

## Report to Corporate Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Corporate Services Committee

**From:** John Paradis, Deputy City Manager, Enterprise Supports

**Subject:** Employee Attendance 2023

**Date:** March 25, 2024

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Enterprise Supports, the following Report BE RECEIVED for information purposes.

## Executive Summary

On March 19, 2008, the then Board of Control endorsed the recommendation from Civic Administration to provide regular reporting on employee absenteeism and attendance to Council.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the City of London's level of attendance in 2023, as well as outline processes involved to ensure employees have safe and early return to work following an absence from the workplace.

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

Council's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan for the City of London (the "City") identifies several strategic areas of focus including "The City as a leader in Public Service". Supporting employee attendance is one indicator of 'safe, respectful, diverse, and healthy workplace'.

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- [Corporate Services Committee – March 20, 2023 – Employee Attendance 2022](#)
- [Corporate Services Committee – May 9, 2022 – Employee Attendance 2021](#)
- [Corporate Services Committee – May 10, 2021 – Employee Absenteeism 2020](#)
- [Corporate Services Committee – July 13, 2020 – Employee Absenteeism 2019](#)
- [Corporate Services Committee – May 28, 2019 – Employee Absenteeism 2018](#)

Additional Annual reports to Corporate Services Committee (2009 to 2018).

### 2.0 Discussion and Considerations

#### 2.1 Overview of Paid Benefits

The Corporation is committed to maintaining a high standard of attendance, recognizing that it is an expectation of employment that all employees are responsible for their prompt and regular attendance at work. To support staff in times of illness or injury, the Corporation provides paid time off through:

- Paid Sick Time
- Short term disability (STD)
- Long term disability (LTD)
- Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB)
- Pandemic Related Absence (for 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023)

## 2.2 Workplace Wellness

Civic Administration works collaboratively with employees, Unions/Association, and insurers to implement supports and resources to provide employees a safe and healthy workplace. Historically these initiatives have included mental health strategy, flu clinics, lunch and learns, training, Employee Assistance Program, medical surveillance programs, online wellness information library, wellness Wednesdays, screensavers etc.

Civic Administration continues to build and expand upon these initiatives with a focus on wellness and mental health. Additional focus continues to be upon needs related to supporting a hybrid model as we continue to pilot more permanent alternate work strategies.

## 2.3 Claims Management

Civic Administration works together with employees regarding applying for Sick, STD, LTD and WSIB benefits. This includes meeting with employees to ensure they understand the process and making sure they provide the appropriate documentation to the applicable party and/or insurer for determination of eligibility for benefits.

