

Report to Corporate Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Corporate Services Committee
From: Michael Goldrup, Director of People Services
Subject: Employee Absenteeism 2020
Date: May 10, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Michael Goldrup, Director of People Services, and concurrence of Lynne Livingstone, City Manager, that the following Report be received for information purposes.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the City of London's level of absenteeism in 2020, as well as outline the collaborative processes involved in ensuring employees a safe and early return to work following an absence from the workplace.

Civic Administration remains committed to continuous improvements with respect to assisting employees off work due to medical reasons. Despite these efforts, fluctuations in absenteeism levels are expected and will occur over time due to a variety of factors. Civic Administration monitors these fluctuations closely to determine whether any long term concerns exist and undertakes various initiatives as required.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

Council's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London (the "City") identifies several strategic areas of focus including "Leading in Public Service" by establishing the City as a leader in public service.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

Report to Corporate Services Committee – July 13, 2020 – Employee Absenteeism

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Overview of Claims Management, Return to Work Program and Statistics

The Corporation has various supports and resources available to assist employees that are off work due to medical reasons. Return to work supports include Union/Association - Management Return to Work Committees, modified work and accommodation programs, access to Occupational Health Physicians and Nurses, as well as benefits for Sick Leave, Short Term Disability (STD), Long Term Disability (LTD) and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits. Civic Administration works collaboratively with our employees, Unions/Association, and insurers to implement supports and resources (e.g., mental health strategy, flu clinics, lunch and learns, fitness programs, weight loss challenges, yoga classes, EAP, medical surveillance programs, wellness Wednesdays, screen savers etc.) in this regard to provide employees a safe and healthy workplace. Civic Administration continues to build on these initiatives.

2.2.1 Claims Management (Sick, STD, LTD, WSIB)

Civic Administration works together with our employees in regard to 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.

2.2.2 Employee Attendance Support Program

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. The Corporation recognizes that, from time to time, illness or injury may result in absenteeism. The Employee Attendance Support Plan is designed 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 absenteeism is managed through consistent non-disciplinary intervention strategies across the Corporation's work groups to assist employees in achieving regular and improved attendance.

2.2.3 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.

2.2.4 Statistical Overview - Sick, STD, LTD, WSIB

2.2.5 Sick

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.

Despite the impacts of COVID-19, the Corporation's average lost hours due to paid sick has decreased from 70.8 hours in 2019 to 50.4 hours in 2020 (see Appendix A.1).

2.2.6 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 12.6 hours in 2019 to 14.3 hours in 2020 (see Appendix B.1).

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 79 of 86 active claims during 2020 (see Appendix B.2). Civic Administration has noted an increase in Short Term Disability claims in 2020 (see Appendix B.2).

2.2.7 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 make application 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 59.0 hours in 2019 to 61.3 hours in 2020 (see Appendix C.1).

It is important to note that the Corporation has approximately 58 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. With the removal of these LTD claimants, the Corporation's average lost hours due to LTD claims has increased from 23.4 hours in 2019 to 26.2 hours in 2020 (see Appendix C.2).

Civic Administration has noted an increase in LTD claims in 2020 (see Appendix C.3) and will continue to monitor.

2.2.8 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.

The Corporation's average lost hours due to WSIB claims has increase from 11.8 hours in 2019 to 17.5 hours in 2020 (see Appendix D.1). This increase is primarily because of the increase in WSIB incidents in the London Fire Department related to presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder.

Like LTD, it is important to note that 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. With the removal of these WSIB claims the average lost hours due to WSIB increased from 6.5 hours in 2019 to 13.6 hours 2020 (see Appendix D.2.).

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 91% (see Appendix D.3.).

2.2.9 Time off Based on Total Annual Hours

The chart in Appendix E.1 provides information regarding the percentage of total time off based on annual hours typically scheduled by employee group and by category of claim.

