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Steve Mahoney, the part-time chair of the provincial Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, is under fire for billing taxpayers for what amounts to full-time pay, expensive trips and a GPS system in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Progressive Conservative MPP Christine Elliott raised the issue at Queen's Park on Thursday, saying Mahoney's part-time status means he charges a per diem of \$550 for each day he works. The problem, she said, is that Mahoney charged taxpayers \$141,328, or the equivalent of 257 per diems last year.

"He's charging more per diems than there are working days in a year," Elliott, MPP for Whitby-Oshawa, told the *Star*, adding she relied on documents and receipts her party obtained through a freedom of information request. A check of last year's calendar shows there were 252 workdays.

The questions surrounding Mahoney's compensation pose yet another problem for the agency. In its 2008 "Working Wounded" series of articles, the *Toronto Star* revealed the WSIB gave hefty financial rebates



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to companies where a worker died on the job and rewarded companies for hiding injuries and rushing the wounded back to work.

The series prompted a change in WSIB policy on rebates.

Mahoney told the *Star* he did nothing wrong.

"That's what I was paid. I don't apologize for that. I worked damn hard at the job last year. It requires me to be available almost seven c a week sometimes," he said. "This summer alone I had 46 meetings (with) stakeholders. Every one of those per diems is backed up wi what I did, who I met with."

He added that previous chairs got paid more than he does. "I frankly think the government is getting extremely good value at \$140,000

Jill Hutcheon, WSIB president and CEO, earned \$443,000 last year. Chief financial officer Malen Ng earned \$335,000 and chief operat officer John Slinger \$314,000. The 226 WSIB full-time employees who earned more than \$100,000 account for \$29 million in taxpayer money.

Elliott's party also slammed Mahoney's "habit of expensing outrageous charges to the taxpayer," with a news release alleging:

Mahoney expensed a \$13,740 trip to Australia from March 13 to 28, 2007, for a conference that only ran from March 20 to 22.

Mahoney told the *Star*: "I had meetings with health and safety officials. I went to their offices in addition to the conference."

Though he had one meeting on his itinerary in the Carolinas area in March 2008, Mahoney stayed several days and expensed a GPS system from a Myrtle Beach, S.C., Best Buy at a cost of \$272 to taxpayers.

Mahoney told the *Star*: "I was going down to meet our lawyers who are in North Carolina. I flew into Wilmington, the cheapest way to go there, and drove to their office. My GPS was smashed in the flight and I needed a new one. It's a tool I rely on a great deal. When I go anywhere in the province, I take my GPS with me to find the most direct route possible."

Mahoney charged \$15,476 for a trip to China and Hong Kong to meet officials and give a speech at a university.

Mahoney told the *Star*: "I don't apologize for flying business class going over to Hong Kong. I was invited to be a keynote speaker at ar

international conference on mine safety. That trip was preapproved. I made a major presentation in front of several hundred delegates. On our return, we host people from all over the world on a regular basis."

After being questioned in the Legislature by Elliott, Labour Minister Peter Fonseca said: The WSIB chair did stay within policy at the WSIB when it came to their expense policy." But he added, "there is a new policy in place. There are new rules. ... I have been given assurance by the chair that all senior staff in the WSIB are aware of these changes."

Stung by spending scandals at Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and eHealth Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty recently ordered a review of the 600 provincial agencies, boards and commissions to root out spending abuses. Under new rules, employees with unacceptable expense claims, such as alcohol for staff functions and personal items, must repay the taxpayers.