

Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 162-2026-City Manager's Office-Human Resources

DATE

PREPARED

March 30, 2026

FILE

STANDING

COMMITTEE

April 14, 2026

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT

2025 Annual Safety Review Report

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Finance & Administration Standing Committee with an overview of corporate injury statistics, safety programming and claim cost information for 2025. This report is presented for information only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has directed Administration to report annually on the corporation's safety performance and initiatives.

The overall number of reported incidents in 2025 increased by 3.2% from 586 incidents to 605. The number of Lost Time claims also increased by 6.1% from 2024. Over-exertion/strain and mental stress continue to be the leading causes of reported injuries. Mental stress injuries, primarily impacting paramedics, accounted for over 24% of all reported injuries. Across the corporation, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claims decreased by almost 5% compared to 2024.

WSIB claim costs were reduced by almost \$911,000 through prevention efforts mainly focused on supports for mental health injuries that impact emergency services. WSIB costs still remain high because of the legacy costs required by Schedule 2 Employers. In 2025 costs related to injuries incurred in 2025 was approximately \$600,000 with the remaining \$5.2 million attributable to legacy claim costs.

Incidents of workplace violence resulting in an injury or near miss were up slightly in 2025 and incidents continue to be assessed for specific corrective actions to protect employees. The Employee Safety Task Force (ESTF), established in 2023 to specifically assess incidents experience by front line staff, was disbanded in 2025 as the action items established have been completed or are in progress.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development (MLITSD) conducted 49 site visits in 2025, issuing orders requesting information such as documents, procedures, training records and a risk assessment. Each order was

resolved within the specified time frame. Four critical injuries were reported to the MLITSD in 2025.

The Safety Management System (SMS) was fully implemented by the end of 2025. The City of Thunder Bay's SMS is guided by the ISO 45001 standard, with the objective of driving continuous improvement through the identification and control of safety hazards. In accordance with best practice guidelines, an external audit will be conducted in 2026.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The Safety & Wellness Section is mandated to establish a safety program, act as a resource, and provide oversight of the safety program for all City of Thunder Bay (CTB) departments, excluding the Thunder Bay Police Service, affiliated boards and commissions.

Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), whose mandate is to eliminate workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses by enforcing the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its associated regulations, attended CTB worksites on 49 occasions in 2025, as outlined in Table 1. The Ministry of Labour Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) attended CTB worksites on 49 occasions in 2025, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of MLITSD Site Visits Completed and Orders Received per Year

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Visits	15	47	41	28	49
Visits with Orders Issued	4	10	8	8	10
Number of Orders Issued	13	17	14	17	13

Of the 49 MLITSD visits conducted in 2025:

- 19 were follow-up visits, 7 of which were compliance audits,
- 11 were proactive visits,
- 8 were in response to complaints from workers,
- 5 were related to critical injuries, although only 4 were actual critical injuries,
- 2 were occupational illnesses; NIHL and staphylococcus,
- 2 were continuations with consult from the regional ergonomist,
- 1 was about a work refusal,
- 1 was related to consolidating Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC).

All orders have been complied with and can be summarized as follows:

- 6 orders related to carbon monoxide and ammonia testing in Arenas and providing documentation and training to the MLITSD
- 2 orders to complete a workplace harassment investigation
- 1 order to provide injured workers training records after a critical injury
- 1 order to lock out fire poles until the JHSC conducts a risk assessment,

- 1 order to provide a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for a product
- 1 order to provide information, instruction, and supervision to workers working around vehicular traffic
- 1 order to provide corporate procedures: Violence in the Workplace Prevention, Violence in the Workplace, Corporate Policy on Harassment, and most recent risk assessment for violence in the workplace.

Workplace Incidents

Incidents that require health care or result in lost time are required to be reported to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Reporting of all incidents, including first aid and hazards/near misses is encouraged to identify trends and capture accurate data for prevention efforts. The incident reports are shared with management and JHSCs to assist in hazard identification and focus Safety & Wellness efforts.

