



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

Changes to Employment Insurance (EI) Sickness Benefits

In the April 2022 budget, the federal government announced changes to enhance the Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefit. They committed to extending EI sickness benefits from the current 15 week benefit period to 26 weeks.

This is good news for those without employer benefit plans, as they will now have sick benefits payable, for a longer period of time, causing fewer financial hardships.

For employees that have disability coverage (LTD)

through their employer benefit plans, they will see mixed results.

In some cases, payment of LTD benefits will be delayed until the EI sick benefits end after 6 months. This will cause you to have a reduced benefit as EI is a lower percentage of income, is taxable, and also has a lower maximum payment.

In other cases, the LTD benefit will continue to begin after a 112 or 119 day waiting period. In these cases the employee

would apply for EI benefits and once approved for the LTD benefits, would stop accepting EI sick benefits. Failing to do so, could require repayment of EI if LTD is received at the same time.

This repayment should not cause a hardship however as the LTD benefit will always be greater than the EI benefit.

We will watch how this evolves and provide updates as they occur.

Ensure your information is up to date with your provider

You as an employee, have a responsibility to keep your employer up to date on status z employee benefit plan. Most plans require that such changes be updated within 31 days of the change taking effect.

If you have a child attending post-secondary school full time or out of the country, or if your child is over age 21, there is special information that must be provided to the insurer in order to maintain or obtain benefit coverage.

In addition to family changes, modifications in your spouses benefit coverage (such as the addition or loss of coverage) must be reported to your insurer as it can affect the way your claims are (or are not) paid.

It is important that all personal information is kept current so that your dependants are eligible for appropriate benefit coverage. Failing to make a timely status change can result in late enrolment penalties which may require you and/or your dependants to complete health questionnaires and risk having coverage declined.

Most carriers also have a late enrolment limit on dental care if you do not make changes in a timely manner. This usually limits an employee and their dependants to a maximum of \$125 for dental care during the first year of coverage. This limitation could be a financial hardship if a

family required even minimal dental work during that timeframe.

Lastly, ensure that your life insurance beneficiary is up to date and reflects your wishes. If you are leaving life proceeds to underage children, ensure that a trustee is named. Failing to name a beneficiary will result in the estate being paid and those funds could be used to pay taxes rather than provide financial support as intended.

If your information is not correct, or if you are anticipating a change in status, please contact your plan administrator or update through your plan member site immediately.

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

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...

...there is a time limit to submit claims. In some cases (traditional plans), claims must be submitted within one year of the date of treatment. In others (like HSA's) claims must be submitted within 60 or 90 days after year end.

The best way to ensure that your claim will be paid is to submit immediately after receiving the product or service. In the case of prescription drugs and dental claims, this may be done directly by the practitioner. In other cases you may need to submit via form, website or app.

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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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 are seeing more and more "tech solutions" being touted as the next best thing in benefits. We have also seen many of these products fail, some merge, and others "pivot" to new offerings leaving past benefits behind.

We try and stay on top of the hundreds of products and the suppliers behind them, so if you hear about something of interest, just reach out and we can give you the low down and get pricing if it's something you're interested in trying out with your employees.

My trip to Jammeh Kebbeh, The Gambia

My wife Joanne sits on the board of Hands Across The Nations (HATN.org) and travelled there just before the pandemic in 2020. The team helped build a market garden and supported the drilling of a well to provide the village and garden with fresh water. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to accompany HATN back to The Gambia November 2022.



My role was to help build an irrigation system for the market garden that had been built and was flourishing over the past 2&1/2 years.



The garden has plots where each family and village maintain and grow a variety of vegetables to eat and sell and at the local market. Our goal was to make the women's life a bit easier, using an irrigation system, rather than having to lug water around the garden each day.



The flight to get there takes about 14 hours of flying but with stops in Paris, then

Nouakchott, Mauritania before landing in Banjul, The Gambia, it takes almost 24 hours. Once landed, we stayed overnight in the capital city of Banjul, before our 5 hour drive up the river to the Baobolong Lodge / Camp and Guest House where we would stay before visiting the village of Jammeh Kebbeh each day.

My job started before we had our flights booked. I had to source affordable plumbing supplies in a country I'd never been to, and jury rig for parts that were unavailable to make it work. I found a plumbing supply store but speciality things like irrigation pipe were either expensive or there was no supply.



I decided to go basic and create our own "drip tubes" using Pex pipe we perforated ourselves. I placed the order and our local people picked it up. This was a learning experience for me as . European suppliers meant some supply chain issues and currency volatility, with prices being good for only 48 hours.



When we arrived at the village, I was blown away by the reception we received, and further amazed at how everyone wanted to help out with the project. We often had more watchers than doers, and even the kids were quick to lend a hand.



The next order of business was finding land and getting a commitment from the health ministry to partner in our funding, building and operation of a local health centre.

We succeeded, met the leaders at the proposed location and received a commitment from all parties to proceed. Now that we are in agreement, we just need to fundraise to make it all possible.

I'm hoping to return in 2023 to start that project. If you're interested in helping, you can donate at www.HATN.org. Mainstay will match any donations made before the end of the year to a max of \$5,000 in total.

We wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday season and the best for the new year.