

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 June 12th meeting.

Medical & Appeals Performance Review

The Medical and Appeals Performance Review (MAPR) was conducted in 2021 with the intent of: streamlining medical reviews and appeals; identifying opportunities to increase the responsiveness of the system; simplifying medical review and appeal policies, processes and procedures; and ensuring long-term system sustainability. The final MAPR report was delivered to the Government of Alberta in January 2022.

ITF was recently advised a summary of the MAPR outcomes, as well as the final report is now available at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/wcs-medical-and-appeals-performance-review>.

The communique from Workplace Policy & Legislation indicated the recommendations have been assessed and the WCB and Appeals Commission have begun addressing recommendations around reducing medical review and appeal timelines and improving overall responsiveness of the system. However, some recommendations will not be actioned as they were out of scope, they would not achieve the intended outcome, or the intended outcome has been addressed in a different way. We were directed to the WCB and Appeals Commission for additional information and updates. This will be added to the agenda for our June meetings.

Access to Information

The focus group met on March 21st to discuss ATI timelines and the cost relief pilot. Four ITF subcommittee members volunteered to submit their ATI requests for purposes of cost relief through the pilot. WCB was confident that by providing a focused set of documents in lieu of a complete file they would be able to reduce response time and still provide employers with the information they need to make cost relief decisions. The average days to provide the file copy for the pilot files was 24 days, which is a 36-day improvement on the current service level of 60 days. The average file size for the pilot claims was 171 pages. In 2023 average cost relief file size was 494 pages.

Members participating in the pilot felt the information they received was generally sufficient to make cost relief decisions. It is recognized, however, there are situations where the complete file will be needed and it can continue to be requested. The pilot will now be expanded to all interested ITF members.

Psych Injury Working Group (PIWG)

The PIWG met on March 18th. The agenda included a review of the updated Terms of Reference and proposed metrics that will be introduced in 2024 to better assess whether strategies are having an impact on improving claims administration and management of psychological injury claims.

Project teams were also struck to look at expanding use of the cognitive job demands analysis form, and to further refine definitions of barrier versus restriction and bring greater clarity to restrictions and abilities of workers impacted by a psychological injury.

Duration of Disability Working Group

The Aging Worker project team met on March 13th to discuss different strategies that could be piloted in order to improve return to work success for this group of workers. In addition, final changes were made to the modified work pilot form and communication material. The new process will now be rolled out to all ITF members.

Policy Consultation

The ITF submissions were made for the WCB's Industry Custom Pricing and Reconsiderations policies, as well as the OHS Code Consultation Part 27 – Violence and Harassment. The Policy Consultation Subcommittee is meeting with WCB on April 25th to discuss the cost relief data analysis in follow-up to the ITF request that this policy be scheduled for review.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The next guest presentation webinar is on Wednesday June 5th starting at 1:00.

The next quarterly meeting is on Wednesday June 12th starting at 8:30 am. The in-person meeting is at the Holiday Inn Edmonton Airport in Nisku

March 2024