

Report to Corporate Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Corporate Services Committee
From: Jacqueline Davison,
Deputy City Manager Enterprise Supports
Subject: Employee Attendance 2021
Date: May 9, 2022

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Enterprise Supports that 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 2021, 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 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. Supporting employee attendance is one indicator of 'maintaining a safe and healthy workplace'.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

Report to Corporate Services Committee – May 10, 2021 – Employee Absenteeism

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)

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, fitness programs, weight loss challenges, yoga classes, Employee

Assistance Program, medical surveillance programs, wellness Wednesdays, screen savers etc.

Civic Administration continues to build on these initiatives and consider other needs related to supporting a remote workforce.

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.

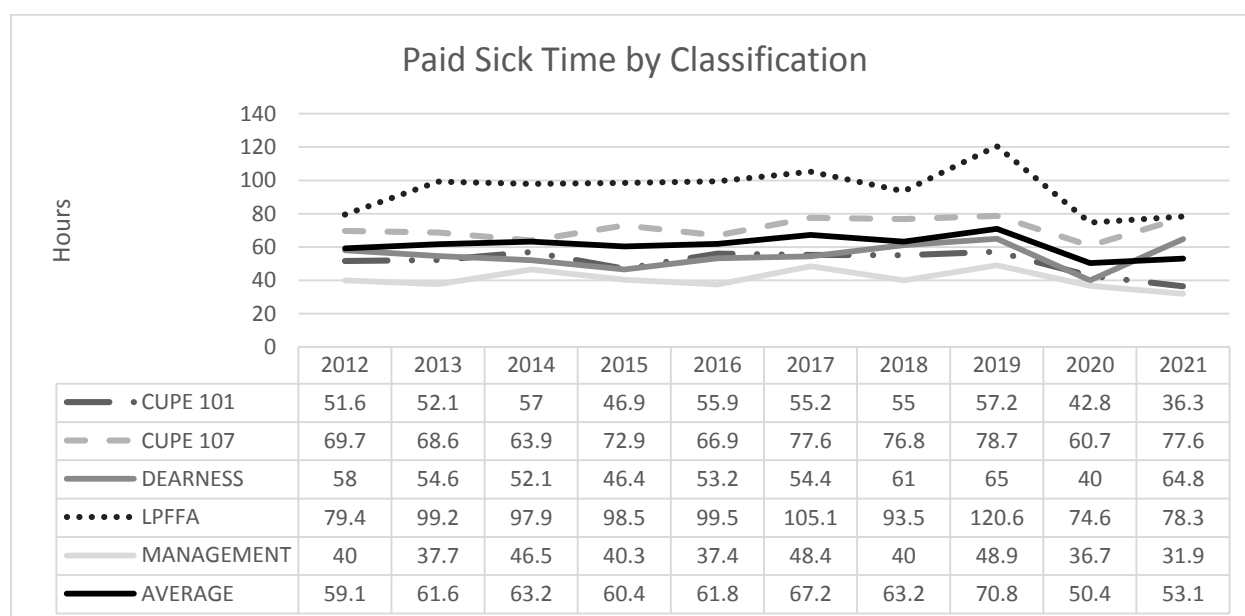
During the lifetime of a claim, Civic Administration maintains regular communication with the employee, manager, and insurer (if applicable) to ensure:

- 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 and 2021, sick time has been influenced by both the COVID19 pandemic and many employees working remotely. The Corporation's average lost hours due to paid sick leave reduced from 70.8 hours in 2019 to 50.4 hours in 2020 and has increased slightly to 53.1 hours in 2021. All groups have average paid sick time below the 2019 levels.