Workplace Incidents by Classification

Incidents are classified in four categories:

- Hazards - incidents where the situation or environment has the potential to cause injury (i.e. an employee slipped but caught themselves before falling). Hazards are also known as “near misses”.
- First Aid - incidents where an employee is injured but does not require formal medical aid from a health care practitioner. This could include a cut that is bandaged in the workplace, or a first responder who seeks peer support following a challenging call.
- Health Care - incidents where an employee requires medical aid from a health care practitioner (i.e. employee goes to hospital to evaluate strained knee). Health care incidents are reportable to WSIB.
- Lost Time - incidents where an employee is injured and is required to be off work beyond the date of injury to recover. These injuries can range from muscle strains to mental stress. Lost time incidents are reportable to the WSIB.

A comparison of the total number of incidents based on classification over the last five years is summarized in Figure 1.

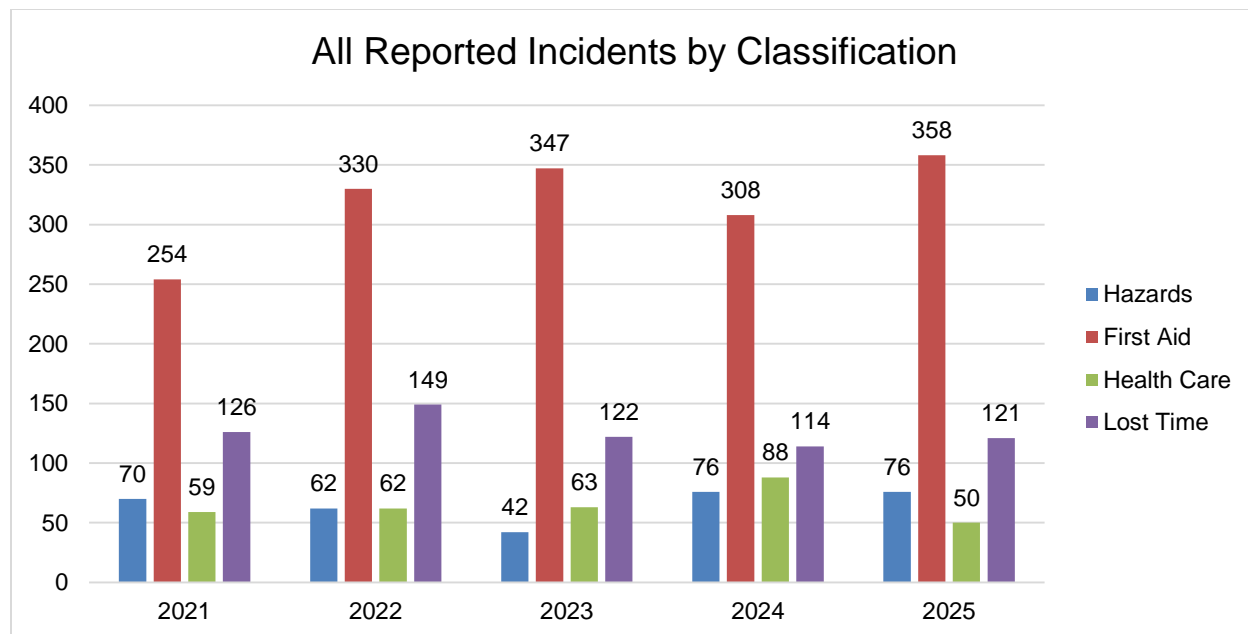


Figure 1: Total Incidents by Classification per Year

Note (1): The above incidents do not include Recurrent Claims, Police or Outside Boards claims.

Note (2): Numbers may fluctuate year over year based on WSIB activity such as claim approvals, denials, or appeals.

The overall number of reported incidents in 2025 increased by 3.2% from 586 incidents to 605. The number of Lost Time claims also increased by 6.1% from 2024.

