

# Child Labour is No Accident: The Experience of BC's Working Children – Report Addendum

On the eve of publishing this report, information was provided to project researchers that expands on child work-related injury data and risks working children face in BC.

## Disability Claims for Children Under 15 Years in BC

Information provided by WorkSafeBC on May 8, 2013 indicates a significant increase in the amounts awarded for injuries sustained by children working in BC since 2003.

Chart 1 illustrates the dramatic rise in annual payments for accepted disability claims related to children ages 12 to 14 at the time of injury.

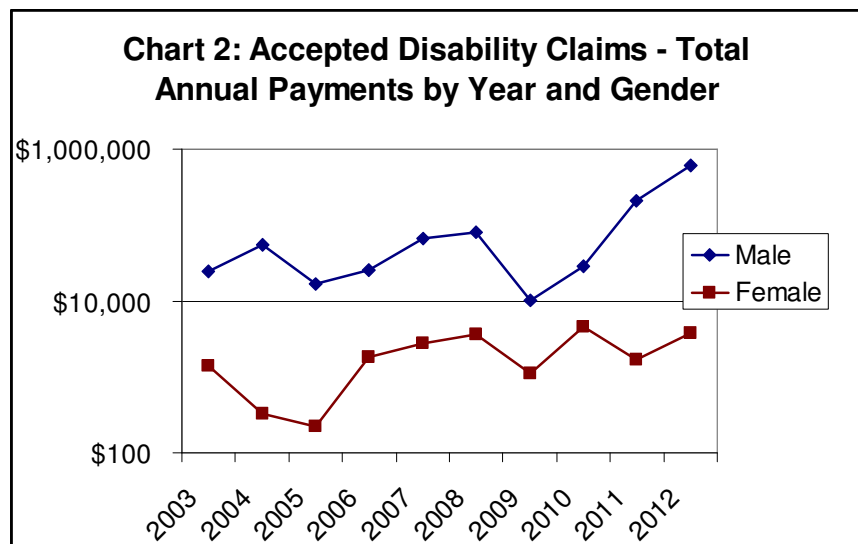
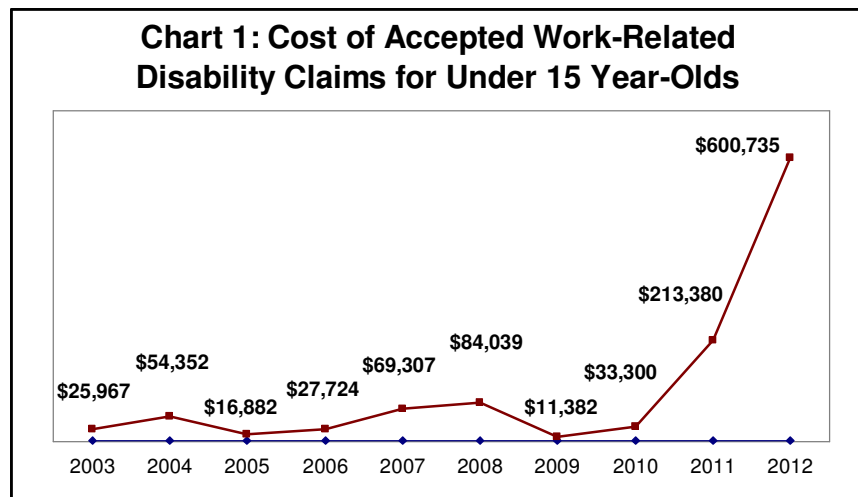
Chart 2 compares the cost of male and female accepted disability claims over the same period of time.

Accepted disability claims for females were between several hundred dollars to almost five thousand dollars over the years.

Accepted disability claims for males fluctuated from about ten thousand dollars in 2009 to over \$211,000 in 2011 and almost \$600,000 in 2012. The steady trend upward is driven by an increase in dollar amounts paid to male children injured on the job since 2003. It should be noted that disability claims do not include health-care or rehabilitation costs.

Overall, WorkSafeBC has paid over \$1.1 Million in disability claims to 179 children injured on the job since 2003.

Within the claims, are two males under the age of fifteen who received payments for “high cost” injury claims in 2011 and/or 2012.



While details of these claims cannot be released in order to protect the boys' privacy we do know the injuries were severe and permanent and occurred while the boys were doing work known to be high risk and inappropriate for children.

