
2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

APPEALS
COMMISSION
FOR ALBERTA WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Alberta  Government

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Message from the Minister



It is my pleasure to present the Appeals Commission for Alberta Workers' Compensation Annual Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

The Appeals Commission tribunal operates under the authority of the Workers' Compensation Act and is the final level of appeal for decisions made by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). The commission is independent of the WCB and accountable to the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration. The Appeals Commission's responsibilities extend to two additional programs: the Advisor Office, which provides expert, no-cost advice and advocacy to workers and employers in Alberta; and the Medical Panels Program, which convenes panels to answer medical questions posed by the WCB or Appeals Commission.

The services offered by the commission ensure that hardworking Albertans and their employers have an opportunity to have their concerns heard, and the support and resources they need to appeal decisions and bring disputes to resolution.

Thank you to the Appeals Commission for its continued excellence in client service and decision making, and for the programs and processes that help maintain healthy and safe workplaces in Alberta.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JRSchow'.

Honourable Joseph Schow
Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration

Message from the Chief Appeals Commissioner and CEO

It is my pleasure to share with you the Appeals Commission for Alberta Workers' Compensation's 2025-2026 Annual Report. This document provides updates and highlights from the Appeals Commission, Advisor Office and Medical Panels Program.

For the past several years, we have seen steady increases in volume and client needs across our programs, and that trend continued in 2025-2026. Throughout, we have remained dedicated to our vision of providing fair, client-focused appeal, advisory and medical panels experiences. We have also maintained our strong commitment to providing timely and efficient services, and have taken significant steps to accommodate the demand for our services while maintaining our ambitious standards.

The foundation of our work is our exceptional team members, who live our values of accountability, respect, integrity and service on a daily basis. Their hard work and commitment to building an exceptional workplace culture resulted in the Appeals Commission being named a Top Alberta Employer for the eighth year in a row, and in our receipt of the prestigious Canada Awards for Excellence Mental Health at Work Essentials certification. I am incredibly proud of these accomplishments and take this opportunity to express my gratitude to every team member at the Appeals Commission.

It is hard to predict what 2026-2027 will bring in terms of client needs and workloads. However, we do know that the year ahead will bring new team members, more steps towards a new case management system, and new office spaces. This will bring fresh energy and perspective to our work, as well as much-needed capacity to continue serving our clients.

As always, thank you for your interest in the Appeals Commission, and thank you to the workers and employers who access our services and inspire our continuous improvement.

Sincerely,



Dale Wispinski, KC

Chief Appeals Commissioner and CEO

About the Appeals Commission

This document reports on the performance of the Appeals Commission from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 inclusive.

Who We Are

The Appeals Commission for Alberta Workers' Compensation is a quasi-judicial tribunal operating under the authority of the *Workers' Compensation Act*. It is the final level of appeal for decisions made by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) and is independent from the WCB. The Appeals Commission falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration and operates at arm's length from the Government of Alberta. The Appeals Commission is committed to a fair, client-focused experience, while demonstrating our values of respect, service, integrity and accountability.

In addition to its adjudicative role, the Appeals Commission is also responsible for operating and administering two independent programs: the Advisor Office and the Medical Panels Program. The Advisor Office provides free-of-charge advice and advocacy services to workers and employers in Alberta. The Medical Panels Program convenes medical professionals to answer medical questions posed by the Appeals Commission or the WCB, typically in relation to complex claims. All components of the Appeals Commission are supported by an internal Secretariat, which provides shared services and supports cost savings in facilities management, finance and information technology.

The relationship between the Appeals Commission and its programs is governed by a comprehensive Governance and Independence Framework, which ensures independent and unbiased adjudication, advocacy and medical panels.

Our People

The Chief Appeals Commissioner is the CEO of the Commission and is supported by the Chief Administrative Officer in directing the strategic objectives of the organization as a whole.

