



Hazardous Materials Information  
Review Commission

Conseil de contrôle des renseignements  
relatifs aux matières dangereuses

# **COMMISSION RENEWAL: BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE**

**Canada**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since accepting the position of President of the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission (HMIRC), sustaining the renewal process of the Commission has been my top priority. At this time, I am pleased to present our Strategic Plan entitled: *“Commission Renewal: Blueprint for Change”*.

This Strategic Plan was the springboard for open, honest and challenging dialogue, and acted as a gathering place around which all our stakeholders met to review, reaffirm and enhance the services offered by the Commission. This involves sharpening the focus on results, increasing the transparency of our operations and modernizing our program delivery.

The past year has been a challenging one for HMIRC. We have faced critical and complex choices. In our efforts to modernize the Commission, we have gone through an internal process of revisiting and updating our mission, vision and operating principles. These elements form the framework for our renewal efforts. While acknowledging the discontent of some members of industry and the growing need for a more client-oriented approach to service delivery, the ultimate challenge continues to lie in our organization’s commitment to meeting the needs and interests of both industry and workers, equally and without bias. This complementary dual role is the hallmark of HMIRC services.

Foreign based industries, which represent 40% of our clients, produce a substantial amount of chemicals that are used in the Canadian market. While there is a general willingness on the part of industry to comply with legislation, we find that many foreign clients possess little or no knowledge of the Canadian rules and requirements surrounding trade secrets and hazardous materials. Here, we have the unique opportunity to educate foreign companies on Canadian legislation. At the same time, our role in bringing them into compliance ensures better protection for worker safety. This is a prime example of how the Commission implements its complementary dual role responsibility. By helping foreign clients understand Canadian rules, we demonstrate our commitment to better client service while ensuring that Canadian workers know about the chemicals to which they’re exposed in the workplace.

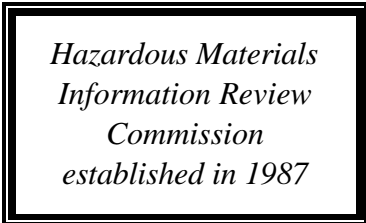
As a model of industry, labour and government consultation, we are calling on all stakeholders to come together, as partners, in this renewal effort. By moving forward together, we can maximize the Commission’s ability to create an environment that achieves the proper balance between the right of industry to protect their trade secrets and the right of workers to know about the hazardous materials they encounter in the workplace.

Weldon Newton

# BACKGROUND: HMIRC's Evolving Role

## Our Beginnings

The Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission (HMIRC) was created as an independent agency in 1987 by proclamation of the *Hazardous Materials Information Review Act*. We are a small but important public sector institution charged with providing the trade secret mechanism within the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS). WHMIS is a national system contributing to the reduction of illness and injury caused by using hazardous materials in the workplace. WHMIS delivers information using three key elements: labels, material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and worker education programs.



HMIRC makes decisions on the compliance of labels and MSDSs within WHMIS' regulatory and legislative requirements. As a direct result of our work, national and international chemical companies have been afforded the ability to protect their industrial intellectual property assets. At the same time, our efforts to review MSDSs and labels and to disclose accurate health and safety information about hazardous chemicals, have directly contributed to a reduction in the risk of workplace related illness and injury.

This dual-challenge continues to define our essential role in Canadian society.

## From Planning to Reality

At the time the Commission was created, various estimates were received to establish the initial baseline and forecast for its workload. A study conducted by Young & Wiltshire in 1988 estimated there were as many as 10,000 claims for existing products in the marketplace. It was also assumed that 1,500 new claims would be filed per year with an 80% refiling rate at the end of a three year period and a 20% withdrawal rate.

As of March 31, 1999, there have been 3,140 claims filed, of those 2,239 claims have been withdrawn or have expired. This represents a 52% withdrawal rate and a 28% refiling rate. Overall, on average, about 190 claims are filed per year.

These statistics represent a sharp contrast between the original assumptions of 1988 and the actual number of claims filed. Clearly, we need to re-evaluate the Commission's position in the context of the changing times and changing markets. The time is right for us to take a fresh look at ourselves, to examine where we are and chart our course for the future.

