

ITF (Industry Task Force) Association

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

WCB Updates

Following up on discussion at the September 10th meeting, a letter was sent to Dr. Ray Block (Board Chair) and all Board members regarding the rate setting gap and 2026 WCB premium rates. As discussed at the meeting, ITF noted there are several factors that contributed to the gap, many of which are outside the control of employers. Given recent initiatives undertaken by WCB, and the financial results presented at the meeting, we expressed the view that an aggressive approach to eliminate the gap was not warranted at this time. The letter was acknowledged and Dr. Block indicated our letter would be considered as part of Board deliberations.

ITF received a summary from the case assistant review focus group hosted by Sara Schmidt (Vice President Client Services & Disability Management). The summary was reviewed by members who participated and comments will be provided to WCB. WCB is establishing a working committee to begin redefining the role and expectations of the case assistant. This is scheduled to begin in November and WCB will provide an update when there is information to share.

ITF Member Open Forum

The member open forum was held on October 29th. Discussion topics included Adjudicative Processors and a strategy to address concerns regarding the first 14 days of a claim, physicians "over prescribing" time off, modified duties and prescriptions which impact return to work, and late claim reporting. Members discussed a proposal for a pilot to address concerns regarding responsibility for managing claims, which will be proposed to Sara Schmidt. Physician issues were raised in the meeting with CMA (see below). Concerns with OIS clinic performance were also identified.

Canadian Medical Association (CMA) Return to Work Policy Review

The 2013 CMA policy "Physicians Role in Return to Work Following Injury or Illness" is currently being revised. ITF reached out to the CMA asking for an opportunity to provide an employer perspective to inform the policy revision. A virtual meeting with members of the CMA policy team was held on October 30th. Leighann Poitras, Sydney Dowhaniuk, Angelina Tlustos, Stephanie Wright, Kim Klassen and Rebecca Arling participated on behalf of ITF. The meeting was constructive and positive.

CMA discussed the challenges physicians see and there is considerable alignment with key issues discussed by the membership in various subcommittees and meetings, and those identified in the ITF pre-meeting. Both parties share a commitment to a timely and safe return to work. With respect to next steps, CMA hopes to have a draft approved by their Board to go out for consultation in December. ITF will be provided a copy of the draft for review and comment. The target is for the new policy to be approved in the spring.

Psychological Injury Modified Work Project Team

The project team met on October 29th. The final draft of the process maps was discussed and additional changes proposed. The need for development of a CPJDA summary and modified work template for psychological injuries were also discussed. WCB will consider ITF feedback that these should both be completed and the group will meet again in November.

Policy Consultation Advisory Group (PCAG)

WCB has postponed the PCAG meeting until December 9th. The three online policy consultations closed at the end of September and WCB is currently reviewing the feedback and determining next steps which will be shared with the WCB Board of Director's Policy Committee on November 24th. As the Board is the decision-making body that approves Policy and Policy Plans, there will not be an update to share until after that meeting has taken place.

Upcoming ITF Association meetings

The next guest presentation webinar is scheduled for November 26th starting at 9:30 am. The Appeals Commission will provide their biannual update to open the webinar. We have scheduled the discussion with WCB on OIS clinics as the second topic. The webinar will close with a presentation from Prospect Human Services. The organization provides fully funded reemployment/volunteering service to individuals who need to transition out of their position and are looking for a second career.

The next quarterly meeting will be held on Wednesday December 3rd starting at 8:30. The agenda will include the 2026 WCB premium rate presentation. The in-person meeting is at the Holiday Inn Edmonton Airport in Nisku.

October 2025

Additional information can be found on the ITF website - <http://www.itfassociation.ca>