

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 December 6th ITF quarterly membership meeting.

OHS Levy

The Order in Council directing a transfer of \$44,574,000 from the WCB for the 2023-2024 fiscal year for the purpose of defraying part of the Crown's costs for administering the Occupational Health & Safety Act was signed on September 28th. The approved OHS transfer for 2022-2023 was \$39,857,000, 2021-2022 was \$42,139,000, 2020-2021 was \$46,256,000 and for 2019-2020 it was \$45,153,000.

Cost Relief Processing

WCB advised their cost relief distribution team has been focused on processing outstanding cost relief decisions, and the backlog of cost relief tasks is down significantly. WCB is currently processing fully completed cost relief tasks within 4 weeks of the decision date.

Their focus for the remainder of the year will be on processing any decisions that impact 2024 rate setting. If a member has an inquiry about a specific file and its status, please reach out to Cristina Cadeiras (Cristina.cadeiras@wcb.ab.ca) who can assist.

Psychological Injury Working Group

The group met on October 4th. Members discussed the Q3 Psych Injury Data Dashboard. An area of note was the increase in the number of workers who did not return to work with their pre-accident employer. WCB will look into whether this was worker choice or due to work restrictions and/or employer challenges. The group continued discussion of the bullying and harassment scenarios developed by WCB and definition of a "threat to personal integrity". There was no progress made on these items.

WCB outlined strategies they are looking at to reduce TPI and CPA wait times, and noted some progress has been made in recent months. Challenges relate to availability of resources for these services. The group then discussed future priorities and action items. The group will meet again in November.

Access to Information

ITF subcommittee members met with WCB on October 5th to discuss ITF member concerns regarding ATI processes and timelines. The group will be meeting again in January.

In follow-up to this discussion, WCB is triaging requests directly to ATI to reduce internal process and allow for faster delivery of information. We were also provided with direct contacts: denzil.gracias@wcb.ab.ca and his alternate kate.brown@wcb.ab.ca. WCB has also begun work on an expedited RTW package including the workers' most recent fitness for work. Members emphasized better and more through communication by claim owners would reduce the need to request file information, particularly updates following any medical assessments or reviews.

WCB is looking into a solution to refine Cost Relief packages and decrease current timelines, and is updating the claim file packages to include instructions on how to make the package searchable. Expanding the types of documents available through the portal and adding a list of available documents are also under consideration.

WCB is in the process of contracting for new redaction software, which is expected to be implemented in 2024. This has the potential to address concerns regarding duplicate documents and redundant email threads, as well as increase the consistency of redaction practices.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The guest presentation webinar is scheduled for Wednesday November 30th starting at 1:00. The agenda includes an update from the Appeals Commission team followed by a presentation by Dr. Doug Gross on models of care for soft-tissue injuries in Alberta. The third session will be a presentation by WCB on their use of AI for claims administration. The webinar will close with a roundtable discussion regarding administrative/claim issues as discussed at the September quarterly meeting. **Members are encouraged to forward suggestions on administrative items for discussion at the roundtable to Melanie by November 17th.**

The next quarterly meeting is on Wednesday December 6th at the Holiday Inn Edmonton Airport in Nisku. This will include the 2024 WCB premium rate presentation.

October 2023