## Our Outlook

Following the Fifth Report of the Clerk of the Privy Council to the Prime Minister and its emphasis on strengthening policy capacity, modernizing service delivery and fostering new relationships, HMIRC is working to ensure that we keep pace with the changing times and needs of program clients and beneficiaries. A key factor in this program renewal process is to move forward in a manner that sustains and enhances our organization's commitment to meeting the needs and interests of both industry and workers.

As an example of measures already underway, the Commission has expanded its current MSDS Compliance pilot project. This project offers claimants and affected parties an opportunity to review and comment on the health and safety information and advice provided to Screening Officers. This initiative has significantly enhanced the transparency of the MSDS review and decision-making processes and has been well received by a number of claimants.

At the heart of public sector reform is the desire to enhance service delivery to better serve Canada and Canadians. Citizens are aware of this change and expect government agencies to be more open, participatory and transparent in how we develop and deliver our policies and programs. This reform suggests that we at the Commission contemplate and undertake new relationships with our clients and stakeholders and ensure that the Canadian public has access to our services.

*A client-oriented  
approach to service*

HMIRC is working to ensure that a client-oriented approach to service will become the foundation for our performance in the future. We are implementing a process to establish and monitor a service standard so that both industry and workers will know what level of service they can expect. Our objective is to ensure that the cost of renewal will not mean lower standards for workplace safety. We are also taking positive steps to ensure improved program orientation, focus and accountability.

## Council's Report to the Minister

In May 1998, a report entitled: "*Report to the Minister of Health*", was sent to the Honourable Allan Rock, for his review. The Report, from the HMIRC Council of Governors, contained 13 recommendations respecting proposed changes to the Commission's mode of operations. The Council unanimously endorsed 11 of the 13 recommendations, but did not reach consensus on two Recommendations (#4 and #5). In October 1998, Minister Rock responded to the Chair of Council, requesting that the newly appointed President and CEO of HMIRC conduct a more widespread consultation with all interested parties on each of the Report's consensus recommendations, and on Recommendation #4.

The Minister also requested that the Commission undertake an assessment of the potential impact of the implementation of the Council's Report recommendations on the operations of the Commission. In response to Recommendation #5, the Minister requested that Health Canada officials examine WHMIS inspection and enforcement, in consultation with the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL).

The Commission utilized the Report's recommendations as a platform for further consultation with its stakeholders over the past several months. This process represented an opportunity to strengthen and build on the spirit and intent of the Report's consensus recommendations. The consultation process has also provided HMIRC with the opportunity to solicit comments on other initiatives in support of the Commission's on-going modernization of its services delivery, regulatory and adjudicative functions.

The original Report recommendations, which received the support of stakeholders during consultation, are found in the Program Renewal and Reform section of this report under the applicable action item, along with the other initiatives in support of program reform.

# COMMISSION RENEWAL: BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

As the Commission commemorates 10 years of existence, it is important that we review and refocus our contribution both within the WHMIS context and the federal government as a whole. The timing is right to pursue initiatives, supported by our stakeholders through consultation, which will empower HMIRC to remain relevant, to foster partnerships and to provide value-added services.

## Current Mandate

Under the authority of the *Hazardous Materials Information Review Act* and the provincial and territorial Occupational Safety and Health Acts, the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission is an arm's length administrative law tribunal charged with carrying out a multi-faceted mandate:

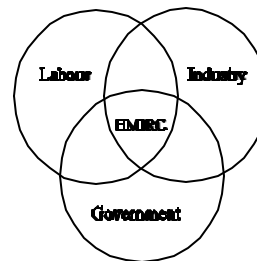
- to formally register claims for trade secret exemptions, and issue Registry Numbers;
- to issue decisions on the validity of claims for exemption using a prescribed regulatory criteria;
- to make decisions on the compliance of material safety data sheets (MSDSs) and labels within the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) requirements as set out in the *Hazardous Products Act* and *Controlled Products Regulations* and various provincial and territorial Occupational Safety and Health Acts; and
- to convene independent, tripartite boards to hear appeals from claimants or affected parties on decisions and orders issued by the Commission.