Workplace Incidents by Type of Injury

Over Exertion and Strain (OES) Injuries – 120 OES injuries were reported in 2025, comprising 19.6% of all injuries. These injuries are often caused by unpredictable lifts and transfers of long-term care residents and emergency services patients. In other physically repetitive jobs, like waste collection and transit, employees commonly suffer from back and shoulder injuries.

Struck or Contact by Injuries – 102 struck or contact by injuries were reported in 2025, comprising 16.7% of all injuries. These injuries most often happen when an employee is struck by a patient or long-term care resident, with the highest reports coming from Superior North EMS (SNEMS), and Pioneer Ridge. Prevention efforts concentrate on training staff to recognize early signs of negative behaviors and to better manage them.

Mental Stress Injuries – 147 mental stress injuries were reported in 2025, comprising 24.1% of all injuries. Most of the mental stress injuries reported were experienced by paramedics (80%). Prevention efforts are focused on improving access to mental health supports including peer support, debriefing after difficult calls, mental health counselling, and improving working conditions to bolster employee resiliency.

Figure 2 below summarizes the number of incidents by type over the past three years.

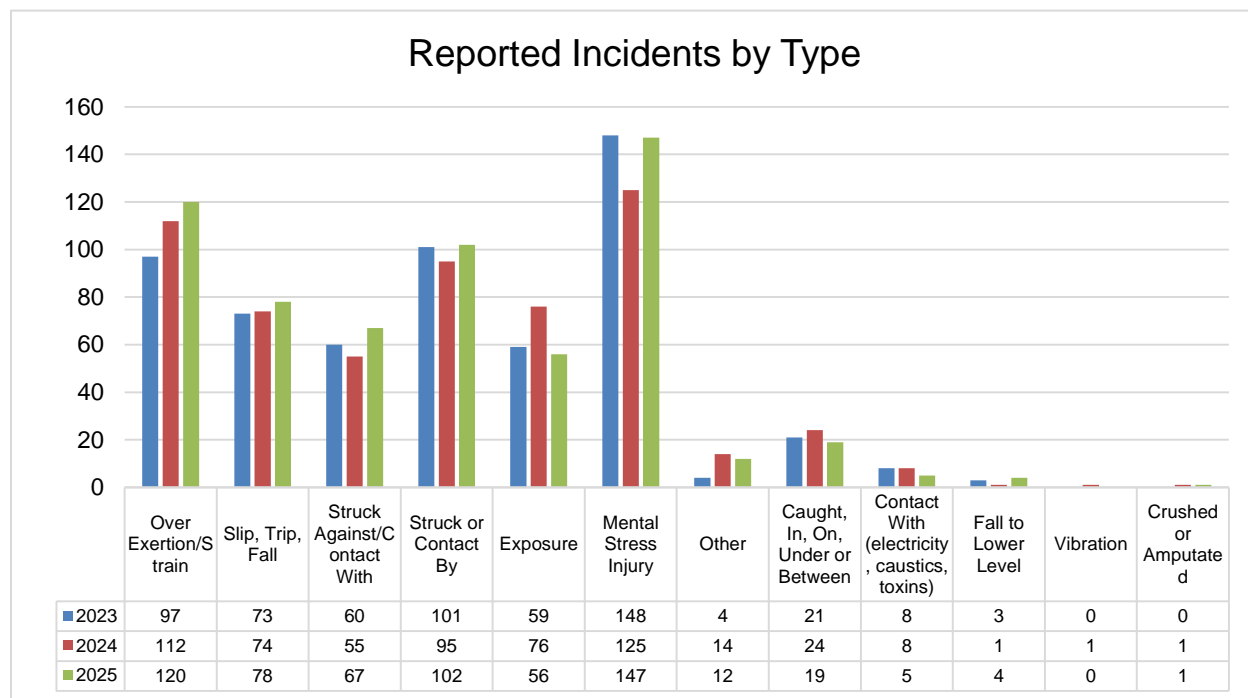


Figure 2: Incident Totals by Type and Year

Note: Incidents classified as “Other” are either incidents where there is not a direct workplace cause that could be identified by the Supervisor, or where the events are unusual and cannot be slotted within the standardized categories.

