

# **Disability Management & Rehabilitation Committee at COTR**

**By Caley Ehnes and Kevi Remple, CORFA Disability Management & Rehabilitation Committee Representatives**

As regular and term employees, do you know about the sick leave benefits that you are entitled to?

Approximately 12 years ago, our Collective Agreement brought to life the Joint Faculty Rehabilitation Committee. This Committee is a joint committee with equal representation from faculty and the employer. At COTR, we have 4 members: Caley Ehnes and Kevi Remple as CORFA representatives and Yvonne Nelson and Nicola Kaufman from Human Resources representing the employer. The committee exists to assist CORFA members who become ill or injured and cannot perform their regular duties, and we help these members throughout the sick leave process. If and when the member is healthy enough to return to work, we facilitate the process with the goal of a successful return. Both the union's and employer's representatives truly are working towards the common goal of doing what is best for the employee. The Rehab Committee is strongly committed to confidentiality, and does not have access to your detailed medical information.

Although none of us plan to become sick or injured, it is wise to know ahead of time what is available if you do. According to Article 9.5 of the Collective Agreement, all regular and term employees who are employed for 4 months are entitled to:

- Full pay for up to 30 calendar days
- Short Term Disability for 21 weeks at 70% of your pre-disability income
- Two years of Long Term Disability also at 70%
- An extension past the two-year limit for Long Term Disability if the member is still seriously disabled

With these benefits, however, also come responsibilities. The member must complete the appropriate application forms and participate in the rehabilitation process in order to continue receipt of benefits.

Here are a few other things to be informed about:

- Things usually take longer than you expect. Be patient with your healing process and with the reintegration back to your workplace. No one will be pushing you to return before your physician says you are ready.
- While on disability, you may not return to work without medical clearance from your doctor, no matter how well you feel. Although our members have a strong work ethic, returning too early may cause longer-term health problems.
- Many members have a graduated return-to-work plan, where they initially return part-time and gradually build up to their normal workload.
- All return-to-work plans must be approved by the Rehab Committee, with input from the member, the member's doctor, the member's supervisor, and the insurance carrier (Manulife). This means that a Return-to-Work meeting is usually scheduled before the member comes back to work to ensure that everything necessary has been arranged in order to support a successful return.
- You must inform your supervisor if you become seriously ill or injured while on vacation.
- Documentation to support sick leave claims related to mental health issues will need to include a diagnosis listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), as "stress leave" is a misnomer.

If you are currently on sick leave or disability feel free to contact us. We would also be happy to answer any questions you may have, whether you are on disability or you are in anticipation of making a claim.

In Solidarity,

***Caley Ehnes & Kevi Remple***