The Commission's clientele consists of a number of WHMIS stakeholders: suppliers and employers in the chemical industry who wish to protect their trade secrets from being disclosed on MSDSs or labels; employers who rely on supplier MSDS information to prepare their own workplace MSDSs and training programs; and labour representing all workers who are exposed to these products.



## HMIRC – A Model Partnership

As a vital independent agency committed to workplace safety, HMIRC plays a pivotal role in providing a mechanism whereby trade secret formulations can be maintained by industry while ensuring that full hazard disclosure can be afforded to workers in the workplace. To achieve the Commission's mandate, our adjudicative efforts must result in a fair balance between the right of workers to be informed about the hazards of the chemicals to which they are exposed and the right of suppliers and employers to protect bonafide trade secret information. Success in this dual-role framework requires that we balance the tension inherent in being a strategic partner with industry on the one hand, and an advocate for worker health & safety on the other.



Created as an independent agency in 1987, HMIRC is a model of industry, labour and government consultation, consensus and co-operation. Our uniqueness is exemplified by the fact that we derive our mandate and program accountability from federal, provincial and territorial legislation.

## Environmental Overview – Key Stakeholders

Over the last year, we have been searching for ways to change in order to best fulfill the HMIRC mandate, serve our clients and participate in partnerships with governments, industry and labour. We are seeking creative and innovative ways to serve:

- The Canadian Worker
- The Chemical Industry
- Federal/Provincial/Territorial Occupational Safety and Health Programs

In carrying out our fundamental commitment to the worker's right to know about the hazardous materials they encounter and the industry's right to protect trade secrets, it is the Commission's responsibility to ensure that the MSDSs and labels we review disclose accurate health and safety information concerning hazardous chemicals. HMIRC is committed to continuing and enhancing this service.

*The aim of HMIRC employees is to provide objective, high quality service*

We want to ensure that Canadian workers remain informed of and protected from all hazardous materials encountered in the workplace, and that employers have the supplier MSDS information they require to prepare accurate workplace MSDSs. Simply put, Canadian workers' right to know about safety in the workplace can only be achieved if the data on the MSDSs and labels is accurately conveyed.

HMIRC is valued by the Canadian and international chemical industry for the key role it plays in protecting the trade secrets of chemical companies. The Commission has handled over 3,000 claims in our first 10 years of existence: 66% of those claims came from Canadian manufacturers, 34% from American manufacturers and only a few from European companies. Preliminary market research suggests there are substantial opportunities to identify additional claims and to provide other value-added services to industry.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments support the Commission's efforts to respond to the interests of both labour and industry. WHMIS coordinators in each province and territory represent the front line for administration of both WHMIS and HMIRC programs, and their expertise and knowledge are clearly linked to the work of the Commission. The Commission has continued to work with Health Canada's WHMIS Development, Interpretation and Compliance Section to remain current on issues affecting the consistent application and interpretation of WHMIS legislation.

It is the aim of HMIRC employees to provide objective, high quality service to WHMIS stakeholders by rendering decisions consistent with sound legal principles. This is one of the key performance measures that enables us to demonstrate our commitment to all HMIRC clients and beneficiaries in a strong, fair and cost-efficient manner.

## Planning Assumptions

We have developed the draft Strategic Plan based on the following key elements:

- Industry, unions and governments support and continue to actively participate in the renewal agenda.
- With the recent transfer of the WHMIS Evaluation Section from Health Canada, the Commission's operations are supported by a strong in-house science core.
- We can rely on our Health Canada portfolio partners for assistance.
- HMIRC employees see the need for renewal and are willing participants.
- Most changes can be made administratively versus legislatively.

## Vision

The Commission will:

- Be a client-oriented agency committed to improving service quality and timeliness at a fair and reasonable cost to those who directly benefit from our work.
- Provide regulatory decision-making that is based on sound scientific principles and take pride in being a professional regulatory organization seeking creative and progressive approaches to enhancing workplace safety.
- Resolve complaints and disputes, whether under statutory mandate or not, in a manner that is impartial, fair and prompt.