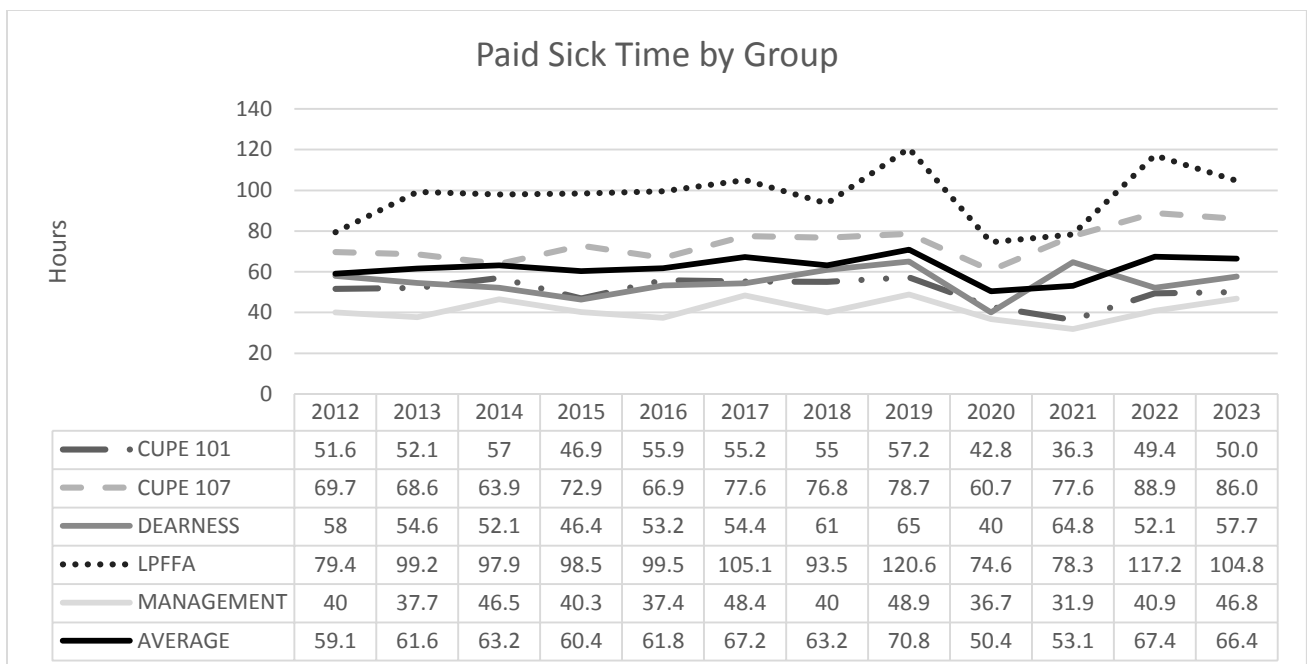
During the lifetime of a claim, Civic Administration maintains regular communication with the employee, manager, and insurer (if applicable) to ensure:

- ongoing medical documentation is provided to support the absence and ongoing benefit entitlement.
- the employee is referred to the appropriate health care provider.
- the employee is seeking and adhering to the recommended treatment plan.
- appropriate benefits are issued in accordance with the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act ('WSIA')*, contracts of insurance, applicable collective agreements, and applicable policies and/or procedures; and,
- modified work is offered, as required.

## 2.4 Paid Sick Time

Most full-time employees and some part time employees are eligible for paid sick leave. Sick leave is payable at 100 percent of an employee's regular earnings to the extent of their sick leave credits. Sick leave earning provisions vary across employee groups. Eligibility for sick leave is dependent on an employee providing medical documentation in accordance with the applicable collective agreement and/or relevant policies and procedures.

During 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, sick time was influenced by both the COVID19 pandemic and transitioning many employees working remotely. 2023 was the first year where COVID 19 had less impact upon attendance based upon change to public health guidelines other than in the Dearness Home. The Corporation's average lost hours due to paid sick leave decreased from 67.4 hours in 2022 to 66.4 hours in 2023. In 2023, CUPE 101, Dearness, and Management have experienced an increase in sick hours. The 2023 overall average decreased slightly and remains lower than the average pre-pandemic of 70.8 from 2019.



Note: Management Employees paid sick and STD benefits are combined into one Program and reported collectively under Paid Sick.

