



## REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

From: Steve Matovic

Date: April 21, 2020

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Subject: Rehabilitation Report # 78 - LTD Full Board Meeting 138

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report covers the period from January 1, 2020 to March 31, 2020. At the beginning of the year 551 members were in receipt of LTD benefits. This included 492 members who received payments and 59 (10.7%) members who received ancillary benefits only.

At the end of March 2020, the total declined to 530 members on LTD, including 491 who received payments and 39 (7.4%) who received ancillary benefits only.

Please refer to the Appendix for tables with the number of members in each claim category by age range at March 31, 2020.

The average caseload for five full time equivalent (four full time and two contracted part time) rehabilitation counsellors was 66.2 at the end of March 2020. Only 39% of the average caseload was comprised of early rehabilitation referrals for members during the weekly indemnity (WI) period.

115 members returned to work from January 1 to March 31, 2020. 99 of these were early STD rehabilitation cases (86%) and 16 were LTD cases (14%).

Rehabilitation expenditures (unaudited figures) for January to March 2020 totalled \$13,552 which was \$41,698 less than the YTD budget of \$55,250.

Over the period January 1 to March 31, 2020 one Canada Pension Disability benefit claim was approved with assistance from the Plan Office at the initial application stage for a total offset of \$13,720.

More detailed information follows in the body of the report.

## **NEW LTD CLAIMS APPROVED**

From January 1, 2020 to March 31, 2020, the Plan approved 41 new LTD claims, compared to 28 new LTD claims approved over the same period in 2019.

## **CASELOADS**

Over the first three months of 2020 there were a total of 116 new referrals to rehabilitation services (STD\* and LTD). This is a 33% decrease compared to the 174 new referrals for the same period in 2019. The decrease in referrals is in part a result of the strike in effect from July 1, 2019 until mid-February 2020 that reduced the number of early rehabilitation referrals during the STD period from the USW-Coastal Health and Welfare plan.

At the end of March 2020, there were 331 cases assigned to five full time equivalent rehabilitation counsellors (four full time and two part time contracted), for a caseload average of 66. This is in comparison to a total of 408 cases assigned to six rehabilitation counsellors at the end of March 2019 and a caseload average of 68.

Only 129 (39%) of the 331 rehabilitation cases assigned at March 31, 2020 were for members referred for early rehabilitation services during the weekly indemnity period. This proportion is low compared to the typical 50/50 split between WI and LTD cases. This decrease in early rehabilitation cases is due to the over 8 month long strike that affected many members of the USW-Coastal Health and Welfare Plan that concluded in mid-February 2020 which led to a reduced number of WI claims and a corresponding reduction in early rehabilitation cases referred.

\*Note: in this report STD is an abbreviation for “short term disability” which is synonymous with weekly indemnity (WI).

## **RETURN TO WORK OUTCOMES**

115 members returned to work from January 1 to March 31, 2020. Of the 115 members who returned to work, 99 were early STD rehabilitation cases (86%) and 16 were LTD cases (14%).

Of the 99 STD cases; 92 (93%) returned to work to the same employer and occupation, six (6%) returned to a modified occupation with the same employer, and one (1%) returned to work to another employer in the forest industry.

Of the 16 LTD cases; 14 (87.5%) returned to work to the same employer and occupation, one (6.3%) returned to modified work with the same employer, and one (6.3%) transitioned to self-employment.

Overall, out of a total of 122 members who were on STD or LTD and fit to return to work, 115 (94.3%) successfully returned to work at time of case closure. During the STD period one members was fit to return to work but was pending the availability of work, two members had no job available to return

to, and one member decided not to return to work in the forest industry. During LTD three members were job ready but had no job to return to.

Three rehabilitation cases were closed for reasons other than return to work or fitness to return to work, because the members were not able to be located because they did not respond to contact efforts and none of these members have returned to work in the forest industry. One member transitioned from STD to a WCB claim.

There were 14 rehabilitation cases closed for retirement in the first three months of 2020.

### **REHABILITATION EXPENSES**

Rehabilitation expenditures (unaudited figures) for January to March 2020 totalled \$13,552 which was \$41,698 less than the YTD budget of \$55,250. The largest segment of rehabilitation expenditures was applied to the funding of physical conditioning, physical activation and assessment services to prepare members to return to work (\$5,249). The other main expenses were the sponsorship of vocational assessments, education and training programs to help members secure work in alternate occupations (\$1,748); costs of travel and accommodation to help members to access services (\$1,743), and psychological/clinical counselling services (\$4,785). By mid-March 2020 there were few health service providers offering in-person services due to the public health distancing measures in response to the COVID 19 virus pandemic. It is also possible that not all expenses for March have been invoiced due to business delayed during the pandemic.

### **CPP DISABILITY BENEFIT: APPLICATIONS, RECONSIDERATIONS & APPEALS**

The Plan's rehabilitation counsellors continue to work in cooperation with the medical adjudicators from FIDAS to identify members who require assistance to apply or appeal for the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D) benefit.

Over the period January 1 to March 31, 2020 they have successfully assisted with one Canada Pension Plan Disability benefit claim at the initial application stage for a total offset of \$13,720 from the retroactive CPP-D award up to the end of the month in which the member reached age 60 and LTD benefits concluded.

During this period two claims have been appealed at the reconsideration stage with assistance from the LTD plan, and we are awaiting the decisions.

Some members will not qualify for the CPP-D benefit because they have insufficient contributions to the CPP within the timeframe required to support eligibility, some do not meet the CPP definition of disability, and others have exhausted the opportunity for any further appeal.

## APPENDIX

### AGE DISTRIBUTIONS FOR LTD CLAIM CATEGORIES – MARCH 31, 2020

Of the 530 members receiving LTD benefits at March 31, 2020, 303 (57.2%) were in Category “01” (permanent total disability); 212 (40%) were in Category “03” (temporary disability), and 15 (2.8%) were in Categories “02” (commitment agreement in place) or “02A” (rehabilitation assessment and planning).

CATEGORY 01			CATEGORY 02		
Age	Count	%	Age	Count	%
21 - 30	0	0%	21 - 30	0	0 %
31 - 40	10	3.3%	31 - 40	2	20 %
41 - 50	40	13.2%	41 - 50	5	50%
51 – 54	62	20.5 %	51 - 54	1	10%
55-59	191	63%	55-59	2	20%
AVG: 54	Total: 303	100%	AVG: 47	Total: 10	100%

CATEGORY 02A			CATEGORY 03		
Age	Count	%	Age	Count	%
			<21	2	0.94%
21 – 30	0	0%	21 – 30	11	5.2%
31 – 40	1	20%	31 – 40	24	11.3 %
41 – 50	0	0%	41 – 50	57	26.9%
51 – 54	2	40%	51 – 54	23	10.85%
55-59	2	40%	55-59	92	43.4%
>60	0	0%	>60	3	1.41%
AVG: 51	Total: 5	100%	AVG: 49	Total: 212	100%