## Mission

As a vital and independent agency, accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Health, the mission of the HMIRC is to:

- Ensure a balance between industry's right to protect confidential business information and the right of employers and workers to know about the hazardous materials they deal with in the workplace.
- Provide a trade secret mechanism within the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System.
- Resolve complaints and disputes impartially, fairly and promptly through statutory or alternate means.

## Objectives

We aim to ensure that:

- Our work is highly visible and widely recognized.
- Our employees exhibit a business attitude through a strategic and client-oriented approach.
- Our activities achieve maximum worker health and safety benefits while minimizing impact and cost to industry standards and practices.
- Feedback from our clients and stakeholders is incorporated into improving our processes and programs.
- Established service standards are consistently achieved when handling client complaints.
- Disputes are resolved effectively by offering viable options and an appeal mechanism is available to respond to client needs.
- A comprehensive policy framework, driven by input from stakeholders, guides the operations of the Commission's core programs.
- Cost recovery, consistent with Treasury Board policy, is achieved for decisions rendered on the validity of claims for trade secret exemptions, and cost recovery associated with MSDS compliance decisions rendered in the public interest, is eliminated.

## Values and Operating Principles

HMIRC, like all federal departments and agencies, is adjusting to a range of new challenges. We recognize that in order to remain relevant and to provide effective and efficient performance and service quality, change is critical. If we ask ourselves which values and operating principles can best trigger this change, the answers would be:

**FAIRNESS:** in our ability to provide service and perform statutory functions.

**TIMELINESS:** in our ability to provide services within established and reasonable time frames.

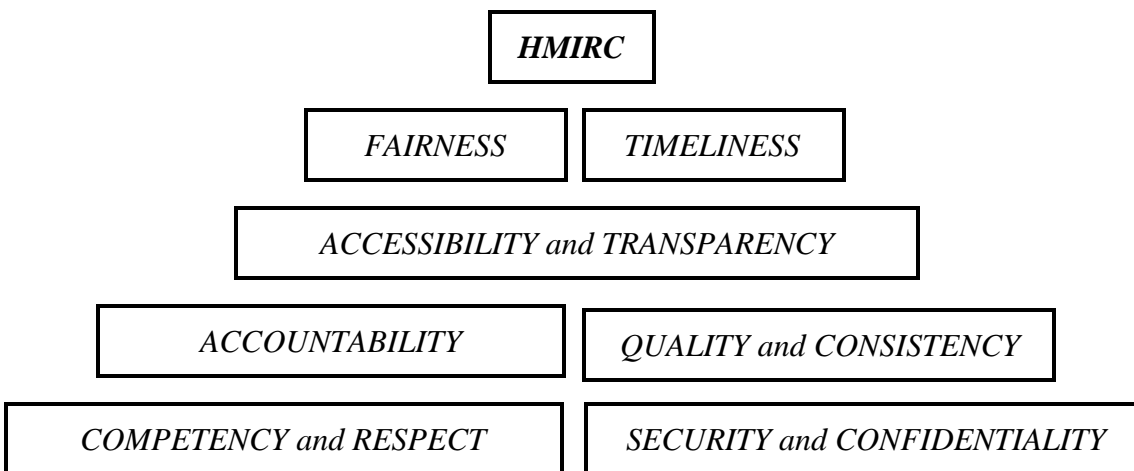
**ACCESSIBILITY and TRANSPARENCY:** in our ability to provide information and services simply and clearly and with policies and procedures that are understandable to everyone.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** in our ability to base regulatory instruments on rigorous cost/benefit analysis and to be accountable for programs and impact of decisions, while providing services in a manner that is cost-effective for everyone involved.

**QUALITY and CONSISTENCY:** in our ability to render accurate, relevant, dependable, understandable, predictable and error-free decisions while ensuring enforcement of firm and consistent regulations in the decision-making process.

**COMPETENCY and RESPECT:** in our ability to provide services based on a high level of skill, knowledge, scientific and technical competence, and to demonstrate respect and professionalism to everyone who comes into contact with the Commission.

**SECURITY and CONFIDENTIALITY:** in our ability to store and handle the trade secrets of our claimants and to balance confidentiality with openness and transparency in our day-to-day duties.