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

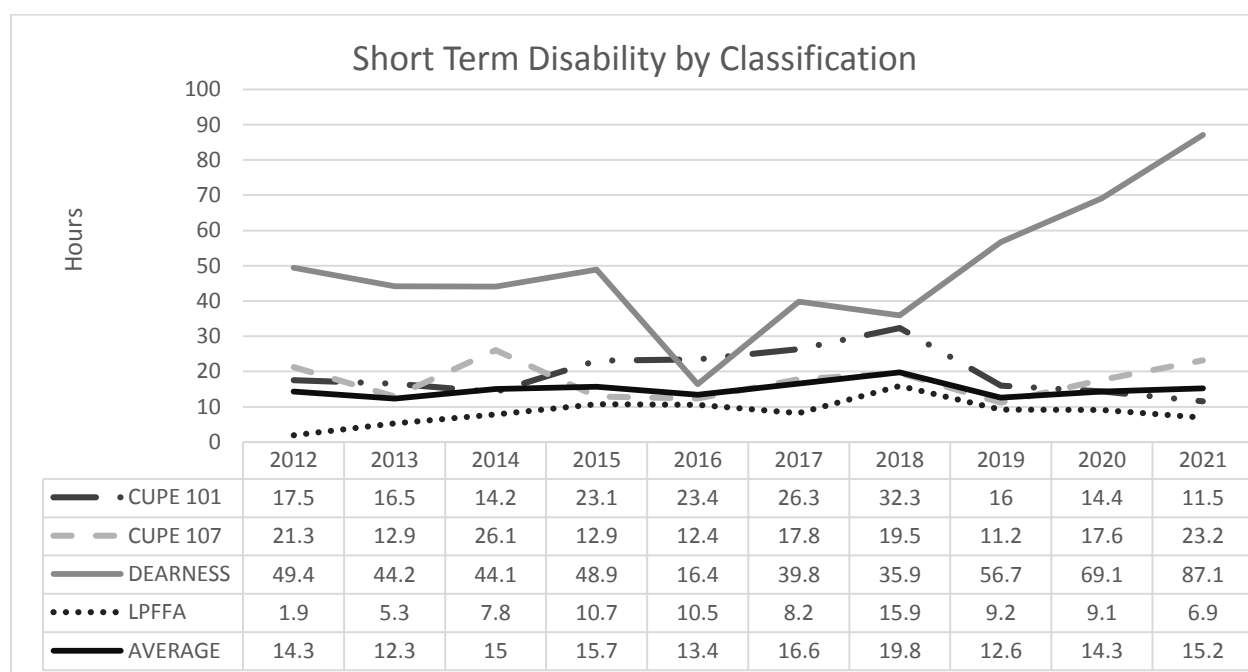
The Employee Attendance Support Plan was implemented to promote and maintain standards of attendance for all employees and to provide supports to employees to achieve regular and improved attendance.

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.

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 14.3 hours in 2020 to 15.2 hours in 2021. Employees in CUPE 107 and Dearness experienced an increase in the average time on STD.



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 81 of 102 active claims during 2021. Civic Administration has noted an increase in Short Term Disability claims in 2021

Short Term Disability – Opened and Closed Claims

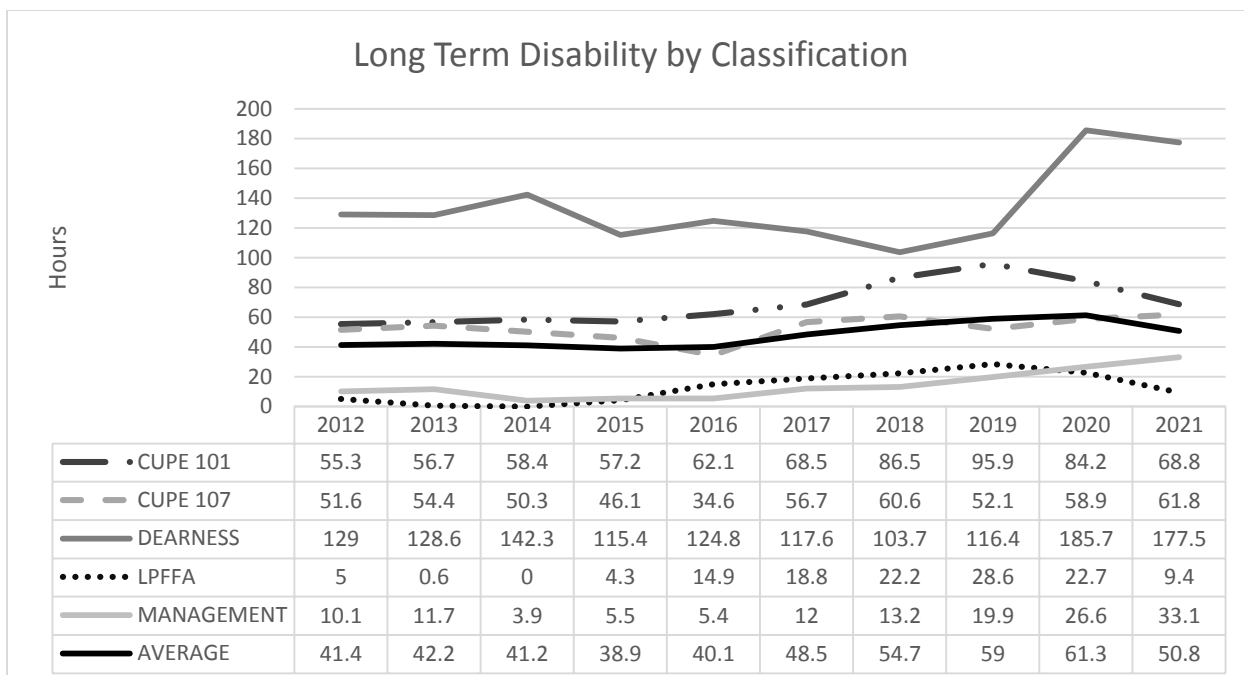
Year	Total New Claims Opened in Year	Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year*
2012	78	81
2013	67	63
2014	79	76
2015	76	81
2016	89	79
2017	105	91
2018	109	107
2019	90	75
2020	86	79
2021	102	81

*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 decreased from 61.3 hours in 2020 to 50.8 hours in 2021.



