



## REPORT TO THE LTD FULL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Subject: Rehabilitation report # 81 – LTD Full Board Meeting 141

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the period from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

At the beginning of the year 551 members were in receipt of LTD benefits. This included 492 (89.3%) members who received payments and 59 (10.7%) members who received ancillary benefits only.

At the end of December 2020, the total claimants declined by 16.7% to 459 members on LTD, including 427 (93%) who received payments, and 32 (7%) who received ancillary benefits only.

Refer to Appendix 1 for tables with the number of members in each claim category by age range at December 31, 2020.

At December 31, 2020, there were 286 cases assigned to four full time and two contracted part time rehabilitation counsellors (5 full time equivalents), for a caseload average of 57.2 cases.

Refer to Appendix 2 for a table showing early rehabilitation referrals to the Evergreen Rehabilitation Management Society with a 23.9% reduction in referrals for 2020 compared to 2019.

339 members returned to work during 2020, a 24.5% decrease from 449 in 2019. 277 members returned to work during the weekly indemnity period, and 62 returned to work from LTD. 331 members (97.6%) returned to work with their own employer.

The strike in the Coastal region ended on February 15, 2020 with a lag in restarts at the affected operations and some members cleared for a return to work experienced delays or no work available. Coastal STD cases referred for early rehabilitation decreased. These circumstances improved in the second half of 2020.

The public health response to the COVID 19 pandemic took hold from mid-March 2020 so that job sites had to react quickly to establish safety plans to allow work to continue. LTD staff, rehabilitation counsellors and the medical adjudicators for FIDAS all adapted to work mostly from home. The staff have done a remarkable job to continue the provision of quality services to members and stakeholders during the pandemic.

Rehabilitation expenditures (unaudited figures) for 2020 totalled \$102,884 and were \$116,616 under budget.

In 2020 rehab counsellors assisted with four CPP disability claims accepted at the application stage, and two reconsideration appeals were successful for an estimated total offset of \$430,877.

More detailed information follows in the body of the report.

## **NEW LTD CLAIMS APPROVED**

From January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, the Plan approved 115 new LTD claims, a decrease of 12.2% from the 131 new LTD claims approved in 2019.

## **CASELOADS**

In 2020, there were a total of 445 new referrals to rehabilitation services (STD\* and LTD). This is a 34.8% decrease compared to the total of 682 referrals in 2019. Please refer to the table in Appendix 2 that shows early referrals to the Evergreen Society dropped by 143 cases (-23.9%) in 2020 compared to 2019. The decrease in rehabilitation cases is related in part to the number of operations that closed or curtailed operations in recent years, and also reflects the reduction in early rehabilitation referrals during the pandemic measures that took effect from March to December 2020.

At December 31, 2020, there were 286 cases assigned to four full time and two contracted part time rehabilitation counsellors (5 full time equivalents), for a caseload average of 57.2 cases.

This compares to a total of 377 cases and a caseload average of 75.4 at the end of 2019.

118 of the 286 rehabilitation cases assigned at December 31, 2020 were for members referred for early rehabilitation services during the weekly indemnity period. So only 41.3% of the average rehabilitation caseload was comprised of members on weekly indemnity claims. In prior years the percentage of early rehabilitation cases was typically near 50%.

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

## **RETURN TO WORK OUTCOMES**

339 members returned to work during 2020, a 24.5% decrease from 449 in 2019. 308 members returned to the same occupation and 23 to a modified or different job with their employer; so, a total of 331 (97.6%) returned to the same employer in the forest industry. Three members found work with a different employer in the forest industry, and 5 members found jobs outside of the forest industry.

Of the 339 members who returned to work, 277 were STD cases and 62 were LTD cases.

275 (99.3%) of the 277 STD cases returned to work with the same employer: 256 to the same occupation, and 19 to modified or alternate work. Two members found work with a new employer in the forest industry.

56 (90.3%) of the 62 LTD claimants returned to work with the same employer, 52 in the same occupation, and four in a modified or alternate occupation. One member found work with a new employer in the forest industry. Two members found work in new jobs outside of the forest industry. One member retrained during LTD and is working outside of the forest industry, and two members transitioned to self-employment.

