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# From the Masthead



**Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. Phone: (905)886-9203**

## In order to serve you better

To assist you with your employee benefit plan, we are continually updating our website. Located at:

[www.mainstayinsurance.ca](http://www.mainstayinsurance.ca)

The site provides easy access to many insurance company's websites and to the health and dental claim forms you utilize on a regular basis. We have also added links to the log on pages for members (employees) in order to provide quick access to other websites.

## Did you know that...

.....we have had many in-depth conversations around the proposed national dental and pharmacare programs identified in the recent budget.

Time will tell who will benefit from these programs and how they may affect your plan coverage.

We'll provide updates through our blog and newsletter as they become available. Be sure to subscribe if you want to stay on top of things.

<https://www.mainstayinsurance.ca/newsletters/>

<https://www.mainstayinsurance.ca/blog/>

Need help finding a form, phone number, or just help in general, please do not hesitate to call us at: 1-905-886-9203

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## Healthcare Advocacy

Between living for 57 years in Canada, and having over 25 years in the employee benefits field, I've learned a few things about the Canadian healthcare system. While it can be a complex and ever changing environment that is, at times, difficult to navigate, it also works pretty well "most" of the time. Problems often begin when things occur that are outside of the norm, and as a result we need that extra bit of help that the "system" can't always provide. It's times like those, that having someone advocate on your behalf is vital.

Healthcare advocates come in many forms. They may be your parent when you're young, your spouse or partner for a period of your life, and your kids when you get older. If none of these is available, it may be an external professional advocate who you hire. People often question this last one. We have a public health care system, why do I need to hire an advocate? We are used to going to experts to fix our; taxes, cars, leaky roofs and legal problems, so why not our health care?

In most instances, a family member can perform the advocate role. Joanne and I have been advocates for several family members who were dealing with both chronic and terminal illnesses. One lesson that we learned early on, made the process easier and

provided better outcomes. That is to keep a diary or log for the patient that everyone contributes to. The patient may use it to write the questions they want to ask at their next appointment (this aids our memory when we are rushed, under pressure and emotional). You can have the doctors and nurses add the answers to your earlier questions, provide a list of your medications, test results, next scheduled appointments, and any other information that is material to your treatment.

The patient should take their diary to each and every appointment to ensure nothing is missed. An unexpected ambulance ride to the hospital and the diary goes with you too. Don't forget including the patient name, and your emergency contact info in the opening page.

Sometimes you need a professional advocate to aid in getting the medical help you need, and that others may not be able to provide. This help can come in many forms. There are second opinion services like Best Doctors that can help to take a second opinion from some of the best practitioners in the world. In some cases they can suggest alternate treatments, or even a visit

to the US for quicker access. There are also and often better, local options available at a fraction of the cost of US treatment.

These local advocates can help guide you through the healthcare system within Canada.

One that I've used several times is RCM Health Consultancy [rcmhealth.ca](http://rcmhealth.ca) Ray Rupert deals with complex health issues and acts as an advocate for his patients. His services may include: reviewing health records, obtaining second opinions, making suggestions to the care team, and monitoring ongoing care.

Although there is a fee for the service, it is quite affordable considering the cost of alternative US healthcare. If you, a family member, or an employee are looking for help, reach out to his team and they can provide you with more information on how they can help. We also have other advocates who specialize in certain specific health issues.

As always, we are here to support you and your staff. Even if the need is beyond the company, employees or benefits plan, please don't hesitate to reach out for assistance.



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This information is provided as a reference to clients of Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. It is not intended as advice. Your situation and the contract provided by your insurer plus any relevant legislation shall always take precedence. Always obtain appropriate legal, human resource or accounting advice.

Note: This side of the newsletter is intended for you the plan administrator. The information on the 'front' is targeted more to your staff and can be copied and distributed for their reference.

Just in case you were wondering...

We have seen dental costs skyrocket as COVID -19 restrictions have lifted and people have returned to get delayed work completed.

On top of a backlog of work, the dental rates charged by Ontario dentists have increased by 4.75%, and the trend and utilization levels have also increased. This is reflected in the 2022 renewal rate increases which are higher than normal.

## What are others paying for their benefits?

Each year we meet to discuss your plan's renewal. During the meeting we review the change in rates based on changes in your staff demographics, claim costs and the claims of all small businesses in the pool. Some of you see higher increases and others experience lower increases or even the occasional decrease.

The average annual increase in rates for our block of business over the past five years has been about 2.8%; over the past ten years 2.6%; and over 15 years only 3.2% per year. The biggest issue for groups (<100 employees) dealing with high cost claims, is a lack of "insurance" which results in rate volatility.

We anticipate higher than average increases in 2022 due to many employees "catching up" on health and dental services that were delayed during COVID.

We have included our highest increases and decreases in the chart below

to illustrate the range of plan cost changes that our clients encounter. These are compiled from our current clients and are un-weighted.

### Annual Premium Changes

Year	Best	Avg.	Worst
2013	-28%	-2.0%	+17%
2014	-20%	0.5%	+14%
2015	-17%	6.9%	+44%
2016	-10%	2.7%	+16%
2017	-13%	8.4%	+44%
2018	-21%	3.7%	+31%
2019	-17%	-0.4%	+31%
2020	-18%	1.1%	+46%
2021	-25%	-0.3%	+32%
2022 YTD	-22%	2.2%	+15%

The initial response we often get to this is "we want that 22% rate decrease". Who wouldn't, one would think, but in reality, you likely would not want it.

The firm that had that rate decrease actually grew their staff population, while at the same time REDUCING their overall claim costs. They were really overpaying until the

pricing was adjusted at renewal to reflect the new staff added and the declining number of claims submitted.

What this summary tells us is that the average client paid a benefit cost slightly higher than inflation, but not as high as one might expect.

Are rate increases likely to get better or worse? We never know for sure but can expect costs to continue to increase an average of 5-7% per year.

These increases are due to aging of employees, higher utilization and the larger than average increases in healthcare costs seen worldwide. Locally, we have seen that the Ontario dental fee guide increased by 4.75% this year (a 25+ year high) and larger paramedical usage increases.

We'll continue sharing to keep you up to date.

## Don't forget to update salaries

Each year at renewal, we remind you to keep employee info up to date. This includes items such as; adding new hires, removing terminated employees and updating info on spousal coverage and earnings adjustments.

During COVID we have seen many employers making "off cycle" salary adjustments in order to hold onto key staff.

If your benefit plan has life insurance as a multiple of earnings (e.g. 1x earnings) or

you have Long Term Disability (LTD) then updating the earnings with the insurer or TPA immediately is critical (don't wait for renewal).

In addition, we have seen several employers make changes to the type of earnings provided. If you are now providing bonuses, commissions, or other forms of earnings that were not done in the past, then we may need to amend the plan to

consider that new type of income.

If you're not sure what your definition of earnings that is used on your plan, we include it in your renewal document every year on the "Definitions & Plan History" page.

If you have questions or need help amending your plan? Please reach out and let us know. We're here to help.