

What's Happening to Our Children?

A Look at Child Work-Related Injury
Claims for the Past 10 Years

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Background

- 2003 BC Government proposes legislation to eliminate permit system
- 2003 Coalition (including 'Campbell's Kids') forms to oppose lower standards
- November 2003 Coalition members meet with Labour Minister Graham Bruce
- Law is changed in late 2003

Background

- Policy paper published by CCPA in March 2004: *Who's Looking Out for Our Kids? Deregulating Child Labour Law in British Columbia*
- Second report by CCPA Sept 2005 *Child and Youth Employment Standards: The Experience of Young Workers Under British Columbia's New Policy Regime*

New Regulations

A young person (12 - 14 years)

- needs one parent or guardian's written consent
- must not be employed at the same time he or she is scheduled to attend school
- can work up to four hours on a school day and no more than 20 hours in a week that has five school days.

New Regulations

A young person (12 - 14 years)

- must not work more than seven hours a day on a non-school day
- may work up to 35 hours in a week "containing less than five school days"
- must be under the direct and immediate supervision of a person aged 19 or older at all times

Result

Result of change:

- BC became the jurisdiction with the youngest work start age in North America.
- In effect, parents were placed in charge of determining work-site safety.

Concerns Expressed

- a) leave children vulnerable to economic exploitation;
- b) increase pressure on them to assist with earning household income;
- c) increase the number of work-related injuries; and
- d) interfere with their ability to finish high school.

Research Goal

To determine how many children under 15 years of age are in the workforce and whether their numbers have changed since the new law came into effect.

Methodology

Areas explored:

- Statscan workplace participation data
- Other survey data and reports from unions, universities and independent researchers
- FOI data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Data Source

- WorkSafeBC's accepted injury claims by age of accident from 1997 – 2008
- WorksafeBC data regarding types of injuries and occupations related to those claims from 2003 - 2007

Key Findings

- Prior to 2005, accepted injury claims for all age groups (14 and under, 15, and 16-years-old) fluctuated between 1998 and 2004. No particular trend was visible.
- Beginning in 2004, a year after the law was changed, accepted injury claims began to increase in all age groups.

Key Findings

- While the number of accepted claims for 15- and 16-year-olds dropped in 2008, injury claims for children under 15 continued to increase into 2008.
- For all age groups, injury claims were significantly higher after 2005 than they were at any time previous.