# PROGRAM RENEWAL and REFORM

The Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission is taking a leadership role in program improvement. We are moving beyond organizational assessment to turn our program objectives, Council's Report recommendations and client interests into action. We are adopting a business attitude that focuses on performance and strategic partnerships, while maintaining and preserving our key values and operating principles.

As an organization embracing change, we aim to deliver our mandate and achieve our mission through the establishment of three new business lines. To accomplish this, we are acting to re-define the organization into three core program areas:

- 1. MSDS Compliance**
- 2. Client Services**
- 3. Dispute Resolution**

These changes, and the action plans implemented within each of these programs, are designed to provide our clients with better and faster service. Unique in nature, the three business lines utilize individual processes and approaches in response to the different roles they are mandated to carry out. Along with the pilot project already initiated by the Commission, the creation of these new business lines represents a positive and pragmatic step towards modernizing our services and meeting our clients' changing needs.

The following sections of the draft Strategic Plan detail the three core program areas, the design principles upon which they have been established and the plans through which each program will strive to turn commitment, ideas and recommendations into action.

# 1. MSDS Compliance Program

The aim of the MSDS Compliance Program is to regulate, in the public interest, the maximum health and safety benefits in the workplace. It is the responsibility of Screening Officers within this Program to decide on the compliance of MSDSs and labels. At the same time, Screening Officers must ensure that the decisions they render are pursuant to the *Hazardous Products Act*, the *Canada Labour Code*, provincial and territorial occupational health and safety legislation, and within the WHMIS regulatory requirements.

This activity will continue to result in a direct contribution to the reduction of workplace-related illness and injury which, in turn, has the effect of easing economic pressures due to compensation claims and health care costs. Screening Officers will, where non-compliance is found, issue a formal order for revision of the MSDS and follow-up to ensure compliance. Of the 1204 claims for which a Notice of Decision and Order has been published in the Canada Gazette, there have been 16 appeals filed in relation to orders issued on MSDS compliance. Of these, 7 were subsequently withdrawn.

## Design Principles

The MSDS Compliance Program is designed to ensure that:

- # Openness, accessibility and transparency, while respecting the confidentiality provisions of the legislation, guide our actions to regulate in the public interest.
  
- # Fairness is the cornerstone of our decision-making process.
  
- # A firm dedication to ensuring that workplace health and safety, and sound scientific principles, judgement and information, guide the decisions we render.
  
- # Stakeholder satisfaction drives our process for complaint management.
  
- # High standards direct our annual program performance review.

## Action Plans

- 1.1 The MSDS Compliance and Client Services Programs will develop and review their activities within an overall policy framework that will include a mechanism for: full consultation (including annual tripartite workshops) on program review and modification, program evaluation criteria, service standards for the MSDS and claim reviews carried out by Screening Officers and cost/benefit analysis, if practicable.
- 1.2 We aim to eliminate the recovery of costs associated with the MSDS compliance work done in the public interest. The original cost recovery planning assumptions will be examined in the context of TBS Cost Recovery Policy. The Commission's review of its cost recovery program will involve detailed discussions with Treasury Board Secretariat officials. For our clients, this action will demonstrate that activities considered cost recoverable are supportable by government policy and that clients are being charged fairly for the work performed.
- 1.3 Registration renewal procedures should be amended to a notification type of procedure in which the company attests to the continued validity and accuracy of the MSDS in question. The Commission must be able to verify the attestation and a method must be established that allows the public to challenge the attestation and for the Commission to request the substantiating information. The Commission need only confirm that the relevant toxicity profile for the chemical or mixture has not changed. Charges for Notification of Renewals should be commensurate with the resources required. Where the controlled product's formulation has not changed since the last review, an attestation to this effect may be made by the claimant. This streamlined process should result in efficiencies which could result in a reduction to refiling fees.
- 1.4 Every effort will be made to utilize our scientific and toxicological resources to maximize the benefits of our programs to our stakeholders. The distribution of Toxicity Profile Summaries, which have been prepared for certain chemical substances, will serve as one example of this initiative. We will also explore partnership opportunities with program partners who have similar interests and objectives in the WHMIS program.
- 1.5 We will increase our investment in the training and development of employees to ensure they maintain the skills and expertise necessary to deliver regulatory program services in a manner which meets high standards of service and satisfies the expectations of our clients.



