ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

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

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Policy Consultation Advisory Group (PCAG)

The PCAG met on July 15th. Boris, Leighann, Craig and Sydney attended on behalf of ITF. WCB has not received any negative feedback on Policy 01-00 (Policy Interpretation) since the final version was posted. Consultation closed June 1 on Policy 01-01 (Funding) and feedback is under review. WCB plans to bring forward the policy revision at the November 23rd Board meeting for approval. Consultation also closed on Policy 04-10 (HMA and Housekeeping). WCB received considerable feedback on the move from away from an allowance-based benefit and are looking to balance the concerns with system integrity. Further information will be available in September, and if there are material changes to the draft it may go to consultation again.

A draft Economic Loss Payment policy update has been developed and WCB anticipates consultation in late fall. Information gathering is underway for consultation on the Psychological Injury policy. WCB is taking a cautious approach on whether they need to revise the policy, or whether starting fresh is a better approach.

Work is also underway to consolidate effective dates for new versions of AMA and DSM guidelines. No target for completion was mentioned. The conversation was more focused on the major updates planned for the DSM but this may be several years away and there could be significant changes before the next published update.

Interim Relief has been added, to the policy plan. It has been in place since 2018 and a review is needed to see if the policy is meeting the legislative intent, as well as how it is being monitored. The next meeting of the PCAG will likely be in November.

Appeals Commission AGM

The Appeals Commission held their virtual Annual General Meeting on July 30th. The statistical data presented was as discussed at our June 4th webinar and distributed with the June 10th agenda package.

The number of new appeals continues to increase year over year, with a 65% increase since the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Twenty one percent of appeals were referred back to the WCB for further investigation in 2025/26. Most frequent issues of appeal remain relatively stable (i.e. additional entitlement, TTD benefits, claim acceptance, ELP and rehabilitation services).

Of the 628 decisions issued, a formal review was actioned for 61. The majority (53) were requests for reconsideration by the Appeals Commission. There were 7 informal Ombudsman reviews and 1 review in the Courts. The decision was altered for 3 of the requests for reconsideration and all other decisions were upheld.

Total budget spend was $19.7m. The Tribunal accounted for 45%, the shared Secretariat for 28%, Advisor Office for 26% and the Medical Panels Program for 1%.

ITF Member Open Forum

The Member Open Forum was held on July 16th. Participants discussed return to work planning meetings once again and it was agreed we would add this as a discussion item at the September 10th webinar. This will provide an opportunity to discuss concerns directly with WCB and revisit the outcomes and underlying premise of having these meetings since employer programs have evolved over the years and needs have changed. Millard Health outcomes were also discussed and WCB will be asked to provide updated outcome data at our September 16th quarterly meeting. The concern is that only rarely are workers deemed fit for work at the conclusion of a program, and discharge with a 4 to 6 week gradual return to work plan has almost become the norm. Several members discussed concerns with not being copied on decision letters and this will also be raised at the September 16th meeting.

Lunch & Learn Session

The July 29th Lunch & Learn was cancelled. We will reconvene these sessions in September. If you would like to be added to the distribution list, or if you have any specific claims you would like to discuss, please let Melanie know.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The next guest presentation webinar is on September 10th starting at 9:30 am. Peter Smith with the Institute for Work & Health will present their recent research on the combined effect of psychosocial safety and OHS vulnerabilities on workplace injury. WCB will also join to discuss return to work planning meetings. An additional presenter is still being confirmed.

The next quarterly meeting and Annual General Meeting is on Wednesday September 16th starting at 8:30. The in-person meeting is at the Manufacturers Health & Safety Association in Rocky View.

July 2026