## 2.5 Employee Attendance Support Plan

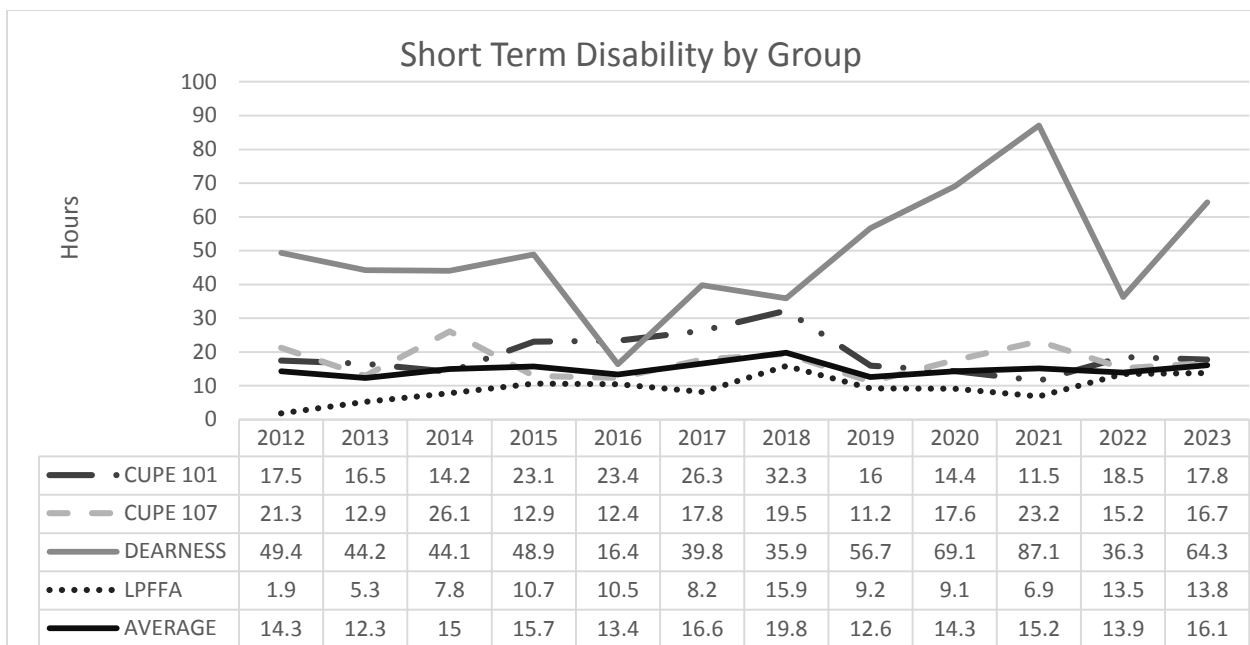
The Employee Attendance Support Plan was implemented to promote and maintain standards of attendance for all employees and to provide supports to employees to achieve regular and improved attendance.

The Plan deals with non-culpable (non-blameworthy) absences, specifically absences arising from injury or illness that do not arise from a disability. The Plan ensures that attendance is managed through consistent non-disciplinary intervention strategies across the Corporation’s work groups to assist employees in achieving regular and improved attendance. Due to the pandemic, Civic Administration placed the program on hold to support public health messages to stay home when presenting symptoms of COVID-19. As a result, the City’s program has not been formally active since 2020. Staff who have required additional supports to attend the workplace in person or remotely have been assisted on a case-by-case basis. The Employee Attendance Support Plan was re-launched on January 1, 2024.

## 2.6 Short Term Disability (‘STD’)

Within the Corporation there are several STD plans that vary based on employee group. Typically, this benefit commences upon exhaustion of sick time or a five-day waiting period and pays between 60 to 75 percent of the employee’s pre-disability earnings. Medical documentation is provided by the employee to the insurer to determine if the employee qualifies for STD benefits in accordance with the relevant contract of insurance. Generally, if approved, STD benefits are payable for up to 26 weeks at which time the employee may be entitled to make application for LTD. During the STD period, medical documentation is required to determine ongoing entitlement.

The Corporation’s average lost hours due to STD claims has increased from 13.9 hours in 2022 to 16.1 hours in 2023. Employees in CUPE 107, Dearness, and Fire experienced an increase in the average time on STD. As the medical system continues to adjust to address aspects such as surgical back logs, we have seen some increase in STD that may be attributed to medical interventions that were delayed and are now occurring. STD claim types across groups have mental health claims as the top contributor followed by muscle skeletal and connective tissue injuries, which supports Civic Administration’s continued focus on wellness and health and safety programs.



Note: Management Employees paid sick and STD benefits are combined into one Program and reported collectively under Paid Sick

## 2.7 Return to Work Program

The Corporation has a pro-active Return to Work Program based on a “functional” model. This model focuses on the employee’s abilities and capabilities, rather than their specific medical condition.