- 1.6 We will undertake to develop a system for prioritizing the order of review of MSDSs which, if non-compliant with the WHMIS requirements, could result in a significant negative impact on worker health and safety. At the same time, over-all workload responsibilities would not be jeopardized.
- 1.7 We will embark on the design of a voluntary MSDS Compliance Program for claimants, providing a possible opportunity for the claimant to bring the MSDS into compliance, with Commission assistance, prior to a formal review by the Screening Officer.
- 1.8 We will be more proactive in WHMIS tripartite policy/interpretation analysis and development, and we will do more to communicate the results to claimants and the chemical industry as a whole. We will also seek to liaise with intermediary occupational health and safety service providers, such as MSDS software firms, as a means of communicating program-related information to clients.
- 1.9 Every effort will be made to ensure that the recent transfer of the Health Canada WHMIS Evaluation Section to HMIRC contributes to a more cost-effective approach to MSDS review.
- 1.10 We will increase process transparency by expanding the current pilot project. This project, as part of the MSDS compliance decision-making process, offers claimants and affected parties an opportunity to review and comment on the health and safety information and advice which has been provided to the Screening Officer.

## 2. Client Services Program

The aim of the Client Services Program is to assist industry in protecting confidential business information (CBI) while allowing them to meet their obligation under WHMIS. The responsibilities within this area involve the formal registration of claims for exemption, the issuance of Registry Numbers, and the security of claim-related information. Regulatory criteria guide Screening Officers in making decisions on the validity of claims.

### Design Principles

The Client Services Program is designed to ensure that:

- # Professionalism, cost-effectiveness, timeliness and responsiveness define our claim registration service.
- # A firm understanding of business/government relations guides our service delivery.
- # Fairness and justice reflect our processes.
- # Openness and accountability encourage client feedback.
- # Prompt and courteous service define our complaint management process.

## Action Plans

- 2.1 We will explore partnership opportunities with other federal, provincial and territorial government departments and agencies, which have similar interests and objectives in the WHMIS Program.
- 2.2 We will maintain a cost recovery approach by setting up the necessary infrastructures and seeking appropriate authorities from Treasury Board. This will be done in coordination with the MSDS Compliance program. A new cost recovery model should be flexible enough to accommodate special situations, such as test-market and low-volume products.
- 2.3 We will continue to provide up-front information and assistance to claimants and potential claimants.
- 2.4 A system should be adopted where CBI exemptions are not permitted for certain hazardous substances. This should be pursued through international harmonization discussions.
- 2.5 Administrative practice should be amended to reduce the stringency of the burden of proof of confidentiality. Claims for confidentiality should rest on a certification by the responsible officer of the company with an accompanying short statement to support the confidentiality attested. The attestation will be based on the existing regulatory criteria for trade secrets (CBI) and there must be an ability for the Commission to verify the attestation. A mechanism must be in place to allow the public to challenge the attestation and for the Commission to request the substantiating information. The existing fee structure must continue to apply.
- 2.6 We will actively seek new service opportunities by conducting market studies on unfiled claims, keeping current on international trends, and monitoring the status of WHMIS II.
- 2.7 We will modernize our method of recording, registering, tracking and managing claims. This will involve replacing existing equipment with new technology and software. Provided that the security of claimant information can be maintained, we will explore the use of Internet electronic mail as a means of providing registration services.

- 2.8 We will examine the criteria utilized to issue Registration Numbers in an effort to alleviate current difficulties with outstanding claims and with MSDS-related information not promptly received.
- 2.9 Every effort will be made to streamline refiling procedures, simplify fee administration and improve overall program administration.
- 2.10 We will ensure that our services and expertise are effectively communicated to other regulatory and/or registry-type agencies of government such as the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. At the same time the Commission will seek out other possible sources of existing toxicological information on chemicals, e.g. Environment Canada. The Commission will continue to participate in the Federal Small Agency Administrators Network.
- 2.11 We will increase our investment in the training and development of personnel to ensure that they maintain the skills and expertise necessary to not only deliver the Client Services Program, but to do so in a manner which meets high standards of service and satisfies the expectation of our stakeholders.

