



## REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

From: Steve Matovic

Date: May 7, 2021

Subject: Rehabilitation Report # 82 - LTD Full Board Meeting 142

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the period from January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021. At the beginning of the year 459 members were in receipt of LTD benefits. This included 427 (93%) members who received payments and 32 (7%) members who received ancillary benefits only. At the end of March 2021, the total increased to 475 members on LTD, including 445 (94%) who received payments and 30 (6%) who received ancillary benefits only.

Members who had been approved for LTD from mid-March 2020 who applied for the Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefit that normally runs to 15 weeks maximum, were referred to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) that continued to October 3, 2020 and then transitioned EI sickness applicants to a further 15 weeks of payments to January 16, 2021. This delayed the inclusion of these members in this report until they had transitioned off CERB and EI on to LTD payments.

Please refer to Appendix 1 for tables with the number of members in each claim category by age range at March 31, 2021.

The average caseload for five full time equivalent (four full time and two contracted part time) rehabilitation counsellors at March 31, 2021 was 62, with 43.7% of the average caseload comprised of early rehabilitation referrals during the weekly indemnity (WI) period, compared to 39% at December 31, 2020. Early referrals normally comprised approximately 50% of cases but had declined in 2020.

56 members returned to work (RTW) from January 1 to March 31, 2021. 46 members RTW from STD and ten from LTD. The total RTW was less than half compared to 115 RTW for the first quarter in 2020.

Rehabilitation expenditures (unaudited figures) for January to March 2021 totalled \$23,201 which was \$19,549 less than the YTD budget of \$42,750.

Over the period January 1 to March 31, 2021 one Canada Pension Disability benefit claim was approved with assistance from the Plan Office at the reconsideration appeal stage for a total projected offset of \$313,000.

NEW report in Appendix 2 on the 2020 LTD Milestones compared to the 2019 baseline.

## **NEW LTD CLAIMS APPROVED**

From January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021, the Plan approved 29 new LTD claims, compared to 41 new LTD claims approved over the same period in 2020.

## **CASELOADS**

Over the first three months of 2021 there were a total of 112 new referrals to rehabilitation services (STD\* and LTD) compared to the 116 new referrals for the same period in 2020.

At the end of March 2021, there were 311 cases assigned to five full time equivalent (FTE) rehabilitation counsellors (four full time and two part time contracted), for a caseload average of 62. This is in comparison to a total of 331 cases assigned to five FTE rehabilitation counsellors at the end of March 2020 and a caseload average of 66.

136 (44%) of the 311 rehabilitation cases assigned at March 31, 2021 were for members referred for early rehabilitation services during the weekly indemnity period. The number and timeliness of early referrals from the WI claims administrators suffered considerably since the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, but we are starting to notice an improvement in the receipt of early referrals so far in 2021.

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

## **RETURN TO WORK OUTCOMES**

56 members returned to work from January 1 to March 31, 2021, down considerably compared to 115 for the same quarter of 2020. Of the 56 members who returned to work, 46 were early STD rehabilitation cases (82%) and 10 were LTD cases (18%).

Of the 46 STD cases; 42 (91%) returned to work to the same employer and occupation, and four (9%) returned to a modified or another occupation with the same employer.

Of the 10 LTD cases; nine (90%) returned to work to the same employer and occupation, and one (10%) found work outside of the forest industry.

Overall, out of a total of 57 members who were on STD or LTD and fit to return to work, 56 (98%) successfully returned to work at time of case closure. During the STD period one member was fit to return to work but had no job available to return to.

Five rehabilitation cases were closed for reasons other than return to work or fitness to return to work. Four STD cases were closed because the members were not able to be located and they did not respond to contact efforts, and only one of these members later returned to work in the forest industry. One member transitioned from STD to a WCB claim.

There were nine rehabilitation cases closed for retirement in the first three months of 2021.

## **REHABILITATION EXPENSES**

Rehabilitation expenditures (unaudited figures) for January to March 2021 totalled \$23,201 which was \$19,549 less than the YTD budget of \$42,750. 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 (\$11,709). The other main expenses were the sponsorship of vocational assessments, education, and training programs to help members secure work in alternate occupations (\$7,713); costs of travel and accommodation to help members to access services (\$200), and psychological/clinical counselling services (\$3,369). Limits remain in effect for in-person services and recreation due to the public health and safety measures in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. It is likely that not all expenses for March have been invoiced yet when this report was written in mid-April.

