

Highlights of the legislative and industry updates in 2009

Federal and provincial legislation and budgets as well as changes to provincial health plans can have a considerable impact on group benefits plans. Here's a recap of some of the changes that took place in 2009.

Note: we have already communicated many of these changes in previous Focus Updates as they were announced in 2009, but we are issuing this summary to recap some of the changes that took place. This recap will provide you with an overall document for ease of reference.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

<p>BC PharmaCare now covers insulin-infusion pumps for children and adolescents with Type 1 diabetes</p>	<p>British Columbia announces new Harmonized Sales Tax (HST)</p>
<p>Effective November 17, 2008, the BC PharmaCare program added coverage of insulin-infusion pumps for children and adolescents with Type 1 diabetes. Previously only insulin pump supplies were covered.</p> <p>For more information, refer to Focus Update # 164.</p>	<p>The British Columbia's budget announced its plan to introduce a single Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), effective July 1, 2010.</p> <p>We will communicate the impact the HST will have once more details become available.</p> <p>For more information, refer to Focus Update #184.</p>

ALBERTA

<p>Changes in Alberta for chiropractic coverage</p>	<p>Changes to Alberta's Prescription Drug Program for seniors, effective July 1, 2010</p>
<p>The Alberta government announced it would no longer fund chiropractic services for Alberta residents effective July 1, 2009.</p> <p>For more information, refer to Focus Update #177.</p>	<p>As part of their new Pharmaceutical Strategy, Alberta made changes to some of their drug programs, including their program for seniors.</p> <p>For more information, refer to Focus Update #187.</p>

MANITOBA

In December 2008, Manitoba's Auditor General released a Report "[Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations](#)", which included 12 recommendations to strengthen the Manitoba PharmaCare Program.

The recommendations aimed to clarify policies to keep PharmaCare fair and cost-effective. One of the issues raised by the Auditor General was that Manitoba PharmaCare drug claims had not been administered according to the legislation. The legislation indicated that only the amount not paid by private plans (coinsurance and out-of-pocket expenses) should count towards the Manitoba deductible. Manitoba PharmaCare had been accumulating all of the drug costs up to the amount of its deductible when drug claims were also processed by third parties.

As Manitoba PharmaCare could not find a way to enforce the Auditor General's recommendation, instead they enacted new Manitoba legislation that effectively allows the total amount of the drug cost to satisfy the deductible, even if a portion was reimbursed by private plans. There is no impact on group plans.

ONTARIO

Ontario extended its provincial coverage of insulin-infusion pumps for individuals with Type 1 diabetes

As of September, 2008, Ontario started covering insulin-infusion pumps and supplies for adults - defined as those over 19 years of age. Previously, only children and youth under the age of 19 were eligible. This extension of coverage now provides continuous provincial funding.

For information, refer to [Focus Update #164](#).

The Ontario budget proposes moving to a single, value-added sales tax at a combined rate of 13 % on July 1, 2010.

The Ontario's budget announced its plan to introduce a Harmonized Sales Tax, effective July 1, 2010.

We will communicate the impact the HST will have once more details become available.

For more information, refer to [Focus Update #169](#).

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QUEBEC

The Quebec Budget announced its plan to increase the QST sales tax	Quebec amends basic drug plan	Changes to the Quebec Insurance Act regulations
<p>The Quebec budget announced plans to increase the Quebec sales tax (QST) on goods and services increased from 7.5% to 8.5% on January 1, 2011.</p> <p>Sun Life will continue to monitor if this proposed rate change will occur.</p> <p>For information, refer to Focus Update #169.</p>	<p>Quebec announced some changes to the parameters of the basic drug plan administered by the <i>Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ)</i>. Effective July 1, 2009, the changes affected plan sponsors who provide drug coverage to Quebec plan members.</p> <p>For information, refer to Focus Update #181.</p>	<p>The new changes to the Quebec Insurance Act were released in August of 2009. These changes included revisions to life insurance conversion privileges for plan members, their spouse and dependent children. As a result, Sun Life will be modifying Group Benefit plans as required.</p> <p>Sun Life is will evaluate the benefits of adopting these increased amounts for all Sun Life group insurance plans.</p> <p>For information, refer to Focus Update #196.</p>

NOVA SCOTIA

Independent dental hygienist claims now eligible for coverage in Nova Scotia
<p>In July 2008, we announced that Ontario and Manitoba joined the ranks in a growing trend across Canada to provincially regulate the practice of dental hygienists. This expansion now includes Nova Scotia, and certain procedures performed by dental hygienists in the province will be eligible for coverage.</p> <p>For information, refer to Focus Update #183.</p>

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FEDERAL

Over-the-Counter Drugs Reclassified by Health Canada

As of January 1, 2010, many over-the-counter drugs lost their Drug Identification Numbers (DINs) and were reclassified as Natural Health Products and identified by a Natural Product Number (NPN.)

For information, refer to [Focus Update #191](#).

Questions?

Please contact your Sun Life Financial group representative.