### **Long-term Disability (LTD) Claims Accepted Between 2004 and 2012**

Additional information provided by WorkSafeBC indicates that within accepted claims data (Chart 1, 2 and Table 1), a number of claims were designated 'long-term disability' (LTD). They are recorded by the year of injury.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Accepted Claims</b> |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 2004        | 2                      |
| 2007        | 1                      |
| 2008        | 1                      |
| 2009        | 1                      |
| 2010        | 1                      |
| 2011        | 2                      |
| 2012        | 2                      |

Long-term Disability for Children under 15 years of age where the date of injury was under 15

Since 2004, nine young people have been designated "long-term disabled" as a result of a work related injury sustained as a child under 15 years.

### **WorkSafeBC Reporting**

WorkSafeBC's legislated mandate, among other things, is "to prepare and maintain statistics relating to occupational health and safety and occupational environment, either by itself or in conjunction with any other agency; and ... to undertake or support research and the publication of research on matters relating to its responsibilities under this Act."

On a regular basis, WorkSafeBC produces comprehensive statistics on injury data. That data is often presented by age group, gender, sector of the economy and regions of the province. WorkSafeBC defines "young workers" as those between 15 – 24 years. Staff at WorkSafeBC recently reconfirmed that data on children (12-14) continues not to be publicly reported either on its own or within other data about "young workers." An explanation has not been provided as to work-related data for this age group is treated differently and must be asked for specifically.

### **Conclusion**

While the dramatic leap in annual claims paid by WorkSafeBC for injuries sustained by working children came as a surprise to researchers, the negative impacts of lowering the work-start age to 12 in 2003 were predicted and appear to be playing out with all their tragic consequences.

Data indicates that while the overall number of injury claims for young workers (15-24) and working children (12-14) has declined in the past few years, the information just obtained from WorkSafeBC shows an increase in the severity of accidents. This is cause for concern. Indeed, this disability claim data tells us that boys, 12 – 14, are at very high risk of sustaining catastrophic injuries while legally working in occupations prohibited to children in other provinces.

The self-serving arguments made by some business sector leaders and politicians to deregulate child labour in BC have come at a terrible cost. The participation of children in the regular workforce has led to children getting injured, some seriously since the law changed in 2004. The lives of some children and their families have been changed forever.

What is also a concern is that the public costs – in disability benefits, rehabilitation, healthcare and lost potential – far outweigh whatever short-term economic benefits an employer might receive from employing children.

It is safe to say that had the law not been changed to allow children as young as 12 to work in virtually every occupation, at almost any task and at all times of day and night, these terrible accidents would likely not have occurred. Prior to 2004, these children would not have been legally employed.

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the amount paid by WorkSafeBC annually for disability claims and the number of claims approved in each year. Please note the annual number of claims and amounts paid are not directly correlated. Claims are recorded in the year the accident occurred (and are therefore revised as claims are approved), while claims paid are recorded in the year they were paid.

To read about the experiences of BC’s working children and youth including effects on health and safety, wages and working conditions and education please see the report “Child Labour is No Accident: The Experience of BC’s Working Children” at [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org)

| <b>Table 1</b>                 |      |                   |                           |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Male</b>                    |      | <b>Claims</b>     | <b>Amount</b>             |
|                                | 2003 | 9                 | \$24,567                  |
|                                | 2004 | 9                 | \$54,022                  |
|                                | 2005 | 1                 | \$16,657                  |
|                                | 2006 | 12                | \$25,916                  |
|                                | 2007 | 19                | \$66,553                  |
|                                | 2008 | 22                | \$80,354                  |
|                                | 2009 | 12                | \$10,256                  |
|                                | 2010 | 5                 | \$28,647                  |
|                                | 2011 | 8                 | \$211,675                 |
|                                | 2012 | 3                 | \$597,013                 |
| <b>Total Male</b>              |      | <b><u>100</u></b> | <b><u>\$1,115,660</u></b> |
| <b>Female</b>                  |      |                   |                           |
|                                | 2003 | 2                 | \$1,399                   |
|                                | 2004 | 1                 | \$330                     |
|                                | 2005 | 3                 | \$225                     |
|                                | 2006 | 11                | \$1,809                   |
|                                | 2007 | 16                | \$2,755                   |
|                                | 2008 | 21                | \$3,684                   |
|                                | 2009 | 8                 | \$1,127                   |
|                                | 2010 | 4                 | \$4,653                   |
|                                | 2011 | 4                 | \$1,705                   |
|                                | 2012 | 9                 | \$3,722                   |
| <b>Total Female</b>            |      | <b>79</b>         | <b>\$21,409</b>           |
| <b>Total Male &amp; Female</b> |      | <b><u>179</u></b> | <b><u>\$1,137,069</u></b> |