Incidents broken down by department are included in Appendix B. Per council’s previous requests for more comprehensive information, reportable incident data for operational areas has also been included for information in Appendix C. Both sets of graphs include only approved or pending WSIB claims and excludes, near misses, first aids and denied claims. For the data in Appendix C only the top 5 causes of reported incidents are included, so total may not match overall counts.

Critical Injuries/Serious or Major Incidents

Critical injuries are defined as follows under Ontario Regulation 420/21 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA):

“critically injured” means an injury of a serious nature that,

- a) places life in jeopardy,
- b) produces unconsciousness,
- c) results in substantial loss of blood,
- d) involves the fracture of a leg or arm but not a finger or a toe,
- e) involves the amputation of a leg, arm, hand or foot but not a finger or a toe,
- f) consists of burns to a major portion of the body, or
- g) causes the loss of sight in an eye.

Critical injuries and serious or major incidents, defined in the OSHA, require extensive investigation, must be reported to the MLITSD and may include incidents involving a non-worker where it can be reasonably determined that there is a connection between the hazard and the risk to workers.

A summary of reported critical injuries annually over the last five years is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of Critical Injuries per Year

Year	# of Critical Injuries
2021	2
2022	2
2023	6
2024	6
2025	4

In 2025, four critical injuries were reported to the MLITSD. Three involved fractures, and one involved a loss of consciousness. Two of the fractures resulted from slips and falls. In one case, a worker slipped on a spilled beverage while cleaning the floor. In the other, an employee sustained a fracture while sliding down a fire pole with little to no resistance to slow the descent. The third fracture occurred when an employee's hand was caught between a log and a woodchipper chute. The loss of consciousness occurred when a worker fainted on the pool deck due to a non-work-related issue.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

WSIB benefits are payable to any employee who is deemed to have incurred a health care or lost time workplace injury or illness as determined by WSIB. The CTB is a Schedule 2 employer, meaning that we are billed and pay actual benefit costs plus an administration fee. WSIB maintains full authority over the claims entitlement process.

\$5.3 million of the \$5.8 million in reported WSIB costs for 2025 are related to pensions, compensation health care and administration costs from legacy injuries. The remaining \$590,00 are costs related to injuries sustained in 2025. Legacy costs for Schedule 2 Employers can only be impacted through the death of the injured worker or their survivor, if applicable. Further, WSIB policy, at the time of injury dictates the level of benefit an injured worker receives. The CTB has no input on claim decisions or WSIB policy. For some context, examples of historical claims including the oldest claim on file currently receiving benefits, as well as historical claims with significant costs are captured below in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples of Historic Claims included in WSIB costs

Year of Injury	Area	Monthly claim cost paid by the City
1967	Fire	\$ 270
1989	Homes	\$1,200
1996	Recreation	\$4,500
2003	Child Care	\$2,500

In addition to the monthly costs, the city continues to pay the WSIB administration fee on these historical claims as well as all new claims. For Schedule 2 Employers, WSIB provides a provisional administration rate to employers early in the year. This rate is based on the number of claims and expected WSIB costs for the administration of claims.

The 2025 provisional administration rate was set at 17.1% but is expected to be finalized at 17.4% once WSIB confirms their administration costs for 2025 which is anticipated to occur in July 2026. The provisional rate set for 2026 is 17.7%

As outlined in Appendix A there was a reduction of \$910,779.22 in WSIB costs for 2025 from 2024. As a Schedule 2 Employer the majority of costs incurred in a year are legacy costs. As previously discussed, legacy costs cannot be reduced as they are benefit payments to workers on approved claims and continue for the life of the claim. The only way to reduce annual WSIB costs is through injury prevention to reduce in year costs and future impacts. Investment in prevention strategies such as the dedicated mental health supports for SNEMS and Thunder Bay Fire Rescue (TBFR) are attributed to the reduction of the in-year costs for 2025. The program was implemented in 2023, but the downstream effects were not immediately realized, which is the norm for prevention programs.