At the Tribunal, adjudicators, including the Chief Appeals Commissioner, are recruited through public competition. The competition process is based on a competency matrix, which ensures that our adjudicators meet a high standard of clear and unbiased decision making and reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Adjudicators are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. As of March 31, 2026, the Appeals Commission had 53 adjudicators consisting of one Chief Appeals Commissioner, two Vice Chairs, 18 full-time Hearing Chairs and 32 Commissioners. The Chief Appeals Commissioner oversees the Tribunal with the support of an executive team comprised of two Vice Chairs, General Counsel, and an Executive Director.

At the Advisor Office, 26 Worker Advisors and three Employer Advisors provide advice and assistance to clients, as well as advocacy services before the WCB, the Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body (DRDRB), and the Appeals Commission. The Advisor Office is led by an Executive Director with the support of General Counsel.

The Medical Panels Program is led by a Medical Panels Commissioner, who is responsible for striking medical panels with the appropriate expertise and ensuring that examinations and reports are timely and of the highest quality. The Medical Panels Commissioner is recruited through a public competition and appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Across the Appeals Commission and its programs, clients are supported by our talented team of dedicated staff members in areas including legal services, stakeholder engagement, case management and administration.

Our Processes

Appeals are heard by panels made up of three adjudicators who issue a decision that is binding on, and must be implemented by, the WCB within 30 days. Decisions of the Appeals Commission are published on the Canadian Legal Information Institute website (<https://www.canlii.org/en/ab/abwcac/>).

Medical panels are made up of three independent physicians with expertise relating to the questions posed by the Appeals Commission or the WCB. These physicians meet with and, if necessary, examine the worker, following which they issue a report that answers the questions posed. Medical panel reports are not published.

2025-2026 Year in Review: Tribunal

Providing high-quality client service and ensuring the efficient processing of appeals are central to the Tribunal's mandate. This year's performance results demonstrate our ongoing commitment to supporting both our clients and team members, while also identifying and addressing areas for improvement.

We continue to deepen our understanding of changing client needs while fostering a workplace that is both fulfilling and respectful. In 2025-2026, we are proud to highlight several initiatives, including:

- Receiving the prestigious Canada Awards for Excellence Mental Health at Work Essentials certification.
- Sharing our ambitious project to benchmark and measure access to justice in the context of workers' compensation appeal tribunals with other tribunals in Canada.
- Developing an external program to support the needs of diverse clients, including adding pronouns and name pronunciation fields to our Notice of Appeal forms.
- Adopting an updated land acknowledgment in consultation with the Government of Alberta's Indigenous Relations team.
- Focusing on providing fair and compassionate hearings, through professional development for Hearing Chairs on balancing empathy and objectivity.
- Continuing to share our knowledge and build our team at regular professional development days.

These accomplishments reflect the dedication, professionalism, and collaborative spirit of our Tribunal team. We are proud of another successful year marked by innovation, continuous improvement, and a steadfast commitment to serving our clients.

Kaitlyn Young, Executive Director

Timelines

The Appeals Commission is committed to processing appeals as quickly as possible, and our performance reflects this commitment. We monitor our timelines on a continual basis and adjust as required to maintain our tradition of excellence in this regard.

We prioritize two key timeline indicators in our total appeal cycle. These are the combined average number of days from the date the appeal is successfully filed to the first hearing date offered, and the average number of days from the hearing to the decision issue date. While the total appeal cycle can be impacted by operational matters, staffing issues or the complexity of appeals, we are proud of our history of consistent and timely performance.

Average number of days from appeal successfully filed to first available hearing date

For appeals with decisions published in 2025-2026, our average number of days from the date the appeal was successfully filed to first available hearing date was 195. Bringing this number closer to our target of 150 days is a top priority for the Appeals Commission, and is the focus of continued efforts. As always, this metric is highly dependent on the number of appeals received as well as our complement of adjudicators.

Please note that additional delays, which are beyond the control of the Commission, are not included here.

Target	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
150 days	189 days	205 days	195 days

Average number of days from the hearing to the decision issue date

Our adjudicators strive for decisions to be issued within 30 days of the hearing.

Target	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
30 days	29 days	24 days	23 days

The Appeals Commission also tracks the percentage of decisions published within targeted time frames.

