

ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

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

Psych Injury Working Group (PIWG)

The PIWG met on March 3rd. The group reviewed 2025 statistics and the challenges where targets have not been met. These will be further considered as work on process mapping and the continuum of care unfolds. WCB then provided an overview of initiatives under the Changing Nature of Claims priority in the 2026 Strategy Map.

With respect to 2026 priorities, the group agreed that there has been a significant amount of work identified that will positively impact psychological injury experience if done well. One additional issue emphasized as being critical to success is a process for gathering of meaningful and consistent information on restrictions from providers.

Access to Information Working Group

The working group met on March 6th to discuss draft Terms of Reference and 2026 priorities and action items. Changes to the TOR were reviewed. There is one pending item involving sharing of the rationale for the WCB legal position underlying their redaction rules. Reporting metrics were also reviewed and this will be included in the agenda package for ITF quarterly meetings.

The review of redaction practices for psych injury claims is a priority and meetings are being scheduled to review specific examples, discuss what is/is not redacted and the challenges created for employers. The goal is to identify changes to better meet employer needs in keeping with existing legislation. We expect a response to our request for sharing of the legal basis underlying current redaction practices in advance of the first meeting in April.

Duration of Disability

The working group met on March 17th. Average claim duration in January and February was 62.4 and 62.6 days respectively. Average current year duration has increased by 0.5 days. Prior year duration has not changed.

WCB then provided an overview of the ACE Return to Work model that is currently being rolled out to all teams. This new approach was developed to improve return to work outcomes by ensuring required actions and expectations at the desk level are clearly understood and are monitored. This includes emphasis on conversations rather than relying primarily on email. Industry Specialists will also have a greater role in addressing barriers when return to work is delayed.

The group then discussed TD02 claim duration and different strategies for ensuring these claims are brought to a timely resolution. This will be revisited as work progresses on WCB's reimagining work initiative.

WCB Board of Director Appointments

By Order in Council Ray Block has been reappointed as Board Chair, along with Brian McConkey and Shawna Miller as Directors representative of the interests of employers. Terms expire March 20, 2029. There was no new appointment to fill the existing vacancy representative of the interests of the general public.

WCB Policy Consultation

ITF has been invited to participate in a pre-consultation focus group on the ELP policy. The purpose of the session is to gather feedback from employers and labour on how the ELP policy is working today. This discussion is intended to help WCB better understand where the ELP policy may no longer be working as intended, and where there may be opportunities to improve outcomes. Feedback will be used to develop parameters for the formal ELP policy consultation scheduled for Q3.

Work is underway to draft a submission on the Funding Policy. If you want to join discussions let Melanie know.

CMA Policy on the Physician's Role in Return to Work

ITF has received a copy of the Canadian Medical Association draft policy on the Physician's role in supporting return to work. The revisions are designed to provide clearer guidance on the physician's role and responsibilities, reduce administrative burden for physicians by improving the process for all parties involved, and apply a practical, solution-focused approach that supports effective and timely return-to-work planning.

The draft was circulated to all ITF members on March 27th and comments are requested by April 6th. A meeting is being scheduled with CMA representatives in mid April to share ITF member feedback on the draft. Members who have access to an in-house physician or physician on contract are encouraged to ask for their input as well.

Member Open Forum

The member open forum was held on March 19th. Topics discussed included WCB application of the “but for” clause, approaches for assessing ICP participation options and WCB acceptance of psychological injury claims. ITF has followed-up with WCB on the procedure for adjudication of secondary psych claims and the extent to which the special care services team is involved.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The next member Lunch & Learn is on April 14th. If you are interested but have not received the meeting invitation, or if you have any claims/scenarios you would like to discuss, please let Melanie know.

The next Member Open Forum is on May 6th starting at 11:00. If there are topics you would like added to the agenda please let Melanie know.

The next guest presentation webinar is on June 4th starting at 9:30 am. The Appeals Commission will provide their biannual update. Kathleen Dobson with the Institute for Work & Health will present their recent research on mental health profiles of workers with a physically disabling injury or illness. The third presentation is being confirmed. If you have any suggested topics for future webinars please let Melanie know.

The next quarterly meeting is on Wednesday June 10th starting at 8:30. The in-person meeting is at the Holiday Inn Edmonton Airport in Nisku.

March 2026