## **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, 2021 they successfully represented one member's CPP-D appeal at the reconsideration stage for a total projected offset of \$313,000 up to the end of the month in which the member will reach 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.

## APPENDIX 1

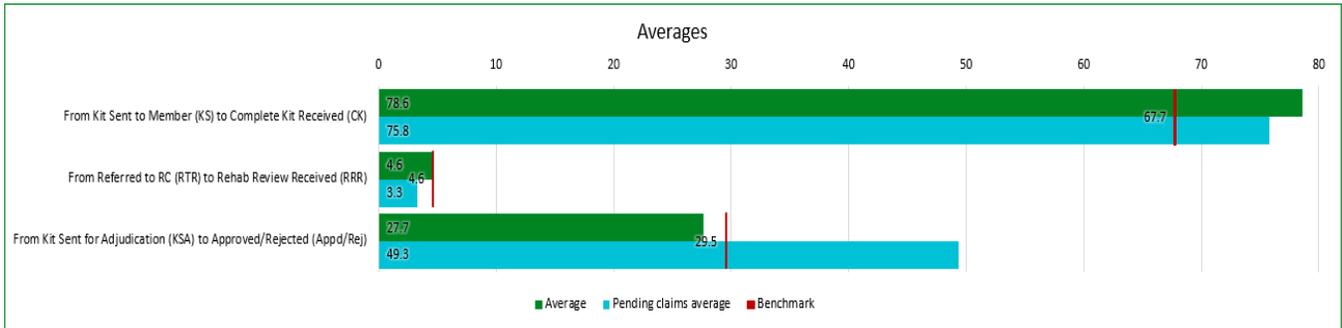
### AGE DISTRIBUTIONS FOR LTD CLAIM CATEGORIES – MARCH 31, 2021

Of the 475 members receiving LTD benefits at March 31, 2021, 282 (59.4%) were in Category “01” (permanent total disability); 180 (37.9%) were in Category “03” (temporary disability), and 13 (2.7%) 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	4	50%
41 - 50	45	16%	41 - 50	1	12.5%
51 – 54	53	18.8%	51 - 54	2	25%
55-59	173	61.3%	55-59	1	12.5%
>60	3	1.1%			
AVG: 54	Total: 282	100%	AVG: 44	Total: 8	100%

CATEGORY 02A			CATEGORY 03		
Age	Count	%	Age	Count	%
21 – 30	0	0%	21 – 30	10	5.6%
31 – 40	2	40%	31 – 40	29	16.1 %
41 – 50	2	40%	41 – 50	49	27.2%
51 – 54	0	0%	51 – 54	26	14.4%
55-59	0	0%	55-59	59	32.8%
>60	1	20%	>60	7	3.9%
AVG: 45	Total: 5	100%	AVG: 49	Total: 180	100%

## Appendix 2: NEW – LTD Milestones 2020 (green bar) versus 2019 baseline (red line)



- LTD Admin cycle for completed LTD applications:** 78.6 days in 2020 (green bar), compared to 67.7 days in 2019 (red line on chart). Impacted by delays in mail and delays to have medical forms completed during 2020.
- Rehab review cycle:** 4.6 days in 2020 (green bar), with no change from 2019 (red line). Includes third party WCB review forms.
- Adjudication decision:** 27.7 days in 2020 (green bar), compared to 29.5 days in 2019. Claims pending adjudication (blue bar) typically have a longer duration when the adjudicator for FIDAS writes for further medical reports or details prior to a decision.

The LTD milestones for claims administration, rehabilitation reviews, and adjudication decisions were measured in calendar days based on the milestones recorded for LTD applications for members during 2020 in comparison to 2019. In 2020 the COVID 19 pandemic disrupted the service environment from mid-March 2020 forward. The transition for staff to work remotely for STD claims administration, LTD and FIDAS added challenges and delays. There were missing or delayed early rehab referrals and max notices from the STD plans which delayed the sending of some LTD application kits. Mail services were delayed at times. Medical clinics & rehab service providers closed for 2 to 3 months and re-opened at reduced capacity and/or virtually, so it was difficult for member's claim forms to be completed and their recovery times were extended. It is expected that when the pandemic situation settles there will be improvements in the average timeframes for the milestones.

## 2020: a snapshot of the milestones and status results for LTD application kits in 225 cases

