



Benefits protected as HSPBA transitions to a joint benefits trust

February 9, 2016

Health science professionals will soon have greater control over their benefits thanks to a new joint benefits trust. The trustees will become part of an innovative and progressive approach that gives them the flexibility to design a benefit structure that aligns with members' needs. It is fitting that health science professionals were first to sign onto this initiative, given how central innovation is in their day to day practice.

"Having direct input and control over the design of our members' benefits will ensure that HSPBA has the flexibility to direct resources towards new and innovative health benefits in a manner that ensures our health benefits dollars are being best allocated to suit our members' needs," said Jeanne Meyers, HSPBA's Chief Negotiator and Executive Director of Legal Services and Labour Relations for Health Sciences Association of BC.

The Joint Health Sciences Benefit Trust (JHSBT) was negotiated as part of the 2014-2019 HSPBA collective agreement to protect and enhance members' benefits. With the transition to the JHSBT, members' and employers' interests will be represented by an equal number of HSPBA and HEABC trustees. Once the JHSBT is fully operational, trustees will be looking for opportunities to increase alignment between the plan's structure and what members need.

"HEABC embraces the opportunity to partner with the HSPBA as benefit trustees," says Adrienne Hook, Executive Director, Strategic Negotiations and Benefits Administration at HEABC. "Ultimately, we want employees to feel they are getting value for the money spent on benefits and to be part of the decision-making necessary to sustain benefit plans in the future."

The HSPBA/HEABC Working Group tasked with setting up the JHSBT has made substantial headway on a long list of priorities in advance of the anticipated hand-over of responsibility to the joint trust on April 1, 2016. Key documents for the new trust are in place and the work of companion agreements are nearing completion as the Working Group moves closer to concluding the formal negotiation stage which began in 2014.

In the interest of due diligence, the trustees will be putting out a request for proposals (RFP) for a third party administrator/benefit provider.

Respondents to the RFP will be reviewed carefully and the chosen provider will start April 1, 2017. The Healthcare Benefit Trust (HBT) will continue to be the service provider for the first year.

There will be no change to benefits for members covered by the HSPBA collective agreement during the transition period. Once the Joint Health Sciences Benefit Trust is fully operational, trustees will be looking for opportunities to further enhance and improve health benefits for HSPBA members.

The HSPBA/HEABC Working Group has approached this project in a professional and collaborative manner to ensure the smoothest transition possible and to identify and resolve problems ahead of time. This due diligence is the foundation for a new partnership that reflects the importance of these benefits for the members/employees and their families. It will ensure the continuance of quality benefits and opens the door for exciting innovation in plan design.

Members of HSA, CUPE, BCGEU, PEA, and HEU are covered by the HSPBA collective agreement.

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