



ERGONOMIC REGULATIONS

CAMPAIGN

LOBBY KIT

ONTARIO FEDERATION LABOUR ERGONOMIC REGULATIONS CAMPAIGN

Ergonomics

Ergonomics can be defined as fitting the job to the worker. All workers are not the same size and everyone has limits. The goal of ergonomics is to design workstations, work processes, equipment, and tools to fit you.

If the job does not fit the worker, the worker is more likely to be exposed risk factors that may lead to Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). The main ergonomic risk factors include the following:

- ▶ **repetition:** tasks or body movements carried out over and over again
- ▶ **awkward postures:** the body postures that are not ideals such as twisting your neck or reaching forward or to the side
- ▶ **static forces:** holding positions for long periods of time (i.e. sitting, neck bent to view a computer monitor).

Repetitive strain injury or RSI is an umbrella term used to describe a collection of injuries affecting the muscles, nerves and tendons. This first results in aches and pains. These aches and pains can progress into crippling and permanent disorders preventing those affected from working or leading normal lives. Studies have shown intervention such as ergonomics, engineering, proper work organization, work design, education and management commitment effectively reduce injuries and illness in the workplace.

RSI Awareness Day

RSI Awareness Day has been an excellent platform to explore ways to control RSI and change the way we as a society think about health and safety. On February 28th (or February 29th on leap years, the only non-repetitive day in the calendar), injured workers, union representatives, health and safety professionals, health care practitioners and other health and safety advocates annually mark RSI Awareness Day.

Please use the sample letter to the editor provided in this kit to continue to raise awareness on the issue and RSI Awareness Day.

You can also use the proclamation issued by the Mayor of Toronto as a basis to approach your own town or city council to officially recognize Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day in the future.

Awareness to Action

Unfortunately awareness is not enough to convince employers to implement the interventions needed to prevent workers from being injured. If voluntary measures worked we would already see these interventions in every workplace across Ontario.

Since passing ergonomic legislation in 1998, British Columbia has seen a 19 percent drop in RSIs and a 40 percent reduction in money spent in RSI lost time claims. B.C.'s experience demonstrates enforced ergonomic legislation does work. Workers in Ontario deserve to be protected by the same type of ergonomic regulations.

In Ontario it is time to move from awareness to action. Our message to this government must be loud and clear,

“Support Ergonomic Regulations”

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) is organizing to put pressure on the Ontario government to introduce ergonomic regulations.

This kit is designed to assist you in the lobby of Liberal MPPs. If your riding is not represented by a Liberal, your help would be appreciated by a neighbouring riding that is. You may not be able to help with an in-person meeting with the MPP due to distance, but you may be able to help by writing a letter or making a phone call.

- ✓ Use the phone script as a guide to contact your MPP by phone and let them know you want them to support ergonomic regulations.
- ✓ Use the sample letter as a guide to write or email your MPP to pressure them into supporting ergonomic regulations.
- ✓ Arrange a face-to-face meeting of your Liberal MPP at their constituency office. MPPs are usually in the ridings on Fridays and weekends, during the constituency weeks in May and November and when the legislature is not sitting. The constituency weeks are generally tied to Remembrance Day and the Victoria Day long weekend. For 2005 the legislature is also scheduled to take a break between March 10th and the 28th so your MPP may also be available then.

Always follow-up the face-to-face meeting with a letter thanking the MPP for meeting with you and re-emphasising the issue. It is also very important to be sure that people in the riding write and call the MPP on the issue before you make your appointment. The MPP needs to know that this is an issue to be taken seriously. If the MPP has not heard from anyone else why should you and your concern be taken seriously?

LOBBYING

Introduction

Lobbying is the process of trying to influence decision-makers. It is as old as politics itself and just as legitimate. Lobbying can be carried out as a small group or an individual either through meetings, letter writing, phone calls or brief presentation.

All politicians can and should be lobbied. It is their duty to know what their constituents think and acquaint themselves with all sides of an issue. Those who are friendly to your position may give you more time. However, even those opposed can be affected by a direct show of community support for an issue.

You don't have to be an expert to lobby a politician. Concentrate more on the effect of the issue in your community. Stick to the community/personal side of the issue – that's the area where you are the expert.

Remember politicians are people. They have the same hopes, fears, dreams and failings as the rest of us. Generally, they want to get re-elected.

