

ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

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

Policy Consultation

Consultation is open on Working Remotely (Policy 02-01, Part I, and Part II, Applications 1 to 3) and has been extended to March 20th at the request of the ITF. The Policy Consultation Subcommittee has reviewed the consultation document and drafted a submission for discussion by the membership on March 15th.

ITF also wrote to WCB to request an update on the status of the Policy Consultation Advisory Group, as well as a meeting to discuss the effectiveness and future opportunities for this group. A meeting has been scheduled for March 1st. Agenda items include ICP, Safety Association Grants and the policy plan update.

Industry Custom Pricing

The subcommittee met with WCB on February 15th. WCB provided an update on the status of action items and timelines on moving forward with addressing priority issues. A proposal for repolling of participating industries commencing in May 2023 and enhanced communication with employers were highlighted. There was considerable discussion about the threshold for changes to participation (i.e. support from employers representing >50% of industry assessable earnings). WCB indicated this cannot be addressed without a policy change.

Members will be polled regarding support for the proposed changes and next steps at the March ITF meeting.

Duration of Disability Working Group

The group met on February 16th. WCB provided an overview of changes that are being made to letters and posters focusing on modified work. The priority for WCB in 2023 will be on reinforcing collaboration and connection with designated teams, as well as strategies that will be undertaken to support more timely communication and develop effective working relationships. Opportunities for WCB outreach were also discussed. A pilot involving early confirmation and documentation of modified work opportunities is being finalized. The goal of the pilot is to more specifically identify gaps and challenges in the return to work process.

There was also a constructive discussion of challenges and gaps identified by ITF members. The group identified several opportunities and suggested actions WCB could

investigate involving medical clearance and conflicting medical information, addressing delays in accessing programs and the adjudication team model. WCB committed to investigating these issues and providing an update on actions they will undertake at the next subcommittee meeting. Additional detail will be provided at the March 15th ITF meeting.

Psychological Injury Working Group (PIWG)

The PIWG met on February 13th. The 2022 Q4 psych injury data dashboard report was discussed. Key data will be included in the March 15th agenda package. A copy of the authorization letter for psychological treatment is being copied to the employer and providers are now being asked whether or not the psych injury is preventing the worker from returning to work. WCB has initiated a pilot of the Cognitive-Psychosocial Job Demands Analysis form with ITF members. If you have not already been contacted and would like to participate please let Melanie know.

Secondary psychological injuries and disclosure of information regarding barriers and restrictions to employers was also discussed. For the next meeting, the WCB will be providing an overview of what information related to a psych injuries is released to employers for a range of scenarios, as well as a comparison of policy and DSM definitions for "traumatic" incident.

Government Engagement

We have not yet received a response to our letter to Minister Jean outlining concerns regarding the WCB definition of egregious conduct and the lack of an oversight role due to repeal of the Fair Practices Office legislation. The Executive requested a meeting to discuss these two proposed legislative changes in greater detail.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The guest presentation webinar is on Thursday March 9th starting at 1:00. Topics include an update from Dr. Cho on physician engagement, the Appeals Commission quarterly update, and Dr. Vennela Thumula with the Workers Compensation Research Institute speaking on psychosocial barriers to return to work.

The next quarterly membership is on Wednesday March 15th. This will be a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting. The in-person meeting is at Genesis Place in Airdrie.

February 2023

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