Overall, out of a total of 368 members who were on STD or LTD and fit to return to work, 339 (92.1%) successfully returned to work. 12 cases involved members where a return to work was expected or pending at the time of case closure. Eight cases were for members

fit to return to work at closure but with no job available to return to. Five members were fit to return to the same employer but decided not to return to work for various reasons. One member received rehab support for job search but did not find other work. Three cases involved members who received retraining during LTD but were not working at the closure of their claim.

21 rehabilitation cases were closed for reasons other than a return to work or fitness to return to work. 10 cases (48%) transitioned from STD to a WCB claim and one case (5%) transitioned from LTD to WCB. One STD case (5%) and one LTD case (5%) were closed as inactive/non-compliant with rehabilitation. Eight (37%) STD cases were closed due to being unable to locate the members, and five of these members later returned to work to the same employer with no applications filed for LTD.

There were 43 rehabilitation case closures for members who retired in 2020. This compares to 17 cases closed for retirements in 2019. The BC Bridging to Retirement program was an important factor in encouraging members to retire from the forest industry in 2020.

### **REHABILITATION EXPENSES**

Rehabilitation expenditures (unaudited figures) for 2020 totalled \$102,884 and were \$116,616 under budget. The largest segment of rehabilitation expenditures was applied to the funding of physical conditioning, physical activation, and assessment services to prepare members for return to work (\$53,239). The other main expenses were the sponsorship of vocational assessments, education and training programs to help members secure work in alternate occupations (\$22,040); costs of travel and

accommodation to help members to access services (\$9,080), and psychological/clinical counselling services (\$16,375).

### **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.

For January 1 to December 31, 2020, they have successfully assisted with four claims accepted at the initial application stage, and two reconsideration appeals were successful for an estimated total offset of \$430,877 based on the assumption that each member remains on LTD benefits to age 60.

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.

### **PERCENTAGES OF 01 & 03 CATEGORY CLAIMS WITH THE CPP DISABILITY BENEFIT**

216 (76.3%) of the 283 members in the 01 claim category; and 28 (16.8%) of the 167 members in the 03 claim category had qualified for the CPP disability benefit as at December 31, 2020.

## APPENDIX 1

### AGE DISTRIBUTIONS FOR LTD CLAIM CATEGORIES - DECEMBER 31, 2020

Of the 459 members receiving LTD benefits at year-end, 283 (61.6%) were in Category “01” (permanent total disability); 167 (36.4%) were in Category “03” (temporary disability), and 9 (2%) 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	8	2.8%	31 - 40	3	50%
41 - 50	45	15.9%	41 - 50	0	0%
51 - 54	52	18.4%	51 - 54	3	50%
55-59	178	62.9%	55-59	0	0%
AVG: 54	Total: 283	100%	AVG: 44	Total: 6	100%

CATEGORY 02A			CATEGORY 03		
Age	Count	%	Age	Count	%
<21	0	0%	<21	1	0.6%
21 - 30	0	0%	21 - 30	8	4.8%
31 - 40	1	33.3%	31 - 40	28	16.8%
41 - 50	2	66.7%	41 - 50	50	29.9%
51 - 54	0	0%	51 - 54	21	12.6%
55-59	0	0%	55-59	56	33.5%
>60	0	0%	>60	3	1.8%
AVG: 43	Total: 3	100%	AVG: 48	Total: 167	100%

## APPENDIX 2

### EARLY REHAB REFERRALS TO EVERGREEN IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019

EG Referrals	CANFOR-USW	COASTAL	SOUTHERN	NORTHERN	WEST FRASER Non EG*	Total
Jan-Dec 2020	65 (36 to June 30)	153 (59 to June 30)	98 (50 to June 30)	101 (51 to June 30)	39 (18 to June 30)	456
Changes 2020 vs. 2019	-24 (-27.0%)	-26 (-14.5%)	-78 (-44.3%)	-17 (-14.4%)	+2 (+5.4%)	- 23.9%
Jan-Dec 2019	89 (54 to June 30)	179 (104 to June 30)	176 (80 to June 30)	118 (56 to June 30)	37	599
Max. notice only with >20 weeks STD and no EG referral	N/A	18	15	N/A	2	35
Jan-Dec 2020						

\* West Fraser Non-Evergreen: 100 Mile Lumber, Williams Lk. Plywood & Quesnel Plywood