Conclusion

Civic Administration remains committed to working with employees and Unions/ Association with respect to absenteeism. Together we have taken steps to reduce the level of absenteeism in the workplace. As previously discussed, fluctuations in absenteeism levels are expected and will occur over time due to a variety of factors. Civic Administration monitors these fluctuations closely to determine whether any long-term concerns exist, and actions are required. As noted, the age demographics of City employees continues to change. Specifically, the percentage of employees that fall within the age range of 40 to 75 continues to increase across most employee groups, albeit some greater than others. It is expected that the percentage of employees that fall within these age ranges will continue to increase over the next few years. This has impacted absenteeism levels.

Furthermore, efforts are currently underway in Service Areas to consider the impacts of mental health on employee absenteeism. Working with our 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 safe workplaces.

Prepared by: Gary Bridge, Manager, Human Resources and Corporate Services
Recommended by: Michael Goldrup, Director of People Services
Concurred by: Lynne Livingstone, City Manager

Appendix A.1 Paid Sick – Average Lost Hours 2007 - 2020

Employee Group	2007 Hrs	2008 Hrs	2009 Hrs	2010 Hrs	2011 Hrs	2012 Hrs	2013 Hrs	2014 Hrs	2015 Hrs	2016 Hrs	2017 Hrs	2018 Hrs	2019 Hrs	2020 Hrs
CUPE 101	60.9	52.1	49.7	47.5	51.4	51.6	52.1	57.0	46.9	55.9	55.2	55.0	57.2	42.8
CUPE 107	80.7	67.4	64.2	69.4	70.3	69.7	68.6	63.9	72.9	66.9	77.6	76.8	78.7	60.7
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.0N	33.6	21.6	67.9	50.6	45.2	36.2	27.8	52.2	66.1	25.7	19.5	91.9	58.7	16.4
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	81.9	52.3	57.9	71.0	57.0	53.5	54.7	50.9	45.4	54.8	57.0	59.3	66.5	40.9
LPFFA	118.2	97.6	96.1	95.2	86.8	79.4	99.2	97.9	98.5	99.5	105.1	93.5	120.6	74.6
MANAGEMENT	44.5	33.6	37.6	35.8	35.3	40.0	37.7	46.5	40.3	37.4	48.4	40.0	48.9	36.7
RNFT	-	-	97.0	89.7	174.8	183.5	87.7	78.2	40.6	57.6	45.8	55.0	41.3	50.7
AVERAGE	74.8	61.0	60.2	60.7	60.0	59.1	61.6	63.2	60.4	61.8	67.2	63.2	70.8	50.4

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

Appendix B.1 - Short Term Disability - Average Lost Hours 2007 – 2020

Employee Group	2007 Hrs	2008 Hrs	2009 Hrs	2010 Hrs	2011 Hrs	2012 Hrs	2013 Hrs	2014 Hrs	2015 Hrs	2016 Hrs	2017 Hrs	2018 Hrs	2019 Hrs	2020 Hrs
CUPE 101	13.3	19.0	21.5	12.7	16.5	17.5	16.5	14.2	23.1	23.4	26.3	32.3	16.0	14.4
CUPE 107	15.0	10.3	9.6	9.1	4.8	21.3	12.9	26.1	12.9	12.4	17.8	19.5	11.2	17.6
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	56.0	88.1	7.6	27.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.0	67.5	130.0	79.0	64.0
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	31.4	38.2	56.6	54.9	39.3	54.8	49.0	39.0	53.8	16.6	40.0	31.7	58.0	72.8
LPFFA	2.8	6.2	2.5	4.8	8.9	1.9	5.3	7.8	10.7	10.5	8.2	15.9	9.2	9.1
MANAGEMENT	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	.7***
RNFT	-	-	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	212.0**	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
AVERAGE	10.5	12.3	13.0	10.4	10.5	*14.3	12.3	15.0	15.7	13.4	16.6	19.8	12.6	14.3

*result of historical change

**Due to the small employee group, one absence can have a significant impact

*** Note a Local 101 employee was in a temporary Mgmt position

Appendix B.2 - Short Term Disability – Opened and Closed Claims

Year	Total New Claims Opened in Year	Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year*
2007	61	54
2008	70	60
2009	71	68
2010	70	88
2011	81	91
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