Generally, when the Corporation is notified of an employee’s illness or injury, the employee is contacted and provided documentation to take to their health care practitioner so their capabilities can be identified, and applicable supports can be provided. Civic Administration contacts the employee’s manager to identify potential modified work options, if appropriate. Civic Administration also maintains a list of potential suitable modified work options that are available across the organization. If an employee cannot be accommodated in their pre-disability position, alternative work may also be explored with the appropriate Union/Association – Management Return to Work Committee, where applicable.

Reasonable attempts are made to ensure employees, who are medically fit to return to work, do so in a timely manner. Employee progress is monitored with the objective of returning the employee to their pre-disability position. If this is not possible, permanent accommodation outside their pre-disability position is considered.

It should be noted that the Corporation’s Claims Management and Return to Work Programs have been successful in ensuring employees an early and safe return to work and closing 86 of 103 active claims during 2023. Civic Administration has noted an increase in Short Term Disability claims in 2023.

### Short Term Disability – Opened and Closed Claims

Year	Total New Claims Opened in Year	Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year*
2012	78	81
2013	67	63
2014	79	76
2015	76	81
2016	89	79
2017	105	91
2018	109	107
2019	90	75
2020	86	79
2021	102	81

<b>2022</b>	89	80
<b>2023</b>	103	86

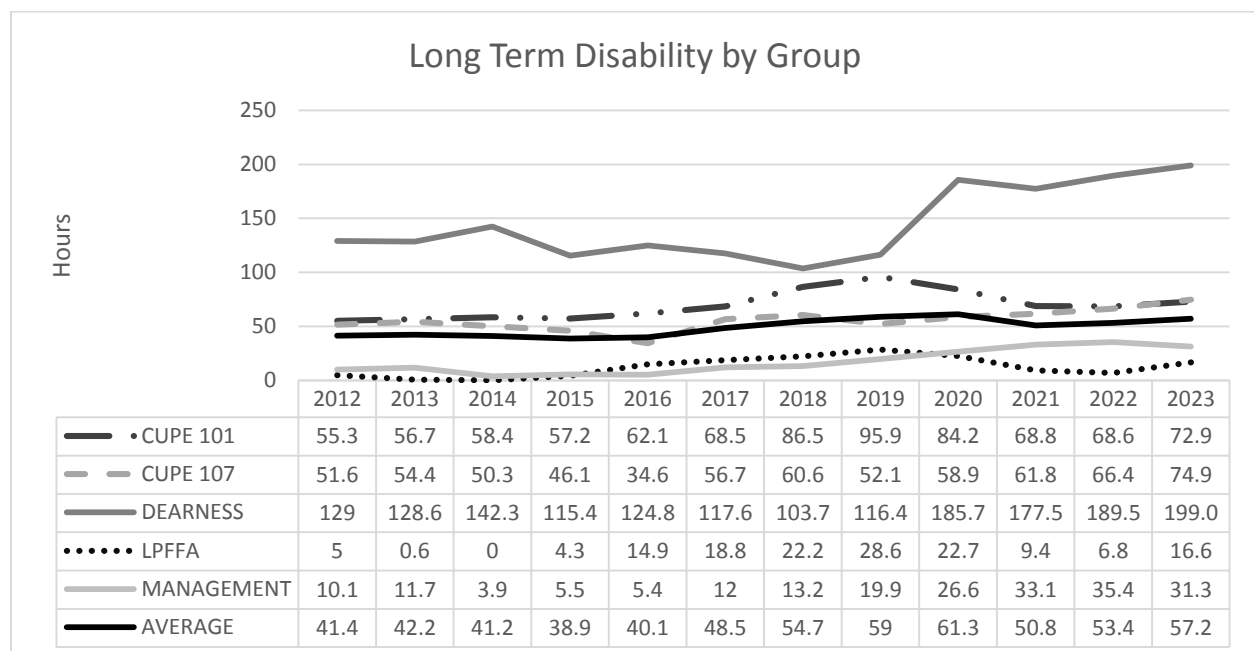
\*Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year may include claims opened in prior years.