LOBBYING - GENERAL GUIDELINES

Fears About Lobbying Politicians

Many of us believe politicians know more than we do or they wouldn't be in decision-making positions. We think we aren't articulate enough or that we'll freeze when we approach the politicians. Maybe they'll ask questions we can't answer.

Often, we forget that the politician's job is to serve us. That's why they get elected to office. We forget that it's us – the voters – who hold the power.

Once you start meeting the politicians you'll see the "mystery" that surrounds them quickly fades. They're just ordinary people who come from a variety of backgrounds. They're often very responsive to the voters – the people who can affect their future.

Many of our fears about lobbying can be addressed by looking at some groups who have lobbied government on issues that touch the average citizen. Who were their members? What made them credible spokespersons? Can we see any similarities between them and our attempts to organize a lobby?

If we look, for example, at the lobby formed several years ago to fight against the de-indexation of pensions, we see that the members of this lobby group were average senior citizens who had credibility as lobbyists because the pension issue directly affected their lives.

It's Not a Waste of Time

Another obstacle to lobbying is the view that it's a waste of time, that we, alone, can't make a difference. But if our voices aren't heard, then our opponents will be the only group to get the ear of the decision-makers.

Even if we don't directly see or speak to the politician because he or she is avoiding us, they do get the message that the issue is important to the community.

There are three stages for a successful lobby campaign:

1. Develop support by publicizing the issue within your organization and/or the community.
2. Decide the kind of lobby – face-to-face meeting with the politicians, phone or letter (or a combination of all three).
3. Take action.

FACE-TO-FACE LOBBY

TIPS FOR AN IN-PERSON LOBBY:

Arrange a Pre-Lobby Meeting

Members of your lobby delegation should meet beforehand to discuss what you're going to say.

Plan the Agenda

Decide what you want to discuss and the points you want to make. Practice making your pitch. If you are lobbying in a group, choose a spokesperson and a recorder.

Know Your Audience

Keep your politician's interests in mind. Example, pay equity – cutting women's incomes reduces spending in the local community. Some politicians will be genuinely interested in maintaining a strong pay equity law. Others will be concerned with their own interest. Making the point of the impact on the community does work. Remember, stick to your subject. Your goal is to persuade the politician to support your position.

Know Your Subject

Anticipate questions and arguments and be prepared to respond. Don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer to some points – offer to get back with information and be sure you follow through. The fact sheets provided in your kits should help with background information.

Review Information

Review all the material and fact sheets in your lobby kit.

Stick to What You Know

The best way to deal with the issue when talking to a politician is to talk from your own experience – why this issue is important to you, your family, or your community.

Be Clear and Concise

Don't try to cover too much ground – confine your comments to specific issues. Explain your position, and don't assume the politician understands your point of view. Speak confidently and persuasively.

Be a Good Listener

Try to determine areas of agreement. Avoid arguments and don't lecture. If the politician favours your position, ask for help in persuading his/her government.

Follow Up with More Information

Don't worry if you're asked a question you can't answer. Just get back to the politician with the information later.

Keep Control of the Meeting

Don't let the politician sidetrack you on to other issues. Politely stick to the issue at hand.

Use Your Clout in the Constituency

If possible, let the politician know the scope of the lobby. Ask other organizations and unions who live in the constituency to follow up by phone calls and letters. Even relatively small numbers of constituents visiting, calling, or writing a politician in his/her riding can be powerful. Constituents are voters who can help re-elect or defeat the MPP in the next election.

Try to Get a Commitment

Know what you're going to say and what you want from the politician before your meeting. Ideally, you want the politician to support your position. Ask her or him to soften up the other elected members of their party. If possible, try to get a commitment from the politician about what they are prepared to do.

Leave the Door Open

Try to prevent outright rejection of your position. Emphasize your areas of agreement, not your differences.

Don't Get Discouraged

Not every politician will be sympathetic or supportive. Don't allow an early disappointment to stop you from continuing to lobby this politician. Sometimes they need to hear things several times before they understand the issue, especially if they've never thought about it before. Sometimes they don't realize the importance of the issue to their constituency.

Their position on this issue means votes!

PHONE LOBBY

POINTS TO REMEMBER FOR A SUCCESSFUL PHONE LOBBY

Numbers Count

- ▶ Ask every member of every organization to phone.
- ▶ Ask each member to get a friend to phone.