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

Appendix C.1 Long Term Disability – Average Lost Hours 2007 – 2020

Employee Group	2007 Hrs	2008 Hrs	2009 Hrs	2010 Hrs	2011 Hrs	2012 Hrs	2013 Hrs	2014 Hrs	2015 Hrs	2016 Hrs	2017 Hrs	2018 Hrs	2019 Hrs	2020 Hrs
CUPE 101	32.1	31.4	43.2	55.2	49.6	55.3	56.7	58.4	57.2	62.1	68.5	86.5	95.9	84.2
CUPE 107	86.5	75.2	67.0	28.0*	52.2	51.6	54.4	50.3	46.1	34.6	56.7	60.6	52.1	58.9
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	0.0	87.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.5	14.0	9.0	198.0**
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	94.6	107.7	129.3	189.5	186.5	143.1	142.7	157.2	127.1	137.6	130.0	114.2	128.6	193.7
LPFFA	0	0.4	5.7	1.2	3.6	5.0	0.6	0	4.3	14.9	18.8	22.2	28.6	22.7
MANAGEMENT	29.9	17.9	15.7	15.6	13.0	10.1	11.7	3.9	5.5	5.4	12.0	13.2	19.9	26.6
RNFT	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
AVERAGE	42.4	38.3	41.5	38.5*	42.3	41.4	42.2	41.2	38.9	40.1	48.5	54.7	59.0	61.3

*Note: includes a significant historical adjustment as a result of a WSIB appeals decision

**substantial increase is due to small number of employees in this group and impact of 1 person on LTD.

Appendix C.2 - Long Term Disability WITHOUT Claims which have been deemed “Unlikely to Ever Return to Work” – Average Lost Hours 2007 – 2020

Employee Group	2007 Hrs	2008 Hrs	2009 Hrs	2010 Hrs	2011 Hrs	2012 Hrs	2013 Hrs	2014 Hrs	2015 Hrs	2016 Hrs	2017 Hrs	2018 Hrs	2019 Hrs	2020 Hrs
CUPE 101	9.6	9.1	13.1	17.7	14.0	20.6	12.7	14.3	17.4	24.5	18.2	27.3	38.6	28.3
CUPE 107	12.1	9.9	10.2	11.3	6.3	14.4	12.3	13.7	14.4	(4.1)*	18.1	15.5	11.0	17.3
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	0.0	82.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.5	14.0	9.0	198.0
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	15.1	23.4	48.9	84.2	53.5	48.0	45.2	42.0	23.9	23.4	16.2	8.8	30.0	80.3
LPFFA	-	0.4	5.6	1.2	3.6	5.5	0.6	-	4.3	14.9	18.9	21.2	12.6	19.3
MANAGEMENT	6.3	4.6	1.0	4.9	2.6	0.0	4.3	0.0	5.5	5.4	3.3	5.7	0.0	0.0
RNFT	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
AVERAGE	8.1	7.9	10.7	14.7	10.2	14.0	10.6	10.5	12.4	12.3*	15.0	17.7	23.4	25.2

*Note: includes a significant historical adjustment as a result of a WSIB appeals decision

Appendix C.3 - Long Term Disability – Opened and Closed Claims

Year	Total New Claims Opened in Year	Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year*
2007	67	21
2008	66	17
2009	66	11
2010	75	22
2011	70	18
2012	80	23
2013	75	22
2014	75	24
2015	79	24
2016	75	24
2017	86	19
2018	111	35
2019	104	26
2020	109	33

