

# 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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## **WCB Policy Consultation**

The ITF feedback for the Occupational Hearing Loss policy consultation was submitted on October 4th. In follow-up we received a response from Pieter Lambooy (Director Client Services and Disability Management) regarding hearing loss claims being counted as time loss claims. Generally, hearing loss claims will be no time loss. WCB may pay a wage loss allowance to a worker if their employer will not be paying them to attend an appointment or where a worker is in a remote location and their employment is a substantial distance from the area of their appointment. A wage loss allowance is not the same as paying wage loss in the form of temporary total disability benefits (TTD benefits). Payment of this allowance does not create a time loss claim.

The policy consultation subcommittee met on October 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss next steps regarding the ITF cost relief proposals. After discussion, the subcommittee proposed that all members be polled in early November regarding some changes to the 2021 cost relief proposals that would better reflect the current state. Once the rate setting process has been completed ITF will also follow-up on the outstanding data requests.

## **ELP Psychological Injury Project Team**

The project team had their second meeting on October 25<sup>th</sup>. The focus of the discussion was a WCB proposal for a pilot commencing in January 2025. The proposal builds on the research findings of Peter Smith presented to ITF members earlier this year and incorporates a different focus and structure for discussions with workers and employers well before an ELP decision is being made. At select points health care providers and union representatives would also be brought into the conversation.

The objective is to better support reemployment of workers dealing with a psychological injury who have permanent work restrictions that may preclude a return to their pre-injury occupation. The group is also discussing possible metrics and data collection needs to facilitate evaluation of the pilot. The project team is meeting again on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

## **Egregious Conduct**

Thank you to members who submitted scenarios where the egregious conduct policy was not applied by WCB.

The ITF Executive met on October 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss the information received and confirm next steps. ITF then wrote to ADM Harbottle providing an overview and requesting a meeting to discuss this issue. Situations covered four general areas: theft, workplace harassment or violence, drug and alcohol policy violations, and breach of the employment contract. ADM Harbottle thanked us for the information which she forwarded to her policy team. A meeting has been scheduled for November 27<sup>th</sup>. ITF also wrote to WCB asking for confirmation of their internal review procedure, who the decision maker is for egregious conduct, and where this is documented.

In light of recent Appeals Commission decisions where WCB determinations involving egregious conduct were overturned, this topic has also been added to the agenda for the November 28<sup>th</sup> claims administration roundtable.

## **Subcommittee and Working Group Key Dates**

Meetings of the various ITF subcommittees and working groups have been scheduled throughout November.

- PIWG Definitions Project Team - November 4
- Duration of Disability Subcommittee - November 18
- Duration of Disability Working Group - November 21
- Psych Injury Subcommittee - November 25
- Physiotherapy Stakeholder Group—November 26
- Access to Information Working Group - November 27

If you are interested in joining any of the subcommittees or working groups, please let Melanie know.

## **Upcoming ITF Association meetings**

The next guest presentation webinar is on Wednesday November 28<sup>th</sup> starting at 1:00. The Appeals Commission will provide their biannual update. Steve Granger with the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University will then present his research linking workplace injuries and mental health. Cam Dewar with WCB's Investigations Unit will be our third presenter. If you have any specific questions for Cam or discussion items for the WCB claims administration roundtable, please let Melanie know.

The next quarterly meeting is on Wednesday December 4<sup>th</sup>. The meeting starts at 8:30 am and the agenda will include the 2025 WCB premium rate presentation. The in-person meeting is at the Holiday Inn Edmonton Airport in Nisku.

October 2024

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