Decisions Issued	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
0-30 days	74.18%	82.53%	81.99%
31-60 days	15.92%	13.63%	15.43%
61-90 days	7.51%	2.50%	2.25%
91+ days	2.35%	1.34%	0.32%

Hearings

The type of hearing is requested by a party and ultimately determined by the Appeals Commission. In 2025-2026, we conducted 645 hearings: 207 documentary hearings, 196 by teleconference, 135 in-person, 98 by video conference, and nine by a combination of hearing methods. The Appeals Commission has noted the popularity of virtual hearings and, in addition to in-person hearings, will continue to routinely offer teleconference and videoconference hearings as options for our clients.

Representation before the Appeals Commission

The majority of appeal participants appear before the Appeals Commission with the assistance of a representative. In 2025-2026, 54% of appeal participants appeared with a representative from the Advisor Office, 33% appeared with other representatives (for example, lawyers or family members), and 13% represented themselves.

Appeals Received

The number of appeals received has continued to rise on a year-over-year basis and is affected by a variety of factors, including changes in legislation and policy, the rate of resolution at the WCB, and the economic environment. The most popular way to submit an appeal is by email, followed by submission through our website. Clients also have the option of a paper submission through mail or fax.

Application Type	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Time Extensions	23	10	22
Reconsiderations	63	54	79
Initial Appeals	678	782	824

Appeals Concluded

We remain committed to an efficient appeals process, minimizing any potential backlog. The number of appeals concluded includes appeals dismissed and withdrawn.

Application Type	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Time Extensions	30	8	20
Reconsiderations	43	44	53
Initial Appeals	469	582	670

Finalized Issues of Appeal

Each appeal received may contain multiple issues. In the 2025-2026 year, the Appeals Commission confirmed 531 issues, varied 19 issues, referred 211 issues back to the WCB and reversed 230 issues. This is a similar pattern to previous years.

Top Five Issues of Appeal

The most frequent issues of appeal have remained relatively stable over time.

Issues of Appeal	2024-2025	Issues of Appeal	2025-2026
1. Additional Entitlement	167	1. Additional Entitlement	221
2. Acceptability of Claim	153	2. Temporary Total Disability	188
3. Temporary Total Disability	128	3. Acceptability of Claim	161
4. ELP Calculation	102	4. ELP Calculation	110
5. Medical Aid Responsibility	97	5. Rehabilitation Services	53

2025-2026 Year in Review: Advisor Office

In the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the Advisor Office continued its focus on improving client service delivery, supporting employee development and engagement, strengthening stakeholder relationships, and maintaining operational excellence.

Demand for Advisor services declined slightly this year, with new client requests decreasing by 2.2%. However, continued growth in previous years has resulted in longer wait times for new clients. To help address this, a dedicated group of Advisors was established to provide interim support, communication, and education to clients on the waitlist.

Despite increased wait times, 97% of clients who responded to the exit survey indicated they would recommend the Advisor Office. This result reflects the high quality of service provided and the trust clients place in the advice offered by Advisors.

Other achievements at the Advisor Office in the 2025-2026 fiscal year include:

- Attending 35.8% more Appeals Commission hearings than the previous year.
- Publishing redesigned resources to support clients in better understanding the WCB appeal process and Advisor Office services.
- Supporting team member development and wellness, including hosting a two-day professional development session to strengthen expertise and resilience.
- Developing and delivering a training session on psychological injuries for employers.
- Launching a pilot project related to Worker Advisor file assignment processes.
- Supporting staff development by updating all training materials for Case Coordinators and Employer Advisors.

These accomplishments reflect the Advisor Office's commitment to enhancing the experiences of clients, staff, and stakeholders while advancing quality and continuous improvement.

George Wright, Executive Director

Advisor Office Performance

The Advisor Office has two separate branches, the Worker Advisor Branch and the Employer Advisor Branch. Demand for services from both branches remained high.