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

Appendix D.1 - WSIB – Average Lost Hours - 2007 – 2020

Employee Group	2007 Hrs	2008 Hrs	2009 Hrs	2010 Hrs	2011 Hrs	2012 Hrs	2013 Hrs	2014 Hrs	2015 Hrs	2016 Hrs	2017 Hrs	2018 Hrs	2019 Hrs	2020 Hrs
CUPE 101	3.8	2.3	4.2	5.6	5.2	2.7	3.3	2.1	0.8	0.8	4.6	4.2	0.3	0.3
CUPE 107	30.9	34.0	28.1	52.4*	28.4	19.1	16.7	17.6	21.5	31.3	25.3	25.6	28.3	27.5
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	41.9	61.7	25.8	27.0	18.7	18.7	19.7	24.1	36.0	11.8	10.0	10.5	10.1	12.3
LPFFA	3.5	9.8	18.2	8.5	10.7	19.6	16.4	16.5	21.9	20.8	26.4	16.7	26.3	64.0*
MANAGEMENT	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.8	1.1	1.3	0.4	0.8	0.5	7.0	2.6	0.2
RNFT	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
AVERAGE	11.9	14.3	13.1	17.6*	11.4	10.1	9.2	9.2	11.1	11.7	12.4	11.9	11.8	17.5

*Note: includes a significant historical adjustment as a result of a WSIB decision

Appendix D.2 – WSIB WITHOUT Claims which have been deemed “Unlikely to Ever Return to Work” – Average Lost Hours - 2007 – 2020

Employee Group	2007 Hrs	2008 Hrs	2009 Hrs	2010 Hrs	2011 Hrs	2012 Hrs	2013 Hrs	2014 Hrs	2015 Hrs	2016 Hrs	2017 Hrs	2018 Hrs	2019 Hrs	2020 Hrs
CUPE 101	3.8	2.3	4.2	5.6	2.8	0.3	0.9	2.1	0.8	0.8	4.6	4.2	0.3	0.1
CUPE 107	27.0	30.1	15.7	5.4	12.4	5.0	4.6	5.0	4.9	14.6	7.5	8.2	12.2	19.4
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.8	0.1	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	41.9	61.7	25.8	27.0	18.8	18.7	19.9	24.1	36.0	11.8	0.6	1.4	1.3	0.0
LPFFA	3.5	9.7	18.2	3.1	5.2	3.9	1.4	5.1	10.4	14.9	13.6	8.7	18.2	56.2
MANAGEMENT	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.8	1.0	1.4	0.4	0.8	0.5	6.9	2.6	0.2
RNFT	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
AVERAGE	10.9	13.3	10.0	5.2	5.9	3.2	3.0	4.4	5.3	6.9	5.7	6.3	6.5	13.6

Appendix D.3 - WSIB – Returned to Work %

Year	Claims	Returned to Work	% Returned to Work
2007	344	344	100%
2008	290	289	99%
2009	300	300	100%
2010	239	238	99%
2011	263	262	99%
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%

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

Appendix E.1 – Time off Based on Total Annual Hours – 2020

Employee Group	Paid Sick %	STD %	LTD %	WSIB %	Total %
CUPE 101	2.5%	0.8%	4.9%	0.0%	8.2%
CUPE 107	2.9%	0.8%	2.8%	1.5%	8.2%
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	0.8%	3.1%	9.5%	0.0%	13.3%
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	2.0%	3.6%	9.5%	0.6%	15.7%
LPFFA	3.5%	0.4%	1.1%	3.0%	8.0%
MANAGEMENT	2.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	3.5%
RNFT	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
AVERAGE	2.6%	0.7%	3.2%	1.0%	7.5%

Appendix E.2 – Time off Based on Total Annual Hours – 2020 WITHOUT Claims which have been deemed “Unlikely to Ever Return to Work”

Employee Group	Paid Sick %	STD %	LTD %	WSIB %	Total %
CUPE 101	2.5%	0.9%	1.7%	0.0%	5.1%
CUPE 107	3.0%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	5.6%
DEARNESS SEIU LOCAL 1.ON	0.8%	3.1%	9.5%	0.0%	13.3%
DEARNESS UNIFOR 302 (CAW)	2.1%	3.3%	4.3%	0.2%	9.9%
LPFFA	3.5%	0.4%	0.8%	2.7%	7.4%
MANAGEMENT	2.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	3.1%
RNFT	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
AVERAGE	2.7%	0.7%	1.3%	0.7%	5.5%