Chart A - Accepted Injury Claims by Age

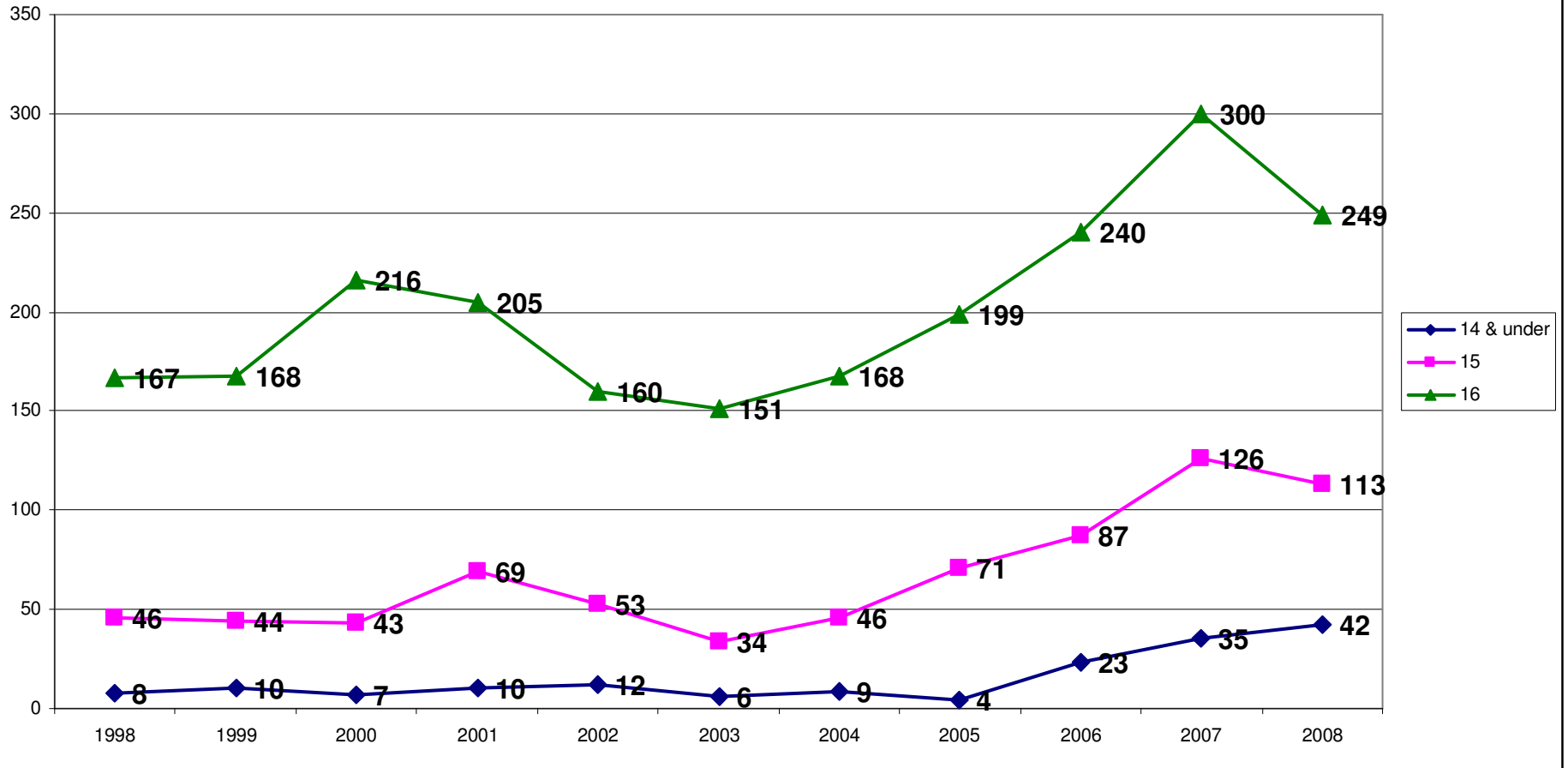
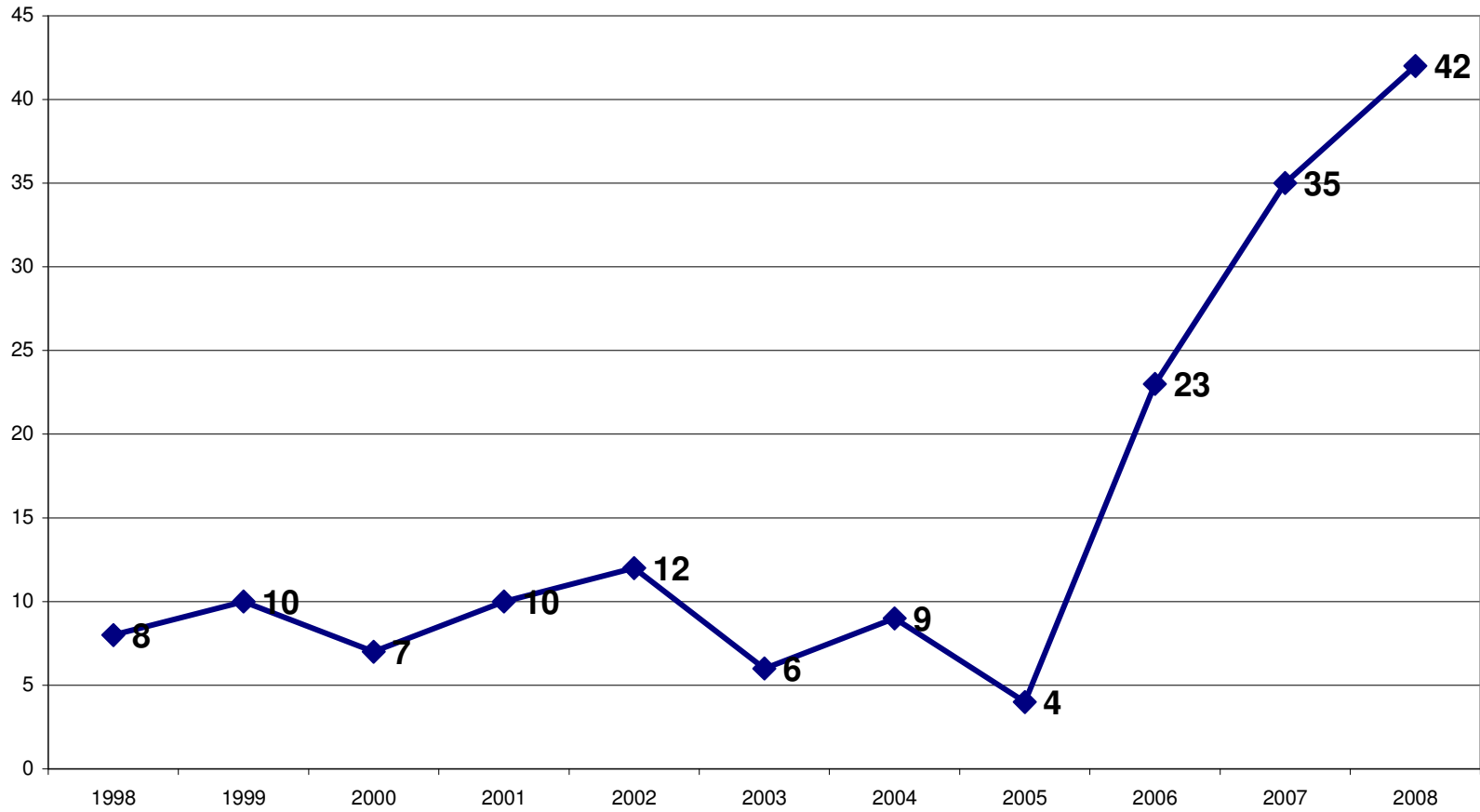