## 2.8 Long Term Disability Claims ('LTD')

Upon exhaustion of STD benefits, or sick leave benefits for those employee groups who do not have STD benefits, employees may be entitled to apply for LTD benefits. LTD benefits typically pay between 66 to 75 percent of an employee's pre-disability earnings. Further medical documentation is required to determine if the employee qualifies for LTD benefits in accordance with the relevant contract of insurance. If approved, the first two years of LTD benefits are assessed based on an employee's ability to perform their own job. Generally, after two years, LTD benefits are assessed based on an employee's ability to perform any job.

The Corporation's average lost hours due to LTD claims has increased from 53.4 hours in 2022 to 57.2 hours in 2023.

Similar to STD claims, for LTD claim types across groups have mental health claims as the top contributor followed by muscle skeletal and connective tissue injuries, which supports Civic Administration's continued focus on wellness and health and safety programs.



The Corporation has approximately 47 employees on LTD whom the insurance carrier has deemed “unlikely to ever to return to work.” These are claims in which there is no reasonable likelihood that the employee will ever return to work with or without active claims management.

### Long Term Disability – Opened and Closed Claims

Year	Total New Claims Opened in Year	Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year*
<b>2012</b>	80	23
<b>2013</b>	75	22
<b>2014</b>	75	24
<b>2015</b>	79	24
<b>2016</b>	75	24

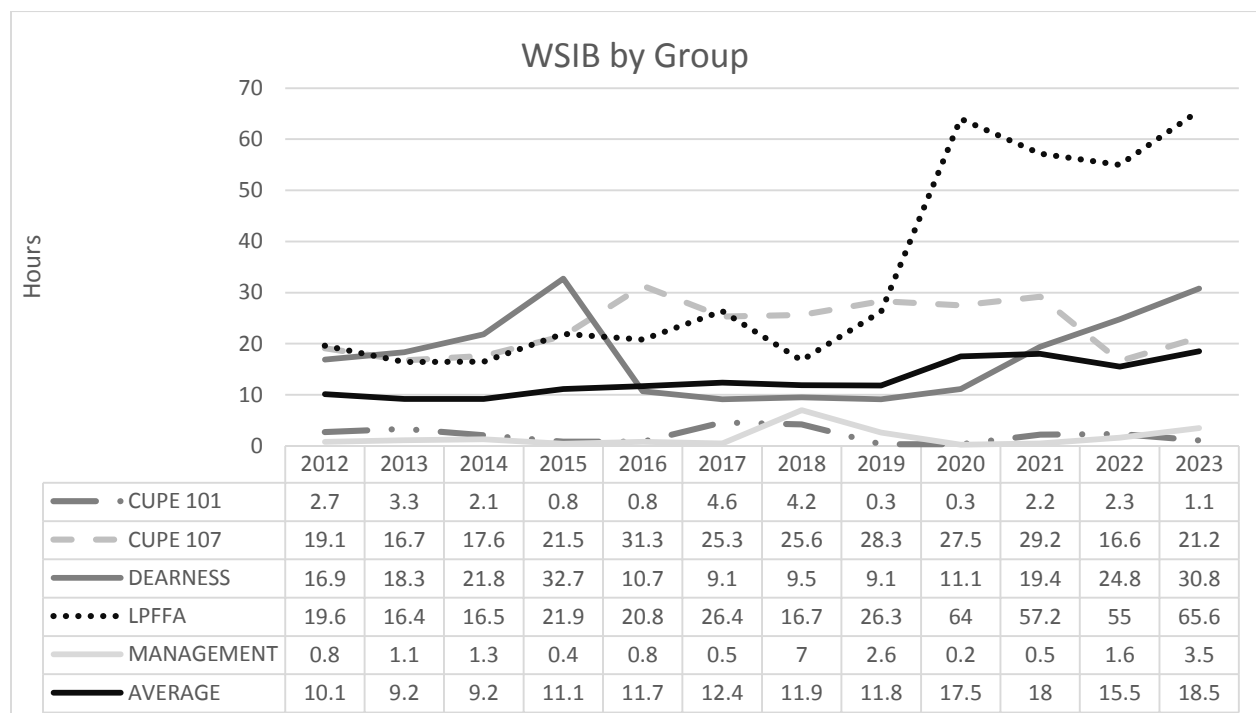
<b>2017</b>	86	19
<b>2018</b>	111	35
<b>2019</b>	104	26
<b>2020</b>	109	33
<b>2021</b>	103	29
<b>2022</b>	110	25
<b>2023</b>	118	26

\*Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year may include claims opened in prior years.

