafeBC Premiums Paid – 1998 - 2007



The City of Surrey benchmarks its safety performance by measuring its lost time frequency rate with 18 other Lower Mainland municipalities. The City of Surrey safety performance is better than average as compared to these other municipalities within the same insurance class as illustrated in Graph 4.

Graph 4 – Comparison to Other Lower Mainland Municipalities



The City of Surrey continues to work with its Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committees to improve the existing City of Surrey OHS program. Human Resources facilitates Health & Safety training courses on a regular ongoing basis.

DISCUSSION

The following text addresses the issues raised by the President, CUPE Local 402 in the presentation to Council on April 28, 2008.

Asbestos:

The Corporate Facilities Division is responsible to ensure the appropriate application of the City's Asbestos Management Program in City facilities. The City's program focuses on assessing and remediating asbestos-containing materials in City facilities. Corporate Facilities is currently working on up-dating the inventory and formalizing the program.

Working Alone:

The City of Surrey established Working Alone and in Isolation guidelines in 2002. "Grant's law" focuses on retail operations. Surrey is currently reviewing its practices with the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committees with a view to making any necessary adjustments to assist in ensuring the safety of its employees.

Gardens and Lawns Pesticides:

The City has a Policy on Integrated Pest Management, which includes a commitment to manage vegetation and pest problems in a way that is ecological, and minimizes the risk to human health and the environment, and minimizes the use of pesticides.

Bill 49 Compensation Amendment Act:

As voiced by the President of CUPE Local 402 in the presentation to Council on April 28, 2008, the Compensation Amendment Act reduced the number of claims that resulted in loss of earnings pensions to claimants. In response to concerns that the new Act was too restrictive, WorkSafeBC has commenced a review of, among other things, the method used to calculate loss of earnings pensions. In July 2007, the WorkSafeBC Board of Directors approved the release of a discussion paper with questions for stakeholders to provide their views on various aspects of the legislation and policy. Input was solicited through November 2007. Currently, WorkSafeBC is preparing another discussion paper with options and draft policy for a second round of stakeholder consultation.

The City relies on WorkSafeBC to develop appropriate regulations, policies and guidelines to address the interests and needs of employees in reasonable balance with the overall costs to employers and, ultimately, the public.

The majority of City employees that have been involved in incidents that have resulted in functional disabilities have been accommodated in their current job, with modifications to their current job or in a different role with the City. The City's goal is to limit both the financial and emotional impact experienced by the employee as a result of the incident.

CONCLUSION

The City of Surrey has a good record with respect to worker health and safety in comparison to other municipalities in the lower mainland. The City's use of Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees throughout the City's operation assists in ensuring a healthy and safe environment for our workers.

Nicola Webb
General Manager
Human Resources