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
New Worker Clients	1286	1891	1805
New Employer Clients	167	151	192
Worker Files Closed	1302	1204	1015
Employer Files Closed	153	145	172
DRDRB Hearings Attended	297	395	280
Appeals Commission Hearings Attended	218	240	326

Client Feedback

The Advisor Office consistently receives positive feedback from clients. Below is a sample of some of the comments received from the client survey that the Advisor Office issues upon the closure of its files.

General Client Feedback

“The process has been incredibly helpful when dealing with WCB. Regardless of outcome the services provided were incredibly helpful throughout the process.”

“Amazing service that was extremely helpful. 100% They took an incredible amount of stress out of the process.”

“I would recommend this service to anyone for the excellent service and professional work.”

“The advisor worked with me every step of the way and treated my case with utmost importance. For a service that I didn't pay for I really appreciated the help and explanation and making sure I understood the system. Thank you.”

Client Feedback about Worker Advisors

"My advisor made sure I felt heard and supported for my psychological injury. I will be forever grateful for her support, knowledge and helping me win my appeal with the WCB."

"My advisor was excellent throughout the process. He was a great support throughout the appeal. He also explained in detail what to expect during the appeal process and he updated me regularly."

"I attribute my entire satisfaction to my worker advisor. She spent so much time explaining details and processes to me. She answered every single question I had. Every doubt she assured. I cannot say enough good things. I am so appreciative of having her help."

"My advisor was very professional left no gaps explained everything to me thank you!"

Client Feedback about Employer Advisors

"I would definitely recommend the Advisor Office. They provide valuable support to employers like me, especially during challenging situations where technical expertise may be lacking."

"Super helpful to have someone able to explain the 'ins and outs' of the WCB claim process to me and to help me identify where our levels of control were as an employer. Sincerely appreciated having someone I could run a scenario by."

"Exceptional customer service. I was impressed by my advisor's depth of knowledge, ability to communicate prudent information and her proactive approach to effectively strategize from various angles based on previous, current, and incoming information."

"My advisor has been incredibly helpful throughout this whole process. Over the course of this case, he was very supportive and insightful while building the case and going through the levels of appeals."

2025-2026 Year in Review: Medical Panels Program

In 2025-2026, the Medical Panel Program (MPP) continued to focus on improving efficiencies, reducing timelines, containing costs, and delivering a client-focused service.

The MPP experienced a significant increase in new referrals over the course of the 2025-2026 year. These files involved a diverse range of medical specialties, including psychiatry, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedic surgery, physiatry, gastroenterology, and internal medicine. Medical expertise across these many disciplines was required to support the medical panel process.

Processing medical panel referrals as expeditiously as possible remains a top priority. Physician recruitment continues to be a significant challenge. To address this, the Program has adopted a more proactive and structured approach to roster development, including a direct email strategy and intra-roster referrals through which existing panel physicians are invited to recommend qualified colleagues for consideration.

Douglass Tadman, KC, Medical Panels Commissioner

Medical Panels Program Performance

The demand for Medical Panels Program services increased in 2025-2026. Thanks to efforts to reduce service delivery timelines in previous years, we had the capacity to efficiently and effectively respond to increased demand.

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Active Files as of April 1	2	2	1
New Medical Panel Referrals Received	2	1	7
Files Closed	14	1	1
Active Files as of March 31	2	1	6

Timelines

The Medical Panels Program is actively working toward a Days to Panel timeline of 180, and a Days to Report timeline of 240.

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Days to Panel	463	414	297
Days to Report	553	438	360

2025-2026 Year in Review: Secretariat

In 2025-2026, the Secretariat advanced key priorities focused on digital transformation, operational efficiency and team member well-being, demonstrating a strong commitment to innovation, service excellence and continuous improvement across the Commission. Key accomplishments included:

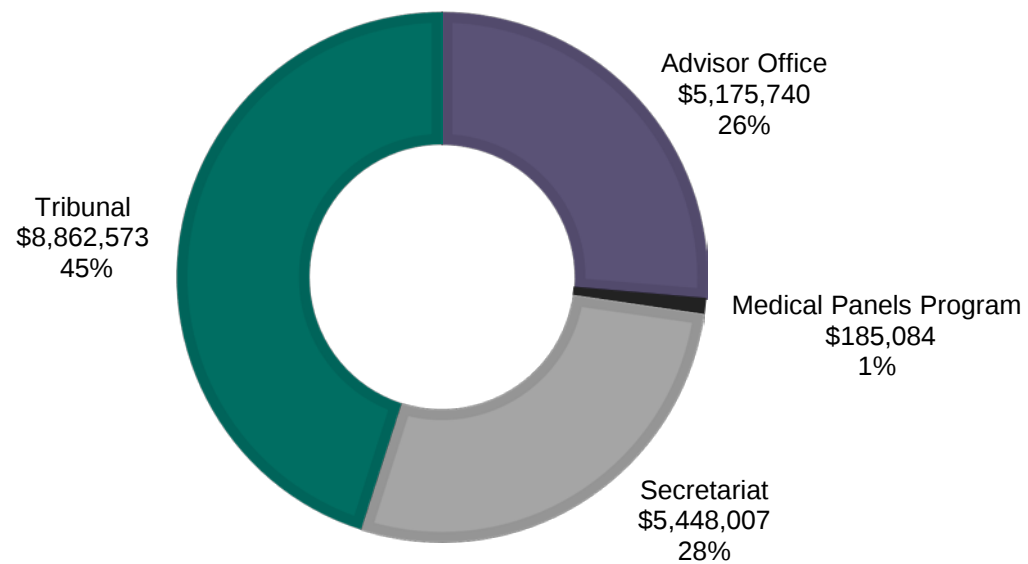
- Making significant progress on our Information Technology (IT) system modernization project and website enhancements.
- Welcoming key IT team members including a Desktop Support Analyst, a temporary IT and Business Coordinator, and a temporary IT Project Manager.
- Introducing two new Commission-wide policies, Ergonomics and Volunteering, to support healthy workplace practices and employee engagement.
- Continuing digital file clean-up in alignment with records retention requirements.
- Facilitating engagement initiatives, including an Employee Engagement Survey, a New Team Member Survey, and a Wellness Survey.
- With leases for Edmonton program offices in the Standard Life Building set to expire, planning for relocation to the CWB Building, located one block east of our current space.

Stephanie Bossio, Director, Secretariat

Finance

Fiscal responsibility continues to be a priority for the Appeals Commission. Total Appeals Commission expenditures in 2025-2026 amounted to 98% of our budget. All our major program operational expenses (such as rent and information technology support) are accounted for through the Secretariat.

Cost Overview



Decision Review

Appeal participants who are dissatisfied with an appeal decision have several options for further review, including a reconsideration application to the Appeals Commission, judicial review and statutory appeal application to the Court of King's Bench, a further appeal to the Court of Appeal or a complaint to the Alberta Ombudsman. In 2025-2026, the percentage of decisions unchallenged or upheld exceeded our target of 98%.

Judicial Review

From April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, the Alberta courts issued one unreported decision with respect to judicial review applications or statutory appeals of decisions of the Appeals Commission.

Unreported

1. On November 27, 2025, the Court of King's Bench orally dismissed an application for statutory appeal of an Appeals Commission decision which denied a request for an extension of the one-year statutory time limitation. The Court concluded that a statutory appeal of the Appeals Commission decision was barred by legislation, but in any event, that the decision was reasonable.

Court of Appeal

From April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, there were no Court of Appeal decisions relating to an Appeals Commission decision.

The Ombudsman

From April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, there were seven complaints relating to Appeals Commission decisions resulting in informal requests for information using the Ombudsman's early resolution process. Five of the early resolution complaints resulted in a finding that the Appeals Commission decisions were administratively fair. One complaint was discontinued, and one complaint was escalated to the formal resolution process and remains active.

For more information, please visit:

www.appealscommission.ab.ca

<https://advisoroffice.alberta.ca>

<https://medicalpanels.alberta.ca>



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