

ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

Effecting positive change and ensuring sustainability of the workers' compensation system through the views of Alberta employers

Government Engagement

The ITF Association has written to Minister Jean (Jobs, Economy & Northern Development) requesting a meeting with the ITF Executive and inviting him to attend one of our 2023 quarterly membership meetings. We are awaiting a response. Following the ITF meeting, ADM Harbottle contacted WCB to discuss items that were raised in our meeting.

Appeals Commission Recruitment

Following the November 30th meeting, ITF contacted Dale Wispinski for a status update. The recruitment process resumed just after the November 24 ITF webinar and recommendations have been made to the Minister for three Hearing Chairs and five Commissioners. Approval is expected early in the new year.

Access to Information

ITF received a response from Erik Soderstrom on December 5th in follow-up to discussion at the November meeting. He reiterated WCB practice has been developed based on best practice in privacy protection and feedback from the Alberta OIPC. He also indicated WCB did explore with the Appeals Commission (AC) why their practices differ from WCB's and WCB did not hear any rationale that would cause WCB to change their practices. WCB also discussed their concerns regarding disclosure with the AC and Erik indicated the AC is reviewing their practices.

ITF then spoke with Dale Wispinski. She reiterated their practices have not changed and their commitment is to procedural fairness. There will be a pilot of a small number of files in early 2023. If a file has been heavily redacted the WCB will provide the AC a copy of the redacted as well as unredacted files. A review will be done by the AC to confirm whether the information WCB redacted is relevant to the issue of appeal. If the AC views it as relevant the information will be released. Results of the pilot will be discussed at the March ITF meeting.

The Access to Information subcommittee met on December 13th to discuss next steps. ITF has requested a copy of the information from OIPC and WCB's internal counsel regarding employer claim file access. Options for advancing this issue are being explored.

Policy Consultation

Consultation is now open on Working Remotely (Policy 02-01, Part I, and Part II, Applications 1 to 3). If you would like to join the ITF subcommittee discussion, or have comments on the consultation document, let Melanie know. A meeting will be scheduled in early January to begin drafting the ITF submission. Consultation closes on March 6th.

COVID Claim Update

Following up on discussion at the November meeting, WCB confirmed the cost relief amount for COVID claims to the end of November was \$87.2 million. With respect to claims in the "other" category from 2020, these are claims where no entitlement decision has yet been made. For most of these WCB is awaiting further information in order to adjudicate. If no further information is received they will remain in this category, and it is expected that the majority of these will not see an adjudication decision. Between Q2 and Q3 the number of claims in this category for 2020 dropped from 93 to 91.

Psychological Injury Working Group

The ITF subcommittee met on December 8th in follow-up to the November meeting with the WCB. Several ITF priorities were identified. These include the need to better define "psychosocial barrier" within the context of work restrictions, change management in the way these claims are to be handled, operationalizing the Cognitive Job Demands Analysis form and new processes, and a model whereby a claim is "paused" if there is a non-compensable barrier impacting return to work. Another meeting of the working group will be scheduled in January.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The next Guest Presentation webinar will be held on Thursday March 9th starting at 1:00. If you have any suggestions for topics or speakers let Melanie know.

The first quarterly membership meeting of 2023 is on Wednesday March 15th. This is expected to be a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting. The in-person meeting will be held at Genesis Place in Airdrie.

December 2022