Use a Script

- ▶ Have a few people develop a script or speaking points as a guide for those doing the phoning. You can use the issue sheets from the kit to help develop your speaking points.

Speak to the Politician

- ▶ If you are “screened” leave a definite message, stating your views briefly.
- ▶ Ask the politician to get back to you.
- ▶ Follow-up with another call.

LETTER LOBBY

POINTS TO REMEMBER FOR A SUCCESSFUL LETTER LOBBY

1. Get the name and address right.
2. Identify yourself or your organization.
3. Get to the point at once.
4. Use the fact sheets from the kit to help develop your argument.
5. Personalize the issue: show how it affects the community.
6. Ask for an action or response.
7. Be clear about what you are requesting be done.
8. Keep paragraphs to no more than six lines.
9. Numbers count – get support from unions, community groups and friends.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Today's date

Subject: Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs)

Dear Editor:

6th Annual International RSI Awareness Day

Monday, February 28th is the 6th Annual International RSI Awareness Day. Every year on this day (February 29th on leap years, the only non-repetitive day in the calendar) health and safety professionals, health care practitioners, injured workers and unions mark RSI Awareness Day. They do this to educate workers and the public about the causes and solutions for repetitive strain injuries (RSIs).

Do you know friends or co-workers who have suffered disabling injuries to their backs, wrists, shoulders, elbows, knees or feet? The injury may be invisible but it is very painful. Many working people are off work for lengthy periods of time. Some are never able to return to work or lead a normal life as a result of RSI.

Something can and should be done. Ergonomic regulations would require that workplaces, work stations, tools, equipment and the organization of work be designed or changed to prevent these types of injuries.

British Columbia and Saskatchewan have already led the way by implementing ergonomic regulations which have helped to reduce the incidence of RSI in those provinces. If you feel that workers in Ontario deserve to be protected by the same type of ergonomic regulations, then please contact your MPPs to let them know.

Yours truly,

Your name

Your city, town, etc.

Your phone number (Editors need this to confirm the letter or they may not print it.)

Sample Phone Scripts for Calling MPP Constituency Offices

On reaching a live person:

“Hello my name is I would like to speak to (name of your MPP).”

The person answering the phone will likely state that the MPP is not available right now and ask the reason for your call.

“I am calling because I’m very concerned about the lack of ergonomic legislation in Ontario. I would like to know if (name of your MPP) would support the introduction of ergonomic regulations to protect working people from being injured at work.”

It is not necessary to use this exact wording. You do need to make your concern clear and ask for a commitment for ergonomic regulations.

Use the background information to prepare some points that are important to you, just in case the MPP or his/her staff are willing to have a short discussion with you.

If the MPP is not available, ask when he/she will be, or request that he/she calls you back. Be polite but persistent.

On reaching voice mail or the answering machine:

“Hello my name is I am calling because I’m very concerned about the lack of ergonomic legislation in Ontario. I would like to know if (name of your MPP) would support the introduction of ergonomic regulations. I would like (name of your MPP) to call me back at (your phone number).

Thank you. Good bye.”

It is important, when leaving a message, to keep it short as most systems will have a time limit for messages and will stop recording or disconnect when the time is up.

If no one from the MPP’s office returns your call, phone back. Be calm and polite but leave another message pointing out when you called before, that this issue is important to you and that you would like to have your call returned. If the MPP or someone from the office calls back, thank him/her and try to get a commitment that the MPP will support ergonomic regulations.

Sample Letter to Your MPP

Today's date

Name of MPP

Constituency Address

Postal Code

Dear:

I am contacting you as my provincial representative because I'm very concerned about the lack of ergonomic legislation in Ontario. I'm writing to ensure that you would support the introduction of ergonomic regulations to protect working people from being injured at work.

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act was introduced 25 years ago, long before most people even heard the word "ergonomics." Over the years technological changes have introduced new hazards into Ontario's workplaces. These new hazards have led to increasing numbers of workers suffering repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). For many workers, this has resulted in permanent disabilities, preventing those affected from working or leading normal lives.

British Columbia and Saskatchewan have already led the way by implementing ergonomic regulations which have helped to reduce the incidence of RSIs in those provinces. Workers in Ontario deserve to be protected by the same type of ergonomic regulations.

I ask that you respond to my concern and tell me if you support protecting workers from injury with ergonomic regulations.

Yours truly,

Signature

Your name

Your address

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