### 3. Dispute Resolution Program

The Commission is establishing a Dispute Resolution Program in order to prevent disputes from arising, wherever possible, and, where they do arise, to address them as early and effectively as possible. The Dispute Resolution Program is intended to supplement and work in conjunction with the current appeals process. The aim of the Dispute Resolution Program is to provide all parties with a range of options for discussion on issues arising from decisions and orders of the Commission. The design of the program is still at its developmental stage. The earlier disputes are resolved, the sooner MSDSs will meet compliance standards which will translate into improved safety in the workplace. The activities, and overall proposed structure of the program, illustrate the Commission's creative and accessible approach to expediting appeal and dispute resolution processes in a manner that is cost-effective and fair to everyone involved.

#### Design Principles

The Dispute Resolution Program is designed to ensure that:

- # Clarity and straightforwardness reflect our service and information delivery.
- # Expeditious resolution of cases, transparency of activities, and informality direct our complaint and dispute resolution processes.
- # Effective procedures and methods facilitate the identification and resolution of complaints.
- # Our unbiased approach to the decision-making process ensures impartial service to all parties.
- # Flexibility and fairness are reflected in our dispute resolution options.
- # Durable outcomes ensure better compliance, fewer disputes and improved relations for all parties involved in case settlements.
- # All parties will be encouraged to seek consensus agreements in resolving their dispute.

## Action Plans

- 3.1 Our current appeals process will be examined to see whether it can be simplified and streamlined to ensure that appeals are heard expeditiously and in a cost-effective manner.
- 3.2 Consistency of decisions is a fundamental Commission objective and will be enhanced through a systemic analysis of decisions and orders which have been successfully appealed.
- 3.3 A more active participation by the Screening Officers in the appeals process will be explored.
- 3.4 We will seek feedback from clients to improve program effectiveness, and we will continue to consult with other agencies to share innovations and best practices related to the adjudicative/hearing process.
- 3.5 We will establish timetables for the delivery of service based on best practices and reasonable expectations.
- 3.6 At the point of inquiry or application, we will provide comprehensible information to clients regarding the role of the Commission and the procedures used to resolve cases.
- 3.7 We will implement a Complaint Management System to deal with service complaints. We will develop service standards to identify and resolve problems, and a feedback mechanism to identify problems before they arise, thereby preventing recurring issues. Our staff will be trained to control and monitor these systems to achieve a high level and quality of service.
- 3.8 We will develop a Dispute Resolution Program through tripartite consultations to define the needs of our stakeholders. Guidelines will be established for our clients outlining the different options of the Dispute Resolution Program, while ensuring that a formal recourse mechanism is available.

## 4. Corporate Services

The success of HMIRC's three new core programs is supported by a very strong Corporate Services Section. To ensure that our new business lines operate effectively and efficiently, the Commission will act to enhance our Corporate Services in three important areas: **communication, information technology, and security.**

### Communication

We will actively pursue communication with all program partners and stakeholders throughout our program renewal and reform, including the publication and communication required immediately following the approval of the Strategic Plan.

### Information Technology

Recognizing the relationship of accessibility to technology, the Commission will develop an interactive website to increase public awareness of, and accessibility to, Commission forms, Frequently Asked Questions, Guides, Policy Issue Sheets, Notices and Filings, Decisions and Orders. We see information technology as an effective way to strengthen our partnerships and links with provincial and territorial WHMIS coordinators and our federal WHMIS colleagues. It is our plan to link our website with Health Canada in an effort to provide more complete information to all users.

### Security

Under *Section 46* of the *Hazardous Materials Information Review Act*, all information obtained by the Commission or an Appeal Board from a supplier or employer is privileged and, notwithstanding any other act or laws (including the *Access to Information Act*), may not be communicated to any person except for the purposes of administration or enforcement of legislation. The secure handling of business information by the Commission will continue to reflect the importance of maintaining confidentiality provided by this section of the law.

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