

ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

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

Government Engagement

Minister Jones has been invited to attend our March 6th ITF quarterly membership meeting. We are awaiting confirmation of his attendance.

Access to Information

Members of the ITF Executive and the Canadian Association of Counsel to Employers (CACE) Privacy Committee met with WCB on January 18th to discuss concerns regarding WCB's redaction of claim information. WCB was firm in their view that the direction on file disclosure is coming from the Privacy Commissioner/OIPC and WCB is limited by the direction in decisions from OPIC on this issue. WCB's view is that legislative change would be required to expand this.

WCB suggested potential ways to address some of our concerns. Entitlement letters could be clearer regarding the mechanism of injury being reported to help ensure employers are aware of what WCB is indicating has occurred. The mechanism of injury could also be provided to service providers in a referral so there is consistency and a common understanding. Wendy King also indicated on specific cases WCB internal redaction could be escalated if there is a concern with file disclosure.

The ITF Executive and CACE representatives met on January 24th to discuss next steps. A meeting has been scheduled with Dale Wispinski on February 6th to get an update on the Appeals Commission pilot with WCB. This will be discussed in greater detail at the March 6th quarterly meeting.

As a separate issue, Michelle Semotiuk and Sarah Chodan made several changes to the proposal for a pilot involving file requests for purposes of cost relief. The purpose of this pilot is to reduce processing times for release of information for cost relief files. Several members of the subcommittee are piloting the process.

WCB Policy Consultation Subcommittee

Consultation is open on the Industry Custom Pricing and Reconsideration, Review and Appeals policies. The subcommittee met on January 24th to review member comments on the draft documents. There were no substantive concerns identified and a draft ITF submission will be discussed at the March meeting.

Physiotherapy Subcommittee

The ITF subcommittee met on January 16th in preparation for the January 24th meeting with the WCB and Labour Coalition. At the meeting on the 24th the data report was discussed. It was noted there has been limited improvement over 2019 and that 2019 numbers were already not stellar. WCB committed to update ITF reporting to include regional data so that we can see trends not visible from aggregate data.

WCB has not seen the results they had hoped for after implementation of the 4-week model. The PT contract is up for renewal the end of 2024. Health Care Strategy will be rolling out a new training regime in March. The bulk of return to work program referrals occur after 7 and before 17 weeks. There are four PT consultants on staff.

2024 metrics were also discussed. Dr. Gross' PT model was raised. WCB is familiar with this and WCB agreed that often less is more. However, there appears to be no appetite to change to the current 4-week approval and extension model.

Appeals Commission Update

ITF was asked to participate in the recruitment process for Hearing Chairs once again. Rebecca Arling volunteered to participate in the interview panel and final interviews were held last week.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The guest presentation webinar has been scheduled for Thursday February 29th starting at 1:00. Dr. Victoria Cho will be providing the annual update on physician engagement. We are in the process of confirming a speaker on the topic of Psychological Risk Factors and Functional Recovery. The Roundtable will include a discussion of roles, responsibilities and coordination between the various levels/areas with responsibility for managing claims (CAPS, adjudicators, case assistants, case managers and special teams). If you would like to propose additional Roundtable topics please email Melanie.

The next quarterly meeting is on Wednesday March 6th starting at 8:30 am. The in-person meeting is at the Manufacturers Health & Safety Association in Rocky View

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