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.

Long Term Disability – Opened and Closed Claims

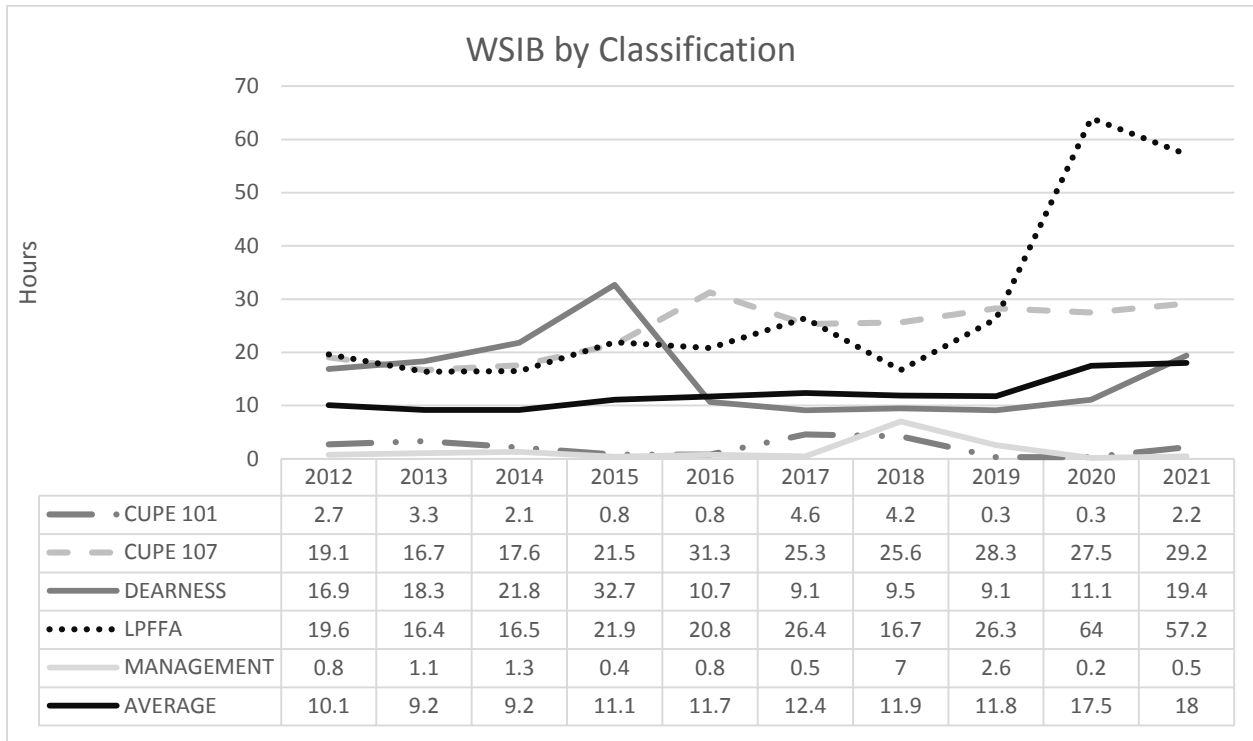
Year	Total New Claims Opened in Year	Total Claims Closed/RTW in Year*
2012	80	23
2013	75	22
2014	75	24
2015	79	24
2016	75	24
2017	86	19
2018	111	35
2019	104	26
2020	109	33
2021	103	29

*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.

The Corporation’s average lost hours due to WSIB claims has increased from 17.5 hours in 2020 to 18.0 hours in 2021. This increase in 2020 and 2021 includes an increase in WSIB incidents in the London Fire Department related to presumptive post-traumatic stress disorder.



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 99% in 2021.

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%

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 and 2021, the City of London provided applicable employees with one pandemic incident of up to 14 calendar days if they were required to self isolate under Provincial guidelines.

The number of incidents decreased from 431 in 2020 to 317 in 2021. In 2021 the average number of hours per employee paid was 4.8, which was reduced from 2020.

Paid Pandemic – Average Lost Hours 2020 – 2021

Employee Group	2020		2021	
	# of Incidents	Average Hours	# of Incidents	Average Hours
CUPE 101	124	7.1	46	1.5
CUPE 107	93	8.1	95	5.9
DEARNESS	34	5.2	31	5.3
LPFFA	109	13.2	134	15.1
MANAGEMENT	71	7	11	0.8
Total number of incidents	431		317	
Average Hours per employee		8.2		4.8

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.

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