Chart B - Accepted Claims for 14 Years & Under



Types of Injuries

For 12 – 14s the top five categories of injury:

Cuts 31%

Other injury 21%

Other strains 16%

Back strains 8%

Dislocations and Fractures 8%

Types of Occupations

For 12 – 14s the top five occupation areas:

Accommodation and food services 56%

Retail 11%

Agriculture 8%

General construction 8%

Food and beverage manufacturing & “other”
services 4%

Why are Injury Claims Increasing?

- **Increase in work force participation**

In other age groups the number of reported work-related injuries increases in direct proportion to the number of youth participating in the workforce.

Either their participation in the workforce increased ten-fold, or the rate of injury has increased.

Why are Injury Claims Increasing?

- **Lack of Protection and Government Oversight**

BC is the only province that does not place legislative or regulatory restrictions on the occupations, tasks, or time of day a child can work.

"... 22% of 12 to 14 year olds in BC reported no supervision while working."

Why are Injury Claims Increasing?

- **Responsibility Shift**

Since the elimination of the permit system there has been a significant increase in WorkSafeBC education initiatives aimed squarely at parents.

“....workplace safety is still perceived as the employer's responsibility.”

Recommendations

- **Develop and enact legislation in the next legislative session**
- **Set a federal standard**
- **Establish a multi-stakeholder advisory group**
- **Gather and monitor data**

Conclusion

It's time to place children's safety and healthy development at the top of the priority list and raise BC's child labour standards.

Next Steps

- Meeting with the Minister of Labour, Murray Coell, on October 15
- Create an informational website to gather support for change
- Collect and publish 'stories' to illustrate the data