

# 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**

The ITF Policy Consultation Subcommittee met with WCB on June 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the cost relief data analysis related to back claims and the NLT claims cost threshold. Data on cost relief for non-compensable psychological injury claims has not yet been compiled. The available analysis was discussed at the June 12<sup>th</sup> quarterly meeting and members in attendance confirmed policy changes for these two areas remain priority issues. ITF has also requested data regarding WCB's assertion that claims where cost relief is applied have poorer outcomes and are more costly. The subcommittee will reconvene to discuss next steps once the additional data is received.

The ITF submission for the permanent total disability definition consultation discussed by the membership on June 12<sup>th</sup> has been made. Consultation on this topic closes July 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **Psychological Injury Working Group**

The CPJDA project team met on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and use of WCB form C1447 (Cognitive Psychosocial Job Demands Analysis) has increased substantially. WCB recognizes employers may also be using other documents. To help ensure all information is uploaded in a timely manner WCB wants to connect with members who use other forms to discuss the best way to have their documents incorporated. Work also continues on enhanced metrics.

The PIWG met on June 4<sup>th</sup>. The agenda focused on the Q1 data dashboard and metrics. WCB noted there has been a shift in primary psych claim trends; the incidence of bullying and harassment claims was higher than traumatic claims for this reporting period. There was also an increase in workers returning to their date of accident employer which is positive. The PIWG will meet again at the end of July when the Q2 data dashboard is available.

## **ELP Working Group**

The ELP Working group met on June 18<sup>th</sup>. The enhanced data analysis was discussed and WCB remains optimistic ELP experience has plateaued. The volume of Primary Psychological Injury claims increased throughout 2021 to 2023, with a peak observed in 2023. These claims are more prevalent among ITF members likely due to the high number of public sector workers who face first responder situations. ELP volume is particularly significant for

workers aged 50 and over. While the cost per claim is marginally lower, the sheer number of these claims is having a substantial financial impact on overall ELP costs. Strategies to mitigate ELP experience among this demographic will be the focus over the next few months.

In addition, WCB has implemented a more stringent and centralized process for review of ELP continuance at age 65 where the worker indicates they had planned to continue working. A team has also been established to develop a new procedure for review of psych injury claims at specific periods after an ELP has been awarded. It is recognized the recovery trajectory is different for this group of claims so periodic reviews may be needed at different intervals.

## **Duration of Disability**

The working group met on June 24<sup>th</sup>. Plans for expanding use of the pre-confirmed modified work form were discussed. This will be rolled out to ITF members in early July. A pilot to identify strategies WCB could introduce for claims involving workers over the age of 50 to impact duration and costs is also underway. The group also discussed barriers delaying return to work for this cohort.

## **Medical Panels Commissioner**

Douglass Tadman has been reappointed as the Medical Panels Commissioner for a term to expire April 30, 2027.

## **Upcoming ITF Association meetings**

The next guest presentation webinar is on Wednesday September 4<sup>th</sup> starting at 1:00. Dr Peter Smith with the Institute of Work & Health will discuss his research on how return to work differs for psychological injury claims. Dr. Vennala Thumula with WCRI will then present her research on Psychological Risk Factors and Functional Recovery. WCB will provide an overview of the DRDRB role and current processes as the third topic. The Claims Management Roundtable will close the webinar.

The next quarterly meeting and ITF Annual General Meeting is on Wednesday September 11<sup>th</sup>. The quarterly meeting starts at 8:30 am and the AGM will begin shortly after. The in-person meeting is at the Manufacturers Health & Safety Association in Rocky View.

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