

## On Occupational Health and Safety

# Flexible hours good for employees, good for the workplace

**W**hen Tracey Lewadny had to return to work after parental leave, she knew she needed to find a way to balance her work demands with the needs of her infant daughter. Like many parents of young children, Lewadny wanted to spend more time with her daughter. Lucky for Lewadny her employer already understood this need.

Manitoba Hydro offers a compressed work week in which employees who work Monday to Friday have an extra day off every two weeks. Manitoba Hydro also offers flexible start and finish times for many of their employees.

Lewadny took advantage of Manitoba Hydro's commitment to flexible working hours and requested a regular four day week. She works extra time during her workdays to allow her to keep full time hours.



Tracey appreciates spending more time with her daughter Thea.

Lewadny says that her extra day off allows her to spend quality time with her daughter. Now that her daughter attends kindergarten,

Lewadny spends time at her school and occasionally volunteers. Most full time employees miss out on spending time in their children's classroom. As well, Lewadny reports that her extra day off allows her to schedule medical and other appointments without needing to coordinate them with her work commitments.

According to Bruce Evans, Employee Relations Manager, one of the main reasons Hydro originally established this program was to meet the needs of parents. They recognized that offering flexible start and finish times allowed parents with school age children to drop off or pick up their child. But it is not only parents

who benefit from flexible work hours. Those who care for elderly parents also benefit, as do individuals enrolled in courses or with community commitments and activities.

At work Lewadny says that she plans around her regular day off. Her coworkers and outside contacts know her schedule. They plan meetings and make work requests to her during her regular work days. Lewadny says that she is flexible to come in to work if needed on her regular day off, but that has rarely happened. Most of her responsibilities can easily be accomplished during her regular workdays.

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# OHC calls for a ban on antibiotic use in pigs

**A**t the recent Clean Environment Commission hearings on the environmental sustainability of Manitoba's hog production industry, OHC asked that antibiotics for pigs be used only to treat disease rather than to promote growth. In March 2007, the Government of Manitoba accepted in principle to enact new regulations to regulate the sale, use and disposal of drugs for animals and provide this information to the public. They also agreed to start a comprehensive data collection network on antibiotic resistance in food animals. This falls short of a ban on using antibiotics when animals are not sick.

Antibiotic use for sick pigs is obviously important. However, most antibiotic use is designed to promote growth rather than treat disease. This type of prolonged use of low levels of antibiotics in hog feed presents the risk of not killing bacteria and promoting resistant strains. Resistant strains can pass from one kind of bacteria to another. Workers in hog barns may become colonized with resistant organisms and pass them on to coworkers, family and the wider community.

Escalating antibiotic resistance has raised concern that we are entering a "post antibiotic era" where there would be no effective

antibiotics available for treating many life-threatening infections in humans. Antibiotic resistance is increasing and can be traced to the overuse of antibiotics. The Union of Concerned Scientists has estimated that 87% of all antibiotic use is for animals while the remainder is for human use.

Add your voice to ours by talking about this issue with others. Consider writing letters to the editor, calling your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), and voicing your concerns at future public hearings. Together our voices can help to enact a ban on using antibiotics for well pigs.

## Upcoming Events

**Stressed to Kill: Understanding the Stress Hormone Cortisol**  
OHC public presentation by Sylvia Yaeger  
Wellness Centre, Seven Oaks General Hospital

June 3, 2008 - 9:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m.  
Union Centre - Room 103 - 275 Broadway  
For more information call 926-7907

**OHC Annual General Meeting & 25th Anniversary Celebration**  
September 19, 2008  
Union Centre - 275 Broadway  
For more information call 949-0811

**Workplace Wellness sessions**  
**QNET Excellence Conference**

October 1, 2008 - Winnipeg  
Cost: \$179+GST (members)  
\$199+GST (non-members)

To register call 949-4999  
or go to [www.qnet.mb.ca](http://www.qnet.mb.ca)

**Health Work & Wellness Conference 2008**

October 15th – 18th, 2008 - Calgary  
To register call toll free 1-877-805-0922  
or go to [www.healthworkandwellness.com](http://www.healthworkandwellness.com)

Evans cautions that offering flexible hours and days off reduce the amount of time available when everyone can be at the workplace for meetings. But he also says that Hydro has increased staff engagement and appreciation of Hydro as an employer. Flexible hours are used widely by Hydro's employees. With the plan to move to their new office building downtown, employees are already talking about commute times and using flexible hours to avoid rush hour traffic.

Lewadny highly recommends that employees take advantage of flexible work schedules if their workplace offers them. She notes that if a position cannot be made part-time, working a little more time every day to have an extra day off is really helpful in achieving balance

between work and personal life. Individuals should consider what works best for them from a range of options: part time or reduced hours; starting and finishing earlier or later; or working a compressed work week by working extra hours each day to allow a regular day off.

Evans advises workplaces who want to offer flexible working hours to establish a policy. When it is formalized, employees will understand the intent of the program and the parameters. A policy also helps to avoid concerns over favouritism. Lewadny cautions that a policy by itself is not enough. Management must support employees to use flexible hours. She says she is very grateful that Manitoba Hydro supports its employees and their families by actively encouraging the use of flexible hours.

**OHC Celebrates  
25th Anniversary**  
Join us on September 19, 2008  
to help celebrate 25 years of  
promoting workers health in  
Manitoba. Check out our  
website for more details on  
upcoming celebration activities  
[www.mflohc.mb.ca](http://www.mflohc.mb.ca)

**did you know...?**  
**Workers who report a high degree of stress balancing their work and family life miss 7.2 days of work each year, double the rate of those who report very little stress.**  
- Conference Board of Canada  
**May 5 - 11, 2008 is  
Mental Health Week  
go to [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)**

**I want to help!** I will support the Occupational Health Centre to help Manitobans protect their health and safety at work.


Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your cheque payable to the MFL Occupational Health Centre  
102-275 Broadway  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4M6



**Check out  
this website!**

**WorkSafe BC  
Injury Prevention Resources  
for Health Care - Violence**

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/Portals/HealthCare/Violence.asp>

**This website lists tools, publications, and other resources on workplace violence such as “Take Care: How to develop and implement a workplace violence prevention program”.**

**Workplace  
Violence  
Training**

**The OHC will be offering free one day training sessions on Violence for Health and Safety Committee members in the fall of 2008. Check our website for specific dates and registration information at [www.mflohc.mb.ca](http://www.mflohc.mb.ca) or call Diane Gagnon at 926-7904**



Send your newsletter contributions for “Focus on Occupational Health and Safety” to Karen Hamilton at [khamilton@mflohc.mb.ca](mailto:khamilton@mflohc.mb.ca) or fax: 956-0848. We reserve the right to edit.

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If at any time you wish to be added or removed from our mailing list, please call (204) 949-0811 or fax (204) 956-0848.

The MFL Occupational Health Centre (OHC) is a community health centre focussed on promoting the health of Manitoba workers. We are a non-profit, charitable organization funded by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and by donations from individuals and unions. We are committed to working with all Manitobans who are interested in creating safer and healthier workplaces.

The OHC provides the following services to Manitobans:

- medical services to help you find out if your job is making you sick
- education and assistance to workplace health and safety committees to identify and resolve health and safety problems.
- special initiatives with immigrant and Aboriginal communities
- information and library services, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm

**Healthy Workplaces Healthy Workers Healthy Communities**

