

## **INJURED WORKERS**

# Association wants financial assistance

**By ANNE KYLE  
Leader-Post**

The children of injured workers whose compensation benefits are denied or terminated suffer the most during the appeal process, according to Jim Taphorn.

Taphorn, a member of the Saskatoon Injured Workers' Association, asked the Workers' Compensation Act Committee of Review on Wednesday to consider instituting a program to financially assist families of injured workers during the appeal process.

"The appeal system is outdated and causes many hardships. Some injured workers can't even afford to buy medicine if their child is sick," he said.

When the injured worker wins his appeal the back pay doesn't restore the harm that is already done — the forfeiture of belongings because he can't make credit payments, lost opportunities, and the loss of the worker's credit rating, the Quinton man said.

The Workers' Compensation Act is not an insurance scheme to protect employers from being sued but a program mandated to protect injured workers' from income loss as a result of a workplace injury or occupational disease, said Saskatchewan Federation of Labour President Larry Hubich.

"Injured workers must be treated fairly and in a timely fashion," he said.

"Often WCB benefits are the only source of income for them and their families. If the system fails them we are revictimizing the victims and this is not acceptable."

Review chairman James Dorsey said his committee has heard from injured workers, employers and other stakeholders during the public hearings across the province that wrapped up in Regina Wednesday.

One of the common themes throughout the presentations was that the early intervention program, the treatment that is being done in that program, and the return to work practises and decisions, are causing concern for employers and individual workers, Dorsey said.

"We also heard concerns about the quality and the accessibility of timely medical health care intervention," Dorsey said, stressing waiting lists for diagnostic and treatment services are creating delays in the recovery and rehabilitation of injured workers and their return to work.

"We also heard from a large number of people who are focusing on prevention and the value of preventing workplace injuries and incidents of work-related illnesses," Dorsey said, noting there were a number of suggestions on ways to improve and administer safety and injury prevention programs.

The Workers' Compensation Act requires the government to appoint a review committee comprised of employers and labour representatives at least once every four years. Saskatchewan is only one of two jurisdictions that has a legislative review of its workers' compensation legislation.

The committee is expected to table its report with the minister of labour in January.