

Via email

September 20, 2018

Ms. Elizabeth Witmer, Chair
Workplace Safety & Insurance Board
200 Front Street West
Toronto ON M5V 3J1

and

Mr. Tom Teahen, President & CEO
Workplace Safety & Insurance Board
200 Front Street West
Toronto ON M5V 3J1

Dear Ms. Witmer and Mr. Teahen:

Re: New WSIB Operating Model - Feedback

I have some very early observations on the new WSIB Operating Model which may be of some value to you. These observations may be isolated examples or representative of early process issues which have since been corrected. However, if otherwise, if not already in place, I would suggest that a high level review mechanism be established so that any needed remedial action may be considered at the earliest practical moment.

Case #1

On August 23, 2018 my office called WSIB to obtain a case update. Our shorthand observations follow. Advised there was no longer a single Case Manager (CM) assigned. Case belongs to a team of CMs. On hold 30+ minutes. Spoke to the 'live answer' CM. Received update. Asked for CM's direct number for future contacts. Request denied. All calls addressed in a queue. It gets handled by a team of CMs and not one specific CM. Were advised need to call the general inquiries line every time, and then be transferred to the team every time, and wait to speak to whomever is on the 'live telephone queue' that day.

When questioned further on this process the CM advised that this is part of the new model rolled out on July 3, 2018. A claim will only be assigned to a specific CM if there is ongoing lost time with no chance of a return to work any time soon.

Case #2

On August 9, 2018, our client, after being on hold for 36 minutes, spoke to a supervisor to discuss concerns with the case.

On August 28, 2018, after being on hold for 50 minutes, tried to speak to the same supervisor. Advised would need to be transferred to the CM team. A second person picked up the call and attempted to transfer to the supervisor unsuccessfully. Called WSIB again. On hold again. Asked to be transferred directly to supervisor and was transferred. Then spoke to supervisor who advised that to avoid lengthy telephone wait times "intake" could put information on the file.

On August 28, 2018 tried this suggested process. Attempted to confirm that WSIB had certain information. Was advised matter must be addressed with CM. Was put on hold for 35 minutes in order to speak to a CM. The client advises that the CM was “disgruntled” and seemed frustrated. While the general inquiries desk tries to provide as much information as possible, they are not familiar with the files and are unable to assist with issues which are not already documented or determined in the file.

Case #3

On September 5, 2018 client called WSIB to ask if surgery is approved. Intake forwarded call to CM team. On hold 56 minutes. CM suggested employer to seek update from worker and not WSIB (as nothing on file).

Case #4

On a recent call, client on hold for 50 minutes before speaking to CM. What should have been a short call took 25 minutes as CM not familiar with the file (due to “queue” protocol).

Concluding observations/comments

The telephone is now a less viable means of communication with the WSIB than it was. With that noted, I must add that telephone communications before the changes were not particularly effective and were normally facilitated through leaving messages, both ways. Person-to-person contact was not always easily facilitated. I fully understand the need for a change. It is my view that management was correct to attempt to engineer performance improvements. Past performance should not be the expected standard going forward. *The simple utilization of email communication between the WSIB and its client public may well reap significant efficiency gains. It will certainly likely be more efficient than past and current approaches. Perhaps it would be advantageous to expedite development of this approach.*

Correspondence, we were informed, now also gets forwarded to a queue rather than a specific CM. The queues, we are told, get very busy, and are currently very backlogged. Delays, we are told, are to be expected. I should add that since these changes, our client contacts typically routinely conclude with some comment on client dissatisfaction with the new process. Clients report that CMs seem angry and frustrated. This is a new phenomenon. From this, and while even based on only a few experiences, I conclude that the anticipated service delivery improvements may not meet expectations.

If not already underway, I would strongly urge the WSIB to implement an immediate and “real-time” feedback process to assess customer satisfaction/criticism/advice. If these few calls accurately reflect the new process, I suspect that this issue will only grow in intensity. I add that a CM has volunteered with us that “*we are all very frustrated with this*” (her words) and overwhelmed with the new process. In fact, the CM presented a personal appeal that we voice concerns so that senior management acquires an awareness of actual day-to-day experiences.

A response is not required. I suggest though that this be discussed at the upcoming series of Chair Advisory Group meetings currently being scheduled.

Regards,



L.A. Liversidge