

WCA amendments 'more fair'

By NORAH STONER
Durham West MPP
The Ontario Legislature's Standing Committee on Resources Development will be holding more than four weeks of public hearings later this month on proposed legislation to amend the Workers' Compensation Act. The amendments are aimed at making the Act fairer to employees and employers and more effective in helping injured workers return to work.

In October, Labor Minister Gregory Sorbara introduced Bill 162, "An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act." Included in the proposed amendments are provisions to create a dual-award system for workers with permanent

disabilities as a result of workplace injuries. According to the Labor Ministry, the two-track approach will compensate workers for both non-economic loss and loss of earnings.

Awards for non-economic loss would vary and take into account a worker's degree of disability and age at the time of injury. The maximum would be \$65,000. The worker's earning capacity before and after an injury will be compared to establish the level of earnings-loss benefits.

"These reforms will bring certainty to workers' compensation in Ontario. Under the old system, if compensation for workers who suffered a permanent partial disability happened to match

their loss of earnings, it would be purely coincidental. The new system will compensate workers for the financial loss they suffer as a result of a workplace injury," said Mr. Sorbara in introducing the amendments. It will also explicitly recognize for the first time the non-economic losses suffered as a result of injuries in the workplace.

A greater emphasis on the goal of helping injured workers return to the workplace more successfully and earlier will be fostered by the legislation.

Sorbara said the amendments also place obligations on the Workers' Compensation Board to intervene early and effectively after a workplace injury with vocational rehabilitation assess-

ment and appropriate services and on employers to reinstate injured workers in their jobs to provide comparable employment, or to provide the first opportunity of suitable employment.

Excluded from these provisions are small businesses with fewer than 20 employees, and industries such as construction, where work patterns make reinstatement impractical.

The approximately 120,000 injured workers who are already obtaining permanent pensions will continue to receive them. The amount will continue to be tax-free and will increase every year with the cost of living.

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Notable achievement

Ten-year-old pianist Samantha Yamada had all the right notes at the recent Kiwanis Music Festival and wowed judges with her talents. The Uxbridge Public School student placed first in her class and Best of Class at the event in the 'Piano Solo' — 11 and under category. Samantha, daughter of Mark and Riki Yamada, is a student of well-known Uxbridge piano instructor Susan Hall. And Samantha's six years of practice paid off — she received a mark of 90 per cent from judges at the festival.



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Calendar of events

Each week, Community Focus publishes a Calendar of Events. There's no charge for this service. Individuals or organizations are encouraged to call 640-2700 or 649-2292 no later than the Friday preceding publication.

Wed. Feb. 15

Seniors of the community are invited to a Variety Night Program, Wed., Feb. 15 in the auditorium at Parkview Village, Ninth Line South, Stouffville, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Thurs. Feb. 16

The Friendship Club will meet Thurs., Feb. 16 in the Stouffville Legion Hall, Ninth Line North, at 8 p.m. All seniors are welcome. For transportation call 640-2443.

Fri. Feb. 17

Magna International Inc. is sponsoring Manhattan Tap, Fri., Feb. 17 and Sat., Feb. 18 at 8 p.m. in the Markham Theatre for Performing Arts, Town Centre Boulevard, Markham. Reserved seat tickets \$19. The number to call is 479-0201 between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Sun. Feb. 19

The annual Thinking Day Service will be held at Christ Church (Anglican), Sunset Boulevard, Stouffville, Sunday, Feb. 19, beginning at 2 p.m.

Heritage Week events begin Sunday, Feb. 19 at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, Vandonf, with an open house from 1 to 4 p.m. genealogical workshops at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. and outdoor skating (weather permitting).

Mon. Feb. 20

The Stouffville Horticultural Society will meet Mon., Feb. 20 at 8 p.m. in the Flower Auditorium of Stouffville United Church. Rev. Wayne Reed will show slides on the beautiful Gaspe region.

The Stouffville Video Club will meet Mon., Feb. 20 at 12:30 p.m. in the Silver Jubilee Club. Home Support Services will provide tea and cookies. Participants are asked to bring sandwiches.

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