

# ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

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

## **Training on the Job Program Overview for Human Resources Professionals**

In previous meetings with the WCB ITF members suggested there may be benefit in having their HR departments better understand the Training on the Job program (TOJ). TOJs allow organizations to tap into Alberta's hidden talent pool by providing employment alternatives for permanently injured workers in a manner that reduces risk for an employer. The TOJ program has many benefits including financial incentives and liability protections. Nearly 1,000 workers have participated in TOJ programs over the past few years.

On January 11, 2024, the WCB will be offering a virtual overview of this program to the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources of Alberta (CPHR) organization. This short session will begin at noon and is complimentary for members of CPHR. Below is a link for the session to register for the session:

<https://www.cphrab.ca/professional-development/unlock-your-workforce-planning-potential-wcb%E2%80%99s-training-job-toj-program>

## **2024 WCB Premium Rates**

The average premium rate is \$1.36/\$100 of assessable earnings, a 10 cent increase over 2023 (7.9%). This rate is discounted 15 cents (i.e. the average 2024 required rate is \$1.51). Maximum insurable earnings is increasing 2.4% to \$104,600 (from \$102,100) and the Claim Cost Threshold is increasing to \$1,900.00 from \$1,800.00. Employer rates are now available online.

## **Access to Information Focus Group**

The focus group met with Michelle Semotiuk and Sarah Chodan on December 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss the proposed pilot involving access to information for cost relief applications. WCB provided an overview of the proposed processes they would like to pilot. Each element of the process was discussed and ITF members provided feedback and clarified challenges that they foresee. WCB committed to reviewing the feedback and have provided us with a revised proposal. The intention is to begin piloting the new process designed to reduce the processing times for cost relief claim file information requests in January.

WCB also confirmed they are moving ahead with acquiring new redaction software that will also manage duplicate documents and redundant email threads to reduce the size of document packages. This should help to improve processing timelines for all request types.

## **Psychological Injury Working Group (PIWG)**

The ITF subcommittee met on December 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss opportunities and potential initiatives the group could focus on in 2024. The suggestions provided by the WCB were also discussed.

Topics proposed by ITF subcommittee members include:

- review of the Terms of Reference for the PIWG
- development of metrics and 2024-2025 targets to evaluate progress
- clarity of restrictions/abilities from service providers; definition of barrier versus restriction; utilization of restrictions and limitations versus the current focus on accommodation measures
- better utilization of the Cognitive Job Demands Analysis for return to work
- facilitation of early return to modified work for psychological injuries including wait times for TPI and other assessments and triage processes/procedures for psych injury claims

## **WCB Board of Director Recruitment**

Recruitment is underway for 4 members of the Board of Directors. There was one vacancy representing the interests of workers, and as noted at the December meeting the intention is to return the Board of Directors to 10 members. The size of the Board was reduced to 7 members in March 2020 (2 representative of the interests of employers, workers and the general public plus a Chair) but WCB advised the Minister having fewer Directors has created challenges from a governance perspective.

## **Upcoming ITF Association meetings**

The guest presentation webinar has been proposed for Thursday February 29<sup>th</sup> starting at 1:00. If you have any suggestions for guest presenters or topics, please let Melanie know. The next quarterly meeting is at the Manufacturers Health & Safety Association in Rocky View on Wednesday March 6<sup>th</sup>.

December 2023

Additional information can be found on the ITF website - <http://www.itfassociation.ca>