Figure 3 below summarizes the total WSIB Claim Costs over the last five years, and the departments where the costs originate.

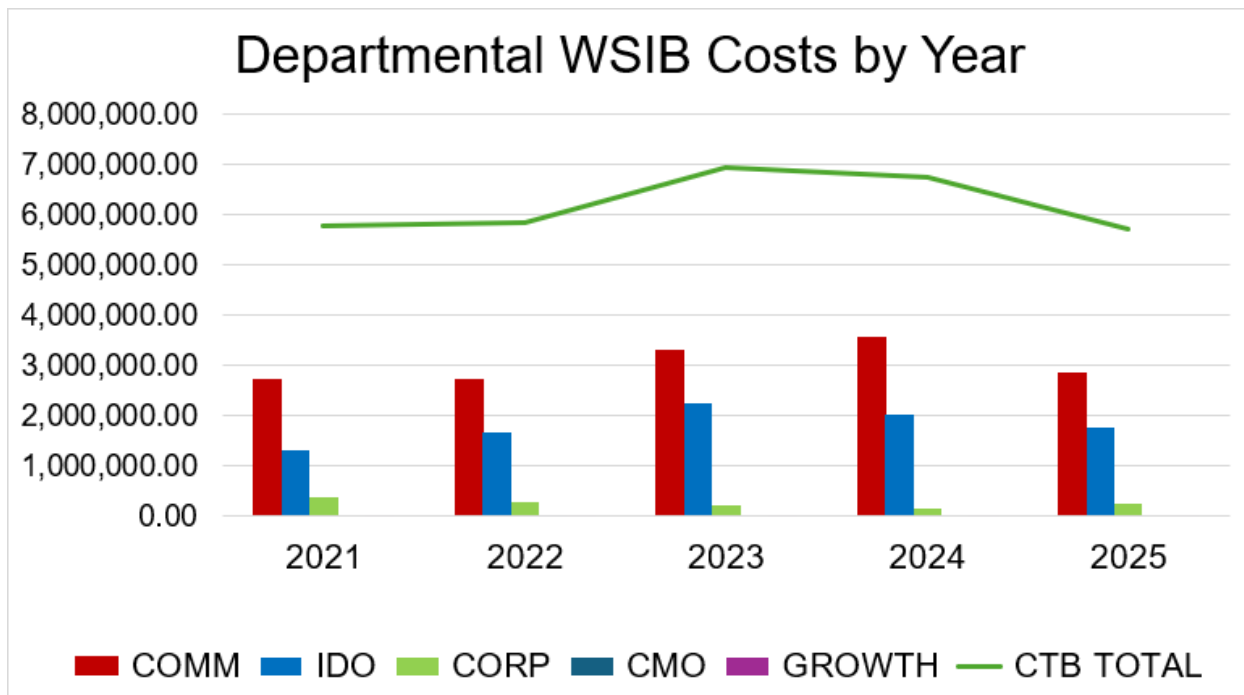


Figure 3: The total cost of approved claims per year by Department.

Thunder Bay Fire Rescue (TBFR), in the Infrastructure & Operations department, is the only work area that has claims for presumptive occupational cancers. A portion of WSIB costs from this department are related to legacy illness claims dating back to 1960. One claim was reported in 2025. Another from 2011, initially denied, was allowed in 2025 as the legislative requirement for colorectal cancer diagnosis to be obtained prior to the age of 61 was removed as of July 1, 2025.