## 2.9 Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Claims ('WSIB')

WSIB benefits are payable to any employee who is deemed to have incurred a workplace injury or illness as determined by WSIB. To qualify for WSIB loss of earning benefits, employees are required to submit medical documentation to authorize any absence. WSIB loss of earning benefits are typically paid at 85 percent of an employee's pre disability net earnings. It is important to note that Fire is the only area that has claims for presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other illnesses including 19 types of cancers with 31 specific cancer diagnosis deemed presumptive by WSIB. Presumption allows for faster access to WSIB benefits, resources, and timely treatment. As an example, once a first responder is diagnosed with PTSD by either a psychiatrist or a psychologist, the claims process to be eligible for WSIB benefits will be expedited, without the need to prove a causal link between PTSD and a workplace event.

The Corporation's average lost hours due to WSIB claims has increased from 15.5 hours in 2022 to 18.5 hours in 2023.



The Corporation has approximately 8 employees on WSIB whom the insurance Carrier has deemed “unlikely to ever to return to work.” These are claims in which there is no reasonable likelihood that the employee will ever return to work with or without active claims management.

The Corporation's Claims Management and Return to Work Program focuses on ensuring employees an early and safe return to work. This has resulted in a return-to-work rate of approximately 95% in 2023.

## WSIB – Returned to Work %

Year	Claims	Returned to Work	% Returned to Work
2012	247	245	99%
2013	225	224	100%
2014	234	232	99%
2015	265	263	99%
2016	207	205	99%
2017	237	234	99%
2018	244	240	98%
2019	265	256	97%
2020	217	197	91%
2021	214	211	99%
2022	192	177	92%
2023	246	233	95%

Note: this chart reflects the number of claims opened during a year and how many of those same claims have returned to work

### 2.10 Paid Pandemic

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace during 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, the City of London provided applicable employees with one pandemic incident. In 2023, employees were provided with up to 5 calendar days if they were required to self isolate under Provincial guidelines. This program was ended January 1, 2024.

The number of incidents decreased from 973 in 2022 to 511 in 2023. In 2023, the average number of hours per employee paid was 6.1 hours, which decreased from 15.5 hours 2022.

### Paid Pandemic – Average Lost Hours 2020 – 2023

Employee Group	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	# of Incidents	Average Hours	# of Incidents	Average Hours	# of Incidents	Average Hours	# of Incidents	Average Hours
CUPE 101	124	7.1	46	1.5	231	8.3	110	3.1
CUPE 107	93	8.1	95	5.9	320	24.9	199	12.3
DEARNESS	34	5.2	31	5.3	85	20.3	37	5.7
LPFFA	109	13.2	134	15.1	249	31.2	127	10.9
MANAGEMENT	71	7	11	0.8	88	4.2	38	1.3
Total Number of Incidents	431		317		973		511	
Average Hours per Employee		8.2		4.8		15.5		6.1

Note: Pandemic Pay began in 2020 at commencement of COVID-19 Pandemic

## Conclusion

Civic Administration remains committed to working with employees and Unions/ Association with respect to attendance. Together, we have taken steps to improve the level of attendance in the workplace. As previously discussed, fluctuations in attendance levels are expected and will occur over time due to a variety of factors. Civic Administration monitors these fluctuations to determine whether any long-term concerns exist, and actions are required.

Furthermore, as part of the People Plan, efforts are underway to consider the impacts of mental health on employee attendance. Working with employees to identify strategies to assist will be key in the years moving forward. This is part of the larger strategy being undertaken by Civic Administration to develop a renewed and shared vision for a safe workplace.

**Prepared by:**

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**Recommended by:**

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