

Joint Benefit Trust under construction

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Can members expect to see changes in our health and welfare benefits through the new health and welfare trust? It would be good to have additional services like dietitians added to the extended health portion of the plan.

We are far from a point where any changes to the benefit plan could be considered. At present, a working group is focused on negotiating the many details for creating the joint trust partnership between the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) and the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC). The new Joint Health Sciences Benefit Trust (JHSBT) is scheduled to 'go live' in April 2016 and the respective parties (HEABC and HSPBA) are working hard to put all the pieces together for the JHSBT launch next year.

Once the JHSBT is up and running in 2016, there will be a long list of issues for trustees to consider and deal with before embarking on any review of plan design features. Unlike the bargaining cycle where incremental changes were bargained over time, the new JHSBT will be able to step back and review plan design issues and trends in their entirety before any redesign of benefits would be considered.

Will members have input when the time comes for a review of the benefits?

Yes. Member input will be important as the trustees work through the issues and complexities of plan design options. Members may have different wants and needs and it will be important to find the right balance respecting these different perspectives. For instance, a 25-year old member will likely have different priorities for the plan than a 55-year old member. What is known now is that members place a very high value on their benefits and they don't want to see the benefits eroded any further. The opportunity to get the best possible value for the dollars spent will be a priority for all trustees. Efficiencies and savings that can be realized will make the dollars go further and give trustees more options for improving the benefits; up to and including expanding the list of permissible health expenses.

When can members expect to hear more?

As we get further into 2015, HSPBA and HEABC will work together to notify members of the steps required as we change over to administration of the JHSBT.

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