



Provincial Auditor's 2022 Report—Volume 1: Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board Taking Longer than Expected to Make Psychological Injury Claim Decisions

WCB needs to meet its target timeframes for assessing psychological injury claims and improve its communication with claimants, and establish formal guidance to reduce delays in administering psychological injury claims

REGINA—June 7, 2022: In her *2022 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 7, Provincial Auditor Tara Clemett assessed the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board's processes to administer compensation claims for psychological injuries, and found it needs to minimize delays in injured workers receiving appropriate support to improve their mental health, and return to work. She made five recommendations.

"Effective processes and communication helps to streamline and improve the time in which a claimant receives a decision on their claim, and reduces further delays or appeals," said Tara Clemett.

Psychological injuries are often complex, and, as a claim, generally more difficult to administer and frequently require more judgment than some other injuries. While WCB accepted 41% of more than 500 psychological injury claims received in 2021, our audit found 17 of 30 claims we tested did not meet WCB's target timeframe for assessing and communicating decision outcomes of psychological injury claim assessments (i.e., within 14 business days). The late claim decisions took between 15–43 business days to communicate, which may create delays for injured workers to receive benefits and treatment.

In addition, WCB expects staff to contact the injured claimant at least once every three weeks. However, WCB only met this expectation for one month in 2021. Regular communication with workers allows staff to stay on top of claim status and progress of treatment plans.

WCB also needs to:

- Set formal guidance on what key information is needed for appeals; what to communicate for appeal outcomes; and what claim information to release to employers for appeals
- Complete ongoing quality reviews for psychological injury claim and appeal files

Psychological injuries continue to rise in Saskatchewan with the highest number of them occurring among first responders, and corrections and healthcare workers. The number of submitted psychological injury claims and their average cost has increased since 2016 when WCB's legislation changed and so did the rules for compensating psychological injuries. On average from 2016–21, WCB received more than 27,000 total reported claims per year, with psychological injury claims received rising from 395 in 2016 to an average of nearly 600 each year.

The full Provincial Auditor's *2022 Report – Volume 1* available online at auditor.sk.ca.

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