Mental Stress Injuries

First responders are at a higher risk of experiencing Mental Stress Injuries (MSI) due to routine exposure to traumatic events in the course of their work. Presumptive legislation recognizing PTSD in first responders was introduced in 2016, while additional mental health illnesses (chronic and traumatic stress) were added in 2018. Claim costs for MSI's represent more than half of the annual provincial WSIB costs despite representing approximately 24% of the compensable injuries. This is a trend experienced by emergency services across the province and supported by the WSIB data. Workers who have lost time for MSI's remain off work for longer durations and have a much lower rate of success in returning to work in their pre-injury occupation.

MSI's decreased since 2023 and remained relatively stable from 2024 to 2025. This aligns with the introduction of dedicated psychological support services for SNEMS and TBFR. The first year of the contract, awarded in 2023, was a developmental year that involved assessing the needs of each service and their respective employees to develop strategies to reduce stigma, creating relationships and encouraging employees to seek out and connect to care when needed. Through 2025, NWO Psychology, the dedicated service provider, began implementing their programming, which includes:

- Critical incident debriefing
- Timely access to one-on-one support
- Peer support program development
- Resiliency training
- Data driven/best practice recommendations for programming

The preliminary results and anecdotal feedback from staff is very encouraging in predicting ongoing success, however additional time and data is required to make firm conclusions.

Figure 4 below summarizes the MSI by Year.

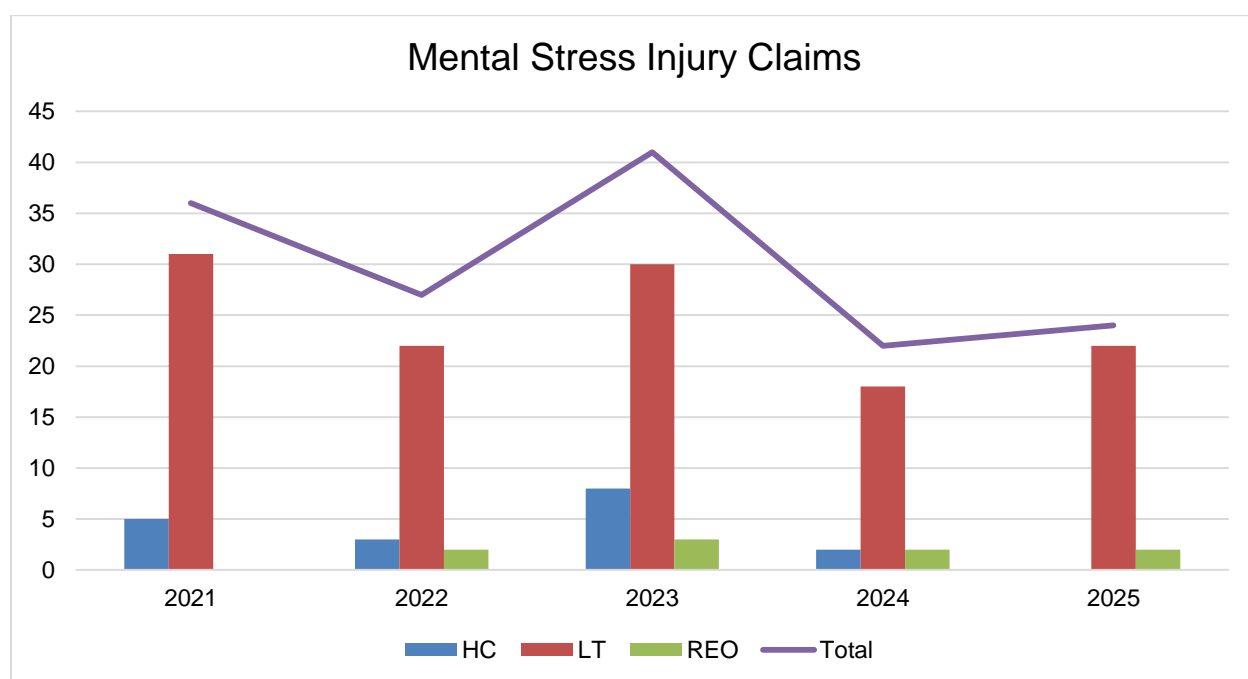


Figure 4: The number of mental stress claims per year by incident type (HC – Health Care, LT – Lost Time, REO – Reoccurring Injury).

Workplace Violence

Incidents of violence directed at front-line CTB staff that result in injury or a near miss through the normal course of their work, are reported and tracked through the Parklane Online Incident Report (OLIR) system.

Table 4 below summarizes the number of violent incidents reported through the OLIR system from 2021 to 2025 and includes both reportable injuries resulting in a WSIB claim and near miss/first aid incidents.

Table 4: Incidents of Violence Reported Through Parklane OLIR

Department/Section	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
SNEMS (District)	3	3	6	7	5
Transit	11	9	10	14	8
SNEMS (City)	49	61	56	51	43
Pioneer Ridge	45	21	30	24	26
Administrative Areas (Finance, Revenue, City Clerks, CIT, Parking Authority)	2	2	2	1	7
Recreation (Aquatics, Wellness, Children & Youth, Sport & Community Development) & Child Care	2	3	10	9	19
Operational Areas (Roads, S&W, Waste Collection, Arenas, Parks)	1	3	1	5	6
TBFR	1	1	1	0	2
Total	114	103	116	111	116

Note: some occurrences did not result in an incident but were classified as a near miss – a punch thrown that did not connect with an employee would fall into this classification.

The CTB continues to promote the reporting of workplace violence and recognizes that incidents of a threatening, harassing, or violent nature remain underreported. Reported incidents across frontline and operational areas are reviewed to assess the effectiveness of existing prevention strategies and to determine whether additional administrative, physical, or training controls are required. Violence prevention efforts remain tailored to each service area through Job Based Hazard Assessments and specialized training.

The Employee Safety Task Force (ESTF), established in early 2023, focused on addressing workplace violence, vicarious trauma, and moral injury experienced by frontline staff. Through collaborative action planning with management and frontline employees, the ESTF advanced a range of initiatives including de-escalation training, operational improvements, enhanced community supports, and advocacy for system-level resources.

The ESTF concluded in November 2025, as identified action items have been completed or are underway. The city is committed to providing safer workplaces for their employees and will re-establish the ESTF in the future if required.

Safety Management System (SMS) Implementation

The SMS is a structured approach to identify and address safety hazards and associated risks to protect staff and the corporation. The SMS is a plan-do-check-act system of identifying hazards, implementing controls, assessing effectiveness (auditing), and correcting deficiencies.

Full implementation of the SMS Manual, guided by the ISO 45001 standard, was completed by the end of 2025 with each element having been audited once. With the goal of continuous improvement internal audits will continue each year, and per best practice every three years an external audit will be conducted to find additional opportunities for improvement. With the last external audit conducted in 2023, the Safety & Wellness staff are planning for an external audit in 2026.

In 2025, 47 internal audits were conducted across the corporation on Elements 8 – Health and Safety Document Control, 11 – Corrective Action Reporting, and 12 – Management of Change.

Legislative and Standards Update

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 was amended to expand the presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters and fire investigators. The changes remove the previous requirement that colorectal cancer be diagnosed before the age of 61 for it to be presumed to be work related. As of July 1, 2025, firefighters with at least 10 years of service diagnosed with colorectal cancer are eligible for benefits regardless of the age of diagnosis.

Amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) through the Working for Workers Five Act 2024 require that washroom facilities provided for workers are maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. The employer must also keep and make available records of washroom cleaning with additional requirements to post and maintain the records.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The details of WSIB costs are provided in the Attachment to this report.

BACKGROUND

Each year the Safety & Wellness Section reports to Council outlining the status of the safety program in the previous year.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Appendix A: Corporate WSIB Costs (excluding Police)

Appendix B: Graphs include approved, no further action, and pending Health Care and Lost Time claims.

REPORT PREPARED BY

Kerri Bernardi, Manager – Safety & Wellness

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

John Collin, City Manager

04